

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MOBILITY:
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT RECRUITMENT AT
THE UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN
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Saskatoon

By

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Abstract

The number of international students studying at the University of Saskatchewan has not seen the same growth trends as the rest of Canada and has actually decreased in the number of international students from a peak of 2,542 in the 2015/2016 academic year to 2,516 in the 2017/2018 academic year (University of Saskatchewan, 2017). The University of Saskatchewan ranks near the bottom of the U15, the premier group of research universities in Canada, for the percentage of international students as part of its student population and last in overall international student population in Western Canada (U15, 2017). The goal of this mixed methods study was to determine what factors influenced the current international students at the University of Saskatchewan and compare the results with the university's initiatives and structures supporting the recruitment of international students so the university may become more efficient in attracting international students. Quantitative data was collected from an online survey. Qualitative data was collected through document analysis and follow-up interviews from the online survey. The data collected from the documents was analysed in relation to migration theory proposed by Lee (1966) and the push-pull factors identified by Lam, Ariffin, and Ahmad (2011); Lee and Tan (1984); Mazzarol, Kemp, and Savery (1997); and Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) to see if the structures and initiatives are in alignment with earlier research. Both qualitative and quantitative data was analysed using a side-by-side comparison approach outlined by Creswell (2014); the qualitative findings were reported so that themes were drawn and then compared to the quantitative results.

Keywords: internationalisation, international student, push-pull factors, recruitment initiatives

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Chapter One: Introduction to the Study

Universities have been competing more aggressively, both nationally and internationally, for students because it is believed the competition for students is a driver of quality and efficiency in higher education (Austin & Jones, 2016). Wagner (2004) saw globalisation as a major contributor to the changing of the university landscape due to the addition of higher education institutions to the world market. Many researchers see internationalisation and globalisation as the best ways to increase the number of international students, especially graduate research students (Altbach, 2002; Austin & Jones, 2016; Hazelkorn, 2011; Rüdiger, 2008). The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) found that the number of international students globally doubled from 2000 to 2011, and the expansion of international students was immune to the effects of the global economic crisis that occurred during the late 2000s (OECD, 2013). An international student is a student enrolled in an institution outside their country of citizenship (OECD, 2013). The largest numbers of international students come from Asia, where they represented 53 percent of international students enrolled in 2011 (OECD, 2013). Historically, the most popular country for international students to study has been the United States but other countries, such as Canada, have been increasing their percentage of international students, while the United States dropped from 23 percent of the share to 17 percent from 2000 to 2011 (OECD, 2013). In 2012, over 4.5 million students studied abroad and that number is expected to reach over 7 million by 2025 (Stein & de Andreotti, 2016).

According to Canada's International Education Strategy, in 2012, international students contributed over 8.4 billion dollars to the Canadian economy (Global Affairs Canada [GAC], 2014). There were over 265,400 international students studying in Canada in 2012 and they

helped sustain over 86,570 Canadian jobs (GAC, 2014). Through housing costs, food, entertainment, and taxes, international students contributed locally to communities and nationally to governments while they helped sustain and create jobs in the service industry (Kunin & Associates, 2012; Stein & de Andreotti, 2016). Canada's Minister of International Trade explained the importance of international education as "at the very heart of our current and future prosperity" and a way to fuel the "people-to-people ties crucial to long-term success in an increasingly interconnected global economy" (GAC, 2014, p.4). International student mobility was heralded by Guo and Chase (2011) as the "cornerstone of the growing internationalisation of Canadian universities" (p.309). McGrath (2010) believed universities should maximise diversity because it is important for the well-being of the campus and the community at large. This was because everyone, not just those involved at the university, could have experiences like attending a racial-cultural awareness workshop, discussing racial or ethnic issues, or socializing with someone from another racial-ethnic group that have been proven to have positive effects on knowledge and skill acquisition (McGrath, 2010).

International students contributed more economically to universities compared to domestic students due to the differential tuition fees that they pay, sometimes 40 percent or more than domestic students (Leary, Hotchkiss, & Robb, 2016). The practice of charging international students higher tuition than domestic students in Canada started in 1974 at the University of Alberta and the practice can be found in every province in Canada (Leary et al., 2016). The universities' rationale for charging international students higher tuition is the parents and family of international students did not contribute to the social services that domestic student's families would have through taxes and other fees in the years leading up to post-secondary education (Leary et al., 2016). International students also face different obstacles than

domestic students and have needed more support and services available for them to be successful (University of Saskatchewan Integrated Planning Committee, 2003). Examples of non-academic services international students have utilized were international tax filing services and support for immigration issues, among others (University of Saskatchewan Integrated Planning Committee, 2009).

From 2003 to 2013, there was an 84 percent increase in the number of international students attending university in Canada (Canadian Bureau for International Education [CBIE], 2014). In 2013 there were 293,500 international students studying in Canada across all levels of university making it the seventh-most popular destination for internationally mobile students in the world (CBIE, 2014). The benefits of international students encompass more than the immediate economic boost brought on with higher tuition costs. Research has shown nearly half of international students planned to remain in Canada long-term after university to continue contributing to the country's economy (CBIE, 2009). According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (as cited in GAC, 2014) "immigration is expected to account for 100 percent of net growth in the workforce" (p. 9), as the birth rate within Canada cannot keep up with the retirement of previous generations; attracting the best and brightest students from abroad will help secure Canada's long-term prosperity and economic success (GAC, 2014). The Canadian government has recognized the impact that international students have on the country and thus, created a plan that intends to double the population of international students by 2022 (GAC, 2014). Experts see the number of internationally mobile students rising and since there was an 84 percent increase in the number of international students in Canada from 2003 to 2013, Canada's recruitment goal seems obtainable (CBIE, 2014).

Globally, higher education has been “transformed from being considered a social expenditure to being an essential component of the productive economy” (Hazelkorn, 2011, p. 8), although the budgetary policy instituted in Saskatchewan in recent times has seemed counterintuitive to that notion. The Ministry of Advanced Education (2017) for the province of Saskatchewan has set a provincial goal of raising the number of international students studying in one of Saskatchewan’s post-secondary institutions by 75 percent over the 2011 baseline of 5,144 international students. The number of international students studying in the province of Saskatchewan has steadily risen from 5,144 in 2011 to 7,296 for the 2017-2018 academic year (Saskatchewan Advanced Education, 2018). For the 2017-2018 academic year, 77 percent of international students in Saskatchewan were enrolled in undergraduate and graduate programs, while 22 percent were enrolled in non-degree programming (Saskatchewan Advanced Education, 2018). Twenty-seven post-secondary institutions in Saskatchewan belonged to the International Student Program in the 2017-2018 academic year, which provided provincial authorization to enroll international students at an institution (Saskatchewan Advanced Education, 2018). In order for a higher education institution in Saskatchewan to belong to the International Student Program, the institution must meet or exceed all of the guidelines outlined by the Educational Institutions and Child Care Facility Administration’s (2019) *Designation Framework*, like offering scholarships, having an international student advisor, marketing appropriately, having policies in place to take care of the basic needs of international students, and having a risk mitigation strategy among others.

The economic importance of international students on the economies of the universities and the province itself will continue to grow, especially with recent reductions in funding that the government has implemented. For the 2014-2015 academic year, the government of

Saskatchewan gave 717.6 million dollars to universities and post-secondary institutions and provided 134 million dollars for financial supports for students (Saskatchewan Advanced Education, 2014). However, the amount of money budgeted to universities and post-secondary institutions, as well as students, peaked in the 2014-2015 academic year and has steadily declined since (Saskatchewan Advanced Education, 2015; 2016; 2017). For the 2015-2016 academic year, the government of Saskatchewan budgeted 9 million less for funding to universities and post-secondary institutions while cutting 77 million dollars for financial supports for students (Saskatchewan Advanced Education, 2015). There was a 22.3 million dollar decrease in funding to universities and post-secondary institutions and a 4 million dollar decrease for financial supports for students in 2016-2017 (Saskatchewan Advanced Education, 2016). Most recently, there was a 44 million dollar decrease in funding to universities and post-secondary institutions and a 7 million dollar decrease for financial supports for students for the 2017-2018 year (Saskatchewan Advanced Education, 2017). Increasing the number of international students, who pay a higher tuition cost, could help mitigate the decline in funding the government of Saskatchewan has implemented the last few years (GAC, 2014; Leary et al., 2016).

Problem Statement

The number of international students studying at the University of Saskatchewan has not seen the same growth trends as the rest of Canada and has actually decreased in the number of international students from a peak of 2,542 in the 2015/2016 academic year to 2,516 in the 2017/2018 academic year (University of Saskatchewan, 2017). The University of Saskatchewan ranked near the bottom of the U15, the premier group of research universities in Canada, for the percentage of international students as part of its student population and last in overall

international student population in Western Canada (U15, 2017). International students were 11.5 percent of the student body at the University of Saskatchewan (University of Saskatchewan, 2017). In comparison, the University of British Columbia has around 12,960 international students that made up approximately 24 percent of their student body (University of British Columbia, 2017), while the University of Manitoba has over 5,000 international students that made up approximately 17 percent of their overall student body (University of Manitoba, 2016). An analysis needs to be conducted of the University of Saskatchewan's international recruitment initiatives to see if they coincide with what current literature emphasises as factors that influence international students' choice in higher education institutions. Also, some international students currently studying at the University of Saskatchewan need to be consulted to explore what factors brought them to the University of Saskatchewan to see if the concentration of the resources being used could be better focused in the future.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyse the recruitment initiatives of international students at the University of Saskatchewan and compared the results to what international students presently enrolled at the University of Saskatchewan say about factors that influenced their decision to study at the University of Saskatchewan. The percentage of international students that make up the student body at the University of Saskatchewan is one of the lowest in the public university system in the western Canadian provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia (U15, 2017). With increased financial restrictions placed on the University of Saskatchewan with the budget cutbacks instituted by the provincial government (Saskatchewan Advanced Education, 2017), there is an immediate need to increase the number of international students present at the University of Saskatchewan. To explore that purpose, a

study needs to be conducted to analyse the recruitment policies that, in turn, drive the recruitment of international students. The results of this analysis will be used in conjunction with a survey conducted of present international students at the University of Saskatchewan that will ascertain the factors that contributed to their decision to study at the university. The goal of the study is to determine what factors influenced the current international students at the University of Saskatchewan and compare the results with the university's initiatives and structures supporting the recruitment of international students so the university may become more efficient in recruiting international students.

Research Questions

With the abovementioned purpose and research questions, the following definitions will be used:

- What factors influenced current international students at the University of Saskatchewan to choose it over other universities in Canada?
- What are the recruitment initiatives at the University of Saskatchewan that support the recruitment of international students?
- How can the University of Saskatchewan increase its appeal to international students?

Definitions

- Globalisation- The flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, and ideas across borders (Knight, 2004).
- Internationalisation- The process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education (Knight, 2004).
- International student- Student enrolled in an institution outside their country of citizenship (OECD, 2013).

- Push factors- factors operate within the student's home country and initiate a student's decision to undertake international study (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).
- Pull factors- factors operate within the individual external countries to make the country attractive to international students (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).

Limitations

The study was conducted at the University of Saskatchewan during the spring and summer terms of 2019, and occurred only once. Thus, time was a limitation as the study could not be conducted across multiple terms/years to ensure that participant characteristics mirrored the international student demographics at the University of Saskatchewan with regards to country of origin and academic level. This led to a disproportionate number of participants from certain countries and at different academic levels that did not accurately reflect the population demographics at the University. Another limitation was that there was only one version of the survey being administered, so it was impossible to measure the internal validity against itself through multiple administrations. To limit the occurrence of including non-valid results, the link to the survey was only available to students with access to the University of Saskatchewan's PAWS system or that received the *Global Connections* newsletter from the International Student and Study Abroad Centre. There were also two mandatory questions that asked participants if he or she was a current student at the University of Saskatchewan and were classified as an international student; an answer of no to either question navigated the participant to the end of the survey and did not produce any usable results.

Delimitations

The study was delimited to those students at the University of Saskatchewan, both undergraduate and graduate, that migrated to attend the university from outside of Canada. The

study illuminated the specific factors that influenced international students that were already enrolled at the University of Saskatchewan, but those factors may change in the future with changes in society, demographics, and world economies. The study was also delimited to 99 respondents that participated in the survey within the five-week window. The literature for the document analysis was delimited to *Foundational Documents* at the University of Saskatchewan that were related to recruitment initiatives specific to international students and available publicly online. The interview participants were delimited to only include those who completed the online survey and provided their email address and agreed for further contact related to a follow-up interview. The results of this study may be transferable to other universities in the U15 that reside in the prairie provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta as they are more comparable in geographic proximity and size than large universities in the U15 like the University of Toronto or the University of British Columbia.

Assumptions

It was assumed that all international students that attended the University of Saskatchewan and participated in the survey had a reason for choosing it over other universities in Canada; that their attendance was not random selection. It was assumed that a recruitment initiative that appeared on multiple *Foundational Documents* was of more importance than a recruitment initiative that only appeared on one document because it was supported across multiple documents over several years. It was also assumed that the University of Saskatchewan could make itself more appealing to future international students by altering or creating new initiatives based on the suggestions of the international students that participated in the study.

Significance

The findings of this study will benefit several levels of academia. International students at the University of Saskatchewan have participated in national surveys that are similar to the one in this study but there has not been a survey conducted with the international students at the University of Saskatchewan specifically. As an international student at the University of Saskatchewan, I have never participated or been invited to participate in a university-wide survey that focused on the factors included in the present study. The findings from the study may benefit those involved in recruitment at the various colleges and the recruitment department of the University of Saskatchewan to better understand what influenced international students to choose the University of Saskatchewan.

The findings from this study may also benefit those involved with international student recruitment at the provincial-level as there is little research available regarding international students in the prairie provinces in Canada. In 2015, there was a similar survey in British Columbia that had an area of focus on international students, *BC Student Survey: Final Report* (British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer), but no similar survey was publicly available in any of the other Western provinces of Canada. Gaining a better understanding of Saskatchewan's international student population could help with the recruitment goals the province has set (Saskatchewan Advanced Education, 2018).

Organisation of the Thesis

This study was organised into five chapters. Chapter one discussed the context of the study, its purpose, research questions, significance of the findings, definitions of the key terms used, and the limitations and delimitations. Chapter two provided a literature review that highlighted several studies that found factors that influenced international students; the review

also included a description of the results of the document analysis that was conducted on four *Foundational Documents* of the University of Saskatchewan. Chapter three described the research design of the study, data collection, data analysis, participant selection, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations. Chapter four presented the data analysis from the online survey and follow-up interviews and highlighted several factors that were found influential. Chapter five provided a discussion of the findings of the online survey, follow-up interviews, and document analysis and the relationship of the data collected to results from previous studies and literature. Chapter five also provided recommendations and a summary of the study.

Summary

Chapter one introduced readers to this study by providing a background of the climate on international student recruitment. The global increase of internationally mobile students and the demographic information on the countries that had the most international students were described. Several areas—economic, academic, labour—that international students have contributed to their host countries were explained as rationale for the importance of international students. The Province of Saskatchewan has set a goal for increasing the population of international students despite a steady decrease in provincial funding for universities across the province. This led to the problem statement, the University of Saskatchewan ranks near the bottom of the U15 for international students enrolled overall and as a percentage of its overall student body. Three research questions were proposed to help understand the recruitment initiatives at the University of Saskatchewan and identified the factors that influenced international students that were enrolled when this study was conducted. Several limitations and delimitations were also explained, as well as the significance the study will contribute to future research efforts.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Chapter two presents the current state of universities in Canada and the importance of remaining competitive as universities, which have become a part of the global market during the rise of internationalisation and globalisation. This chapter also includes the review of literature on the establishment of migration theory and the influence it had on the *push-pull* model that forms the basis for the analytical framework of the study. The significant *pull factors* that have been found to influence international students' decision to choose specific universities were also identified and explained. A document analysis on four *Foundational Documents* from the University of Saskatchewan was also conducted, and the international student recruitment initiatives that were found in the documents were presented and contrasted to previous research findings.

Introduction

In 2012, there were over 4.5 million students whom studied university abroad, a number that is expected to reach over 7 million by 2025 (Stein & de Andreotti, 2016). The most popular destinations, like Canada, which saw an 84 percent increase in international students from 2003-2013 (Leary et al., 2016), have several factors driving this increase in international students. One contributing factor was global competition for highly skilled manpower, as several countries like the United States, Canada, Australia, and Japan have a need to fill human resource gaps in their knowledge economies (de Wit, Ferencz, & Rumbley, 2012). Universities have unparalleled importance in the knowledge-based world that has emerged during the 21st century, where they provide the research that enables innovation to take place and training for future employment (Altbach & Teichler, 2001). This is important for countries like Canada, who has an aging workforce and not enough Canadians to replace the retirees, therefore, immigration during the

upcoming decade is being expected to account for 100 percent of net growth in the workforce (GAC, 2014). The Canadian government has recognized the impact that international students have on the country and thus, wish to attract the best and brightest students from abroad to help secure Canada's long-term prosperity and economic success (GAC, 2014).

International students have become a source for economic expansion at both local and national levels (Stein & de Andreotti, 2016), another factor that has contributed to the rise in international students. Many international students are charged higher tuition than domestic students in many Western countries (Stein & de Andreotti, 2016) but tuition was just one aspect of the economic benefits international students bring and applied at the university level. In the United States, international students contributed an estimated 14 billion dollars to their economy (McCormack, 2007) while in Canada in 2012, international students contributed 8.4 billion to the Canadian economy (GAC, 2014). Through housing costs, food, entertainment, and taxes, international students contributed locally to communities and nationally to governments while helping sustain and create jobs in the service industry (Kunin & Associates, 2012; Stein & de Andreotti, 2016). The decline of public subsidies for domestic students and deregulation of tuition fees for foreign students also made international students more attractive to universities (Healey, 2008). As Healey (2008) found, "[The] recruitment of large numbers of foreign students...in low cost subjects like business and management where large contribution margins could be earned, became a way to maintain revenues and cross-subsidise both research and domestic students" (p. 346). International students are more than just money and skills though, as they contribute a wealth of knowledge and culture to their host countries (Leary et al., 2016).

In addition to the benefits of increased tuition and the various economic areas that international students contribute (Kunin & Associates, 2012), foreign students also bring an

abundance of knowledge and culture that universities want their students to experience and use to their advantage to be better prepared in today's global environment (Leary et al., 2016). The diversity that international students bring helps universities to acclimatise its students to the political, religious, racial, socio-economic, and cultural differences present in a global society (Leary et al., 2016). Kunin and Associates (2012) also found international students to be cultural agents that can help communities, smaller communities in particular, evolve toward values of openness to and respect for cultural diversity. With the migration of international students and the assets they bring with them having such positive effects (Leary et al., 2016), universities found themselves competing globally as institutions of higher education have begun entering the world market (Wagner, 2004) in the age of the market economy (Austin & Jones, 2016). According to Austin and Jones (2016), universities have been competing more aggressively internationally for students because it is believed that this competition for students and government funds are drivers of quality and efficiency in higher education. Globalisation has been a major contributor to the changing of the university landscape in the market (Wagner, 2004), but internationalisation has also had an influence as well (Knight, 2004).

Globalisation

Altbach (2002) believed globalisation was inevitable, unstoppable, and mostly positive; with advances in Internet connectivity, the strengthening of the global labour force of highly skilled personnel, the growth of English as the medium for scientific communication, and an increase in advanced training in many fields, all examples of the positive affects of globalisation. Altbach (2002) shaped the definition of globalisation that Knight (2004) proposed, “the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, and ideas . . . across borders” (p. 8). To Knight (2004), globalisation refers to “worldwide in scope and substance” (p. 8) and does not

deal with the concept of a nation. Madgett and Bélanger (2008) describe globalisation in regards to education as a way in which national providers of higher education that were normally confined to providing their services within the borders of a nation have been able to export these education services to other countries. Hazelkorn (2011) furthers Madgett and Bélanger's (2008) description, adding, "[globalisation] is measured by connecting people and processes globally, and breaking down traditional barriers" (p. 6).

Historically, when universities were first founded at Bologna and Paris in the 11th and 12th centuries, respectively, they were international institutions and quickly grew to be globalised (Altbach & Teichler, 2001). The two institutions of higher education expanded throughout Europe and used a common language while providing training to a student body originating from many different countries. The faculty at the institutions were recruited from around the known world and helped translate books from Arabic and Greek, bringing the most advanced scientific knowledge from the more advanced corners of the world (Altbach & Teichler, 2001). As time advanced, the global economy came to fruition and with it, a globalised academic system for both students and staff (Altbach & Teichler, 2001). Examples that illustrate the effects of globalisation are: English became the language of choice for research and teaching purposes internationally; the Internet is used for teaching, research, and socialization; academic institutions began partnering with institutions in other countries; many institutions have created satellite campuses in other countries; and many institutions around the globe have similar degree structures, comparable courses, transferrable credits, and related mechanisms of the evaluation and measurement of academic progress (Altbach & Teichler, 2001).

Gacel-Ávila (2005) sees the multidimensional changes that incorporate economies, fields of science and technology, communications, education, culture, and politics becoming more

accelerated. These changes create a relationship of more interdependence and competitiveness between nations (Gacel-Ávila, 2005). Gacel-Ávila (2005) believed the process of globalisation as mostly positive, even though not all nations were able to participate at the same level on the global scale. Gacel-Ávila (2005) labels the different levels of globalisation that nations experience as “globali[s]ers” and the “globali[s]ed” (p. 121) and believes there is a growing distance economically, educationally, and technologically that exists between the more globalised nations and the less globalised nations. To Gacel-Ávila (2005), the global context has prompted an increased demand for education that has caused institutions of higher learning to modify their mission, tasks, and responsibilities so that their graduates can live and participate as global citizens and professionals. While globalisation has become a major component of the higher education, internationalisation has also been an influencing factor in the 21st century (Altbach, 2002; Altbach & Teichler, 2001; de Wit, 2011).

Internationalisation

Internationalisation is a term that has been growing in focus in the field of higher education and explains the international dimension of higher education, specifically, postsecondary education (Knight, 2004). According to de Wit (2011), the last three decades have seen the rise of the international dimension of higher education become more central to the agenda of not only institutions of higher education, but of international organizations and national governments, student organizations, and accreditation agencies. This led Altbach and Teichler (2001) to declare, “at no time since the Middle Ages has higher education been more international in nature” (p. 5). The declaration has been supported through the increase in international students from 250,000 in 1965 to 3.7 million in 2006 (de Wit, Ferencz, & Rumbley, 2013) and growing further to 4.5 million in 2012 (Stein & de Andreotti, 2016). Altbach and

Teichler (2001) also noted that there has been an increase in the number of international academics and researchers, although they admit it is hard to find an exact number as research on the topic is lacking. However, for as much attention as internationalisation had been getting, Knight (2004) admitted that there has been some confusion regarding what internationalisation means.

Knight (2004) presented numerous aspects regarding internationalisation as reasons for confusion of finding an accepted definition. According to Knight (2004), some people viewed internationalisation as a series of international activities for students and teachers, international partnerships, and new international research enterprises. This was the working definition used from the 1980s until the mid-1990s and was largely an institutional approach (Knight, 2004). Towards the late-1990s, academics saw internationalisation as the delivery of education to other countries, possibly through branch campuses or franchises or as an inclusion of international or global dimensions into the curriculum (Knight, 2004). This introduced an organizational approach to internationalisation but left the internal dimension of internationalisation reliant upon the external environment and did not context internationalisation in terms of the education sector itself (Knight, 2004). The challenge was creating a definition that acknowledges internationalisation at both the national/sector level and the institutional level. Knight (2004) proposed a working definition of internationalisation as, “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (p. 11). The reason Knight (2004) chose “process” was to convey that internationalisation as an ongoing effort and makes the definition more generic while not reflecting the priorities of a country, institution, or specific group of stakeholders. Using the terms “international, intercultural, and global dimension” intentionally chosen by Knight (2004)

to illustrate how the three terms compliment each other and give richness in breadth and depth to the complex process of internationalisation.

de Wit (2011) viewed internationalisation as a move from a reactive issue to a pro-active strategic issue over the years and has also seen its scope, focus, and content evolve significantly. The increased competition in higher education (Austin & Jones, 2016; de Wit, 2011) along with the commercialization and cross-border delivery of higher education have challenged the value that has been traditionally attached to cooperation. de Wit (2011) also identified two different aspects evolving within the internationalisation of higher education namely, internationalisation at home and internationalisation abroad. Internationalisation at home is more curriculum oriented and involves activities that help students develop an international awareness and intercultural skills so they will be prepared to be active in a globalised world (de Wit, 2011). Some activities related to internationalisation at home include, “curriculum and programmes, teaching and learning processes, extra-curricular activities, liaison with local cultural/ethnic groups, and research and scholarly activities” (de Wit, 2011, p. 244). Internationalisation abroad includes all forms of education across borders, as in the mobility of students, faculty, projects, programs, and providers (de Wit, 2011). de Wit (2011) also saw four broad categories of rationales behind the rise in popularity of internationalisation: political, economic, social and cultural, and academic. Economic rationales, according to de Wit (2011), were considered to be more dominant than any of the other categories but academic rationales are gaining importance.

Altbach and Teichler (2001) viewed higher education as a central element in the economic future, and traditional organizations that have provided effective leadership in the area of higher education must redefine their roles and provide services that will keep them current and relevant. The United States has historically been the hub for international student migration,

accounting for 35 percent of international students in 1980 (Altbach & Teichler, 2001). The United States is still the global leader for international student interest but its percentage of international mobile students has diminished as other countries in Europe, North America, and Asia have increased their market share of international students (Altbach & Teichler, 2001). Some of the reasons for an increased interest from other countries can be attributed to internal factors of those countries such as an increase in academic quality, well-structured graduate programs, and more political influence on the global stage. The United States has also stymied its own growth by increasing tuition fees, charging higher tuition for foreign students, and a steady decline in federally allocated funds for exchange programs (Altbach & Teichler, 2001). During the decade from 2000-2010, the United States went from having 23 percent of the world's mobile students to 18 percent (de Wit et al., 2013), as other countries expanded their market share during this period. Historically, the flow of students has gone from the southern hemisphere to the northern hemisphere, from developing countries to the industrialized nations, and the number of students willing to make the journey has gradually increased (Altbach & Teichler, 2001).

Institutional Responses

Healey (2008) believed that public funding for higher education institutions will continue to decrease and with it, governmental control over the universities. This means that more of the financial burden will fall on the higher education institutions and they will need to look more to the unregulated market of international students (Healey, 2008; Ross, Grace, & Shao, 2013). Some governments, like Canada's, have aided the institutions by offering pull factors such as student visas that are easy to apply for and the ability to stay and work for two years after graduating to work towards permanent residency (McCormack, 2007). Some universities

believed that charging international students a higher tuition rate will attract better-quality students from abroad that have the money and the drive to be successful (de Wit et al., 2013). Other universities have relied on the advertisement of student exchanges with overseas institutions to draw in prospective students (Findlay et al., 2006).

Ross et al. (2013) found that institutions predominantly adopted a customer orientation focus on recruitment of international students. This involved achieving long-term satisfaction by developing an understanding of the needs of current and future international students. Some institutions have also begun consulting strategic marketers that work to provide the educational institution with an identity in the marketplace, ensuring that there is a customer focus, supported by an assurance to quality improvement (Trim, 2003). By utilizing a strategic marketing approach, many universities undertook an external analysis that was composed of customer analysis, competitor analysis, market analysis, and an analysis of the environment that is paired with an internal analysis (Trim, 2003). Once the analysis' have been completed, the strategic team can then make recommendations on the most effective marketing strategy for the university.

Relationship Marketing

Relationship marketing originates in the business world and states that, “the purpose of businesses is to create and keep customers” (Klassen, 2002, p. 81). From this point of view, students are the *customers* as they are consuming education, making education a commodity to be purchased. One of the easiest ways to market an institution of higher education, in the modern era, is through the Internet as it is a relatively inexpensive resource for the distribution of information (Klassen, 2002). Most university websites provided prospective students with online entrance applications, virtual campus tours, and information regarding classes and

programs and are often the first method of contact for prospective students (Leary et al., 2016). All higher education websites are not created equal, however, and Klassen (2002) explained that even though the Internet was thought to be the equalizer since web-based marketing is relatively inexpensive and available by institutions, there are large differences between various university websites.

Klassen (2002) found that the top-ranked institutions of higher education significantly outperformed lower-ranked institutions in all three areas of analysis, making them better equipped to create and sustain relationships with their prospective students, and offered two explanations that may explain the results. The first explanation Klassen (2002) offered was that some universities do not see websites as an essential part of their marketing strategy and that just having a website does not guarantee an effect on marketing success. Institutions of higher education cannot stop once the website is built, they must maintain and successfully operate them; this entails a significant financial cost however, Klassen's (2002) second explanation of why some universities lack top-quality websites. It can cost upwards of 10,000 dollars per month to achieve 500,000 website views for a month, relatively cheap compared to 120,000 dollars for a single, 30-second, primetime television commercial (Klassen, 2002). However, 10,000 dollars per month may be too steep for some institutions of higher education, conceding to more-established and profitable institutions. Klassen's (2002) study could have been strengthened with an comparison of the costs of maintaining a website lacking in information but advertising via social networks and ads on popular search engines versus the costs of creating and maintaining a website with all three areas of information used in the study but not spending money to advertise on social media or popular search engines and analyzing the results to see which would be more effective at influencing prospective students.

Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006) had a differing view of marketing in the higher education sector and lament the business terminology that has been assigned to the field that began in the 1990s. Oplatka and Hemsley-Brown (2004) take issue with students being labeled as consumers and believed that the business world morally contradicts the values of education and has no place with its terminology. Oplatka (as cited in Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2004) was not “happy with the idea of advertising, commercializing, considering education to be a product in the same way as sunglasses are a product” (p. 382). The rejection of higher education as a product led Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006) to view it as a service because education is people based and should emphasise the importance of relationships with customers. To those involved in higher education, it is not transactional deals between traders that is the driving force, it is developing educational relationships. Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006) believe relationship marketing is compatible with the nature of higher education services because it “promotes the involvement of students in the marketing and image-building of their institutions” (p. 329) and emphasises the importance of the service staff whom are responsive to the students’ needs and expectations. Helgesen (2006) applied Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka’s (2006) student-centered approach to relationship marketing in a study analyzing relationships between students and their institution in Norway.

Helgesen (2006) saw relationship marketing as focused on retention and the link between customer retention, customer satisfaction, and the financial performance of the business unit. Historically, relationship marketing was traditionally applied to industrial and service markets (Helgesen, 2006) but has come to be associated with higher education as it, in turn, has increasingly been seen as part of the service industry (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006). Customer values are created as their wants, needs, and desires are met by the businesses and

relationship marketing believes the creation of customer values should be an ongoing process over the lifetime of the relationship. Helgesen (2006) wanted to explore the relationship between an educational institution and its students. Specifically, the researcher wanted to find if there were links between student loyalty, student satisfaction, and the perception of the reputation of the institution.

Helgesen's (2006) study tested three hypotheses: "students' perception of the reputation of the university college is positively related to student loyalty, student satisfaction is positively related to student loyalty, and student satisfaction is positively related to the students' perception of the reputation of the university college" (p. 66). The data collected by Helgesen (2006) showed that the three concepts analysed were positively related, which implied that student satisfaction and students' perception of the reputation of the university influence student loyalty. The researcher believed that drivers of satisfaction, reputation, and loyalty of students should be identified by the managers and marketers of higher education institutions and can do so by carrying out periodic student surveys. The marketers need to know what creates student value at each institution so that they may create the appropriate marketing campaign (Helgesen, 2006). Helgesen's (2006) study could have been more valid had there been a separate analysis of the responses of graduate students and undergraduate students to see if there were opposing opinions at the different levels of education. The decrease in public funds for higher education institutions has caused an increase in competition for international students (Austin & Jones, 2016) and universities must understand the factors contributing to the decision of international students to leave the countries they know as home to seek education elsewhere.

Studying Abroad

The concept of higher education students choosing to complete part or all their studies in a foreign country is not a new concept (Altbach & Teichler, 2001). The historic trend was mainly an elitist initiative that served mostly in the most prestigious universities around the globe and involved students from Western countries going to other Western countries to “broaden one’s perspective and perhaps provide knowledge of a foreign language and civilization” (Altbach & Teichler, 2001, p. 17). However, the traditional idea of a cultural experience as the driving force behind the decision to study abroad has been replaced by the goal of obtaining knowledge useful for the internationalised professions in the 21st century (Altbach & Teichler, 2001). Altbach and Teichler (2001) believe that in studying abroad, students could develop a mutual understanding while learning about specific scientific fields, could provide future leaders with an international perspective, and could give international opportunities to population groups usually excluded from postsecondary education. The decision to study abroad could be further explained by Lee’s (1966) migration theory and the push-pull model (Mazzarol, Kemp, & Savory, 1997; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002) that was derived from Lee’s (1966) research.

Migration Theory

Lee (1966) defined migration as “broadly as a permanent or semipermanent change of residence” (p. 49) and did not place any restrictions upon the distance of the move, the voluntary or involuntary nature of the act, or if the migration was internal or external. Excluded in Lee’s (1966) definition were nomads who move continuously, migratory workers who have no long-term residence, and people that move seasonally to other residences they own. In analyzing patterns of migration, Lee (1966) concluded that every act of migration had four factors

influencing decision-making: the place of origin, the destination, personal factors, and an intervening set of obstacles.

Lee (1966) believed the factors surrounding the origin and destination as well as the intervening set of obstacles as having different levels of effect on individual migrants. What may be a positive factor to some, like having a good school system in the destination country, might not be an influencing factor to potential immigrants that do not have children. In addition to the origin and destination factors, there are also intervening obstacles like physical, distance, and monetary barriers that may keep a potential immigrant from overcoming the natural inertia that favours staying in the same residence (Lee, 1966). For some potential immigrants, personal factors may have as much influence as the other three categories combined. Lee (1966) noted that some people's personalities inhibit change, others are very resistant to moving or changing their lives, sharp breaks in the life cycle may be either prohibitive or inhibitive of migration, and some individuals seek guarantees for work and housing while others need little provocation or promise to decide to migrate. This observation of ever-changing factors, unique to individual immigrants, led Lee (1966) to explain migration theory as being "inexact" (p. 50) in its calculation. Lee's (1966) analytical framework that looked at the various factors pertaining to migration has come to be known as the "push-pull" model and has become very popular in its use (de Haas, 2008, p.9).

More recent researchers like de Haas (2008) disliked the push-pull model as it,

"ignore[d] the heterogeneity and internal stratification of societies while general contextual factors habitually defined as either push or pull factors are likely to work out in a differentiated way on the individual level, and might subsequently encourage some people to leave and others to stay" (p. 9).

de Haas (2008) also disliked the push-pull model as the factors are often found in mirror to each other. Wages are an example—would an immigrant move to a foreign country because wages are higher (pull) or would they move to the foreign country because wages were lower in their origin country (push)? de Haas (2008) believed the decision was made using both factors and believes it “arbitrary and open to subjective judgement to establish whether the push or the pull is dominant” (p. 10). However, using de Haas’s (2008) logic, all immigrants claiming wages as the basis for immigration should end up in the same destination country that provides the highest wages, but that is not accurate according to Lee (1966).

In the following section, push and pull factors were explained and discussed in-depth and findings from several studies that analysed students’ decisions to study internationally were organized according to the push-pull model. Even though the studies varied in geographic location, there were many similar factors that influenced the students to study internationally. Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) conducted research on the push and pull factors influencing Asian students to attend universities in Australia; Lam, Ariffin, and Ahmad (2011) surveyed international students studying in Malaysia; and Sà, Florax, and Rietveld (2004) gathered data on Dutch students internally migrating in the Netherlands for higher education.

Push-pull Factors

Push factors. Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) identified numerous factors that were involved with students making the decision to attend higher education institutions in countries other than their own. The student’s reasoning was a combination of “push and pull” (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002, p. 82) factors; push factors operate within the student’s home country and initiate a student’s decision to undertake international study while pull factors operate within the individual external countries to make the country attractive to international students. One of the

most important push factors influencing students is a lack of access to higher education in their home country (Lee & Tan, 1984; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; McMahon, 1992). Lee and Tan (1984) saw developing countries, specifically, as having the inability to satiate the internal demand for higher education, thus pushing their students to developed countries that have established higher education institutions. Other push factors could be: a desire to study in an English-speaking country, lack of quality of the higher education in the home country, the relative wealth of the home country population, and the growth rate in the home country (Lee & Tan, 1984; Karamera, Oguledo, & Davis, 2000; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; McMahon, 1992). Table 2.1 lists the push and pull factors that have been shown to influence international students.

Table 2.1

Push and Pull Factors Influencing Destination Country

Push Factors	Pull Factors
Lack of Access to HE	Knowledge and Awareness of DC
Inability to Satisfy Internal Demand for HE	Reputation for Quality of HE in DC
Desire to Study in English-speaking Country	HC will Recognize Qualifications from DC
Lack of Quality of HE in HC	High Quality Education Services in DC
Relative Wealth of the Population of HC	Financial and Social costs of Relocating to DC
Growth Rate in HC	Personal Recommendations from Family and Friends
	Study Climate, Physical Climate, and Lifestyle in DC

Note: HE = higher education; HC = home country; DC = destination country. Adapted from ““Push-pull” factors influencing international student destination choice”, by Mazzarol, T. & Soutar, G., 2002, *International Journal of Education Management*, 16(2), 82-83.

Pull factors. When there are enough push factors to influence a student to study internationally, a specific country must be chosen to undertake his or her studies. The selection of a specific country is done by analyzing the pull factors of the countries of interest to the student (Mazzarol, Kemp, & Savory, 1997; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; McMahon, 1992).

Mazzarol et al. (1997) analysed previous research, like McMahon (1992) and Lee and Tan

(1984), and identified four pull factors influencing international student's decision to choose a host country.

The first pull factor Mazzarol et al. (1997) identified was the overall level of knowledge and awareness of the country of interest that was made available via information that had been disseminated to the student's home country and the ease with which that information was able to be obtained. Part of the knowledge and awareness factor is the destination country's reputation for quality and whether their home country would recognize the qualifications obtained once the student completed their studies abroad (Mazzarol et al., 1997). Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) found the destination country must have a reputation for high quality education services, while having those education qualifications recognized by their originating countries, and have a high international profile that is easy for prospective international students to find information about. Lam et al.'s (2011) study also found international students place a lot of importance on the destination country's academic reputation and base their decisions on a lot of information gathered from a variety of sources. Sá et al.'s (2004) study showed the importance of knowledge and awareness to Dutch students through their possession of intricate knowledge about several economic factors of living and studying away from home, like rent and the local amenities, as well as knowledge about prospective institutions, like programs offered and quality of staff.

The second pull factor identified by Mazzarol et al. (1997) was the level of personal recommendations that the destination country receives from parents, relatives, and friends. Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) felt there was considerable evidence that the reputation of institutions is affected by the number of people who are willing to refer others to it. The researchers found word-of-mouth referrals to be one of the most powerful forms of promotion and that parents and relatives that graduated from an institution and enjoyed their experience

were likely to recommend the same institution to their children, family members, and friends.

Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) also found the recommendations of recruitment agents to have considerably less influence than family and friends on prospective international students' choice of foreign institution.

A third pull factor that influenced potential international students was financial and social cost issues (Mazzarol et al., 1997). Financial costs included fees, living expenses, travel costs, and availability of part-time work while social costs were the presence of other students from the student's home country, crime, safety, and racial discrimination (Mazzarol et al., 1997).

Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) found financial and social cost issues to be very important for the Asian students in their study. Many students expected to work part-time or to work as research assistants in their chosen fields to gain experience during their studies (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). The Asian students in Mazzarol and Soutar's (2002) study also valued having an established population of overseas students, suggesting that, "once a host country has succeeded in attracting relatively large number of international students from a particular source country, their presence will serve as an additional "pull" factor" (86). Lam et al. (2011) did not find opportunities to work part-time influential in their study but did find lower tuition fees to be an important influencing factor to the international students they surveyed. Karamera et al. (2000) found that distance impaired migration because as the distance between potential immigrant's home country and destination country increased, the costs and needs for migration also increased. Sá et al. (2004) also found financial cost to have a large influence on students travelling for education. Sá et al. (2004) showed that elevated levels of rent deterred students from attending universities in particular areas and suggested changes to taxation laws that would focus on tax breaks for taxpayers providing student boarding to decrease rent charges.

The fourth pull factor was the environment of the host country that included the study climate, physical climate, and lifestyle (Mazzarol et al., 1997). Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) found Asian students wanted to live in a comfortable climate, that was exciting, while maintaining a quiet-studious environment. Lam et al. (2011) also found the international students they surveyed valued the attractiveness of the university's location, the learning atmosphere and environment, and the safety and security of the host country. However, neither survey quantified or explained what was being measured when the researchers gathered data from international students on study and physical climates and lifestyle factors. By not setting any delimitations or offering further explanation, the researchers left too much interpretation to the students being surveyed and to those who interpreted the results as there was too much variance for personal preference for what one considers "ideal" for environment and security.

The three studies by Mazzarol and Soutar (2002), Lam et al. (2011), and Sá et al. (2004) were instrumental in gathering data on the influencing factors on student's decisions to study abroad. However, improvements could be made to strengthen such studies in the future. For example, the reliability of Mazzarol and Soutar's (2002) study could have been enhanced by separating the results of the student responses into undergraduate and postgraduate responses as there are different factors that influence students at the two different levels. Lam et al.'s (2011) study only had 130 respondents to their survey but no information was given on the overall total of international students where the study was administered, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), to determine if the sample was sufficient for generalization to the university, much less on a global scale. Little information was given regarding the nationalities of those who participated in the survey and no mention of differences between nationalities regarding push or pull factors were included in the results or discussion. There were a disproportionate number of

Indonesian respondents—57 percent (Lam et al., 2011)—but there was no mention of the international makeup of the student body at UKM to know if this was a valid representation. The student education level was also disproportionately represented as undergraduate students were nine percent of respondents but Master's students were nearly 68 percent of the respondents (Lam et al., 2011). The researchers believe that a lot of these discrepancies could be eliminated by using quota sampling or area sampling in the future (Lam et al., 2011).

Three stages have been identified that international students undergo before committing to study internationally (Lam et al., 2011; Mazzarol, 1998; Mazzarol et al., 1997). The first stage is made up of push factors and involves a student making the decision to study internationally rather than locally. Once the decision to study elsewhere has been made, a host country must be chosen. During this second stage of choosing a host country, the student weighs the pull factors of various countries of interest. Upon the selection of a host country, the student analyses the pull factors of individual institutions that will be explained in-depth in the following section (Lam et al., 2011; Mazzarol, 1998; Mazzarol et al., 1997).

Pull Factors of Institutions

After a student decides to undertake higher education internationally, he or she must begin narrowing down a particular institution based upon numerous pull factors (Lam et al., 2011; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Sá et al., 2004). Several studies have been completed by a plethora of authors and there are a lot of similarities in the data behind international student's decision to choose a specific institution. The following subsections have been organized according to the various factors, listed in Table 2.2, that influence international students. Note, there is no hierarchy of importance given to the order of the factors.

Table 2.2

Pull Factors of Institutions

Factor
Ease of Obtaining Information
Academic and Non-academic Student Services
Recommendations by Friends and Family
Financial and Social Costs
Academic Courses and Programs
Quality of Faculty
Technology
Institution Image, Reputation, and Ranking

Note: Adapted from ““Push-pull” factors influencing international student destination choice”, by Mazzarol, T. & Soutar, G., 2002, *International Journal of Education Management*, 16(2), 85-88.

Information. Currently, there are many ways to disseminate information and a lot of higher education institutions offer vast amounts of information for prospective students online (Klassen, 2002). Sometimes, especially with international students, the information that prospective students seek is different than the generic information provided by the administrators in student booklets (Madgett & Bélanger, 2008). Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006) believed that a gap existed between the academic and practical aspects of the program that was sought by prospective students and what documents the university provided for information. Additionally, Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006) found that universities missed opportunities to highlight examples of exceptional faculty at the university or to provide potential classes and time table samples. International students require information that differs and exceeds what domestic students may be interested in like how to physically travel to where the institution is located, obtaining a student visa, weather and temperature fluctuations, governmental fees, and lifestyle

information like where to find grocery stores that would cater to student's nationalities (Leary et al., 2016; Madgett & Bélanger, 2008). While Madgett and Bélanger (2008) showed that Canada has performed well recently in the providing of pertinent information for international students, a study by Mortimer (1997) showed that some universities lack efficiency when responding to student inquiries for information.

Public funding for higher education institutions in the United Kingdom was declining in the 1990s, and in response the universities began to expand their interest in international students (Mortimer, 1997). Mortimer (1997) found that the availability of information was one of the main factors in the decision for international students to attend a certain institution of higher education in the United Kingdom and sought to find out if the information being provided by these institutions met the inquiries of foreign students. Mortimer's (1997) study involved sending a letter from the aspect of a prospective student and requested correspondence from the admissions unit at each respective university in regards to six areas: course information on economics and business studies, entry requirements, course fees for international students, availability and cost of accommodations, the number of international students present at each university, and the application procedure. The researcher chose three weeks as the time limit that would be used to judge universities' response time.

Mortimer (1997) did not get a response from 19 of the 69 universities contacted within the three-week time period. Out of the 50 universities that did respond within the time limit, 44 percent provided student booklets that addressed many areas of concern from the letter, 32 percent provided information on courses, 84 percent provided information regarding student fees, 30 percent provided information on accommodations, 74 percent provided information on the number of international students, 16 percent provided application information, but none of

the universities provided information on the entry requirements of students. Mortimer (1997) believed that the slow response time of the universities coupled with their lack of information provided showed the universities are either uninterested in the student's enquiry or are not organized enough to respond quickly. One way higher education institutions have begun dealing with the growing number of international students, the amount of information they seek, and the variance in entry requirements is by having a dedicated department centered on the needs of international students, often within the department of student services (Leary et al., 2016).

Student services. Student services vary in form and may cover both academic and non-academic needs (Mavondo, Tsarenki, and Gabbott, 2004). Mavondo et al. (2004) believed that student services, depending on the life cycle of the student, may be critical to their ability to pursue higher education. The increase in international students necessitates a growing sector of services needed to ensure their success in their programs of study as their experiences, especially during their first year, can have a huge effect on their retention (Leary et al., 2016). Many international students struggle with language proficiency; this is troubling since most are required to take a language proficiency test before acceptance to a foreign university (Leary et al., 2016). Social relationships are also very important to international students and universities need to ensure that they are given opportunities to interact with their teachers and peers in different venues (Leary et al., 2016). The programs, expertise, and practices of the student services unit at the university will also influence the effectiveness of recruitment and retention of international students (Leary et al., 2016). Leary et al. (2016) found that, while many universities were satisfactory for meeting the needs of their diverse group of students, there were some areas where improvement could be made.

One area that Leary et al. (2016) found most universities lacking was how international students were welcomed upon their arrival to their new country. For many international students, they arrive at airports or bus stations without directions of where to go for a safe residence or hotel, how to get to their new domiciles, or where grocery stores that will cater to their diverse preferences are located (Leary et al., 2016). Having a center dedicated to offering services for international students is an effective way to recruit and retain them but the staff at these centers should come from diverse backgrounds as well or at least be knowledgeable in the differences between cultures, like their verbal and non-verbal communication styles (Leary et al., 2016). There are also differences between the types cultures that the staff need to be aware of. For example, Leary et al. (2016) points out that collectivist cultures value “loyalty, sharing, social interaction, conformity, and specifically the advice and direction of family members” (p. 117) while students from individualist cultures value “self-reliance, competition, and reward, and are interested in pursuing their personal goals, distrust people in power, and are not always loyal to their workplace” (pp. 116-117). Universities need to offer information on the procedures related to immigration as it can be a cumbersome task to undertake for international students that may struggle with the country’s language (Leary et al., 2016). McBride (1998) highlighted the importance of student services for international students by saying, “money spent on ensuring that services to international students are good may be the best investment in a recruitment strategy” (p. 31). By understanding what students value at a given university, higher education institutions have a higher chance of alumni recommendations to prospective students (Mavondo et al., 2004).

Recommendations. Recommendations are closely related to satisfaction and loyalty as they both are indicators of the possibility that ongoing and future relationships between the

student and higher education institution will occur (Mavondo et al., 2004). Former students are more likely to recommend an institution to prospective students if their own learning experience while at the institution was positive (Mavondo et al., 2004). For a prospective student, especially if he or she is a member of the recommending student's family or friend, recommendations reduce the level of perceived risk and uncertainty related with service purchase decisions (Mavondo et al., 2004). Word-of-mouth referrals are one of the most powerful forms of promotion and that parents and relatives that graduated from an institution and enjoyed their experience were likely to use to recommend the same institution to their children, family members, and friends (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Binsardi and Ekwulugo's (2003) study of 62 international students in the United Kingdom showed that the second-most effective promotional strategy was to involve alumni, friends, and relatives.

Costs. There are a lot of factors that go into accounting for costs for international students. In addition to the cost of elevated tuition, textbooks, and living accommodations, international students also have to figure in travel expenses to get to the institution from their home country, decide if he or she will fly home for any breaks or vacation, pay for increased application fees to the institution, especially in the United States, and pay for expenses related to immigration like student visas (Madgett & Bélanger, 2008). A study by Findlay, King, Stam, and Ruiz-Gelices (2006) of 1,200 students from 10 higher education institutions in the United Kingdom showed 80 percent of respondents assigned importance to finance as a barrier to studying internationally. Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003) found that the best way to attract more students, according to their study involving higher education students from the United Kingdom, was by concentrating on the price variables like lowering tuition while the second-best way was by giving more scholarships to international students. A search by Madgett and Bélanger (2008)

showed that Canada had an advantage over competitors like Australia, United Kingdom, and the United States for its cost of living and overall cost of several programs popular with international students like Internet technology, engineering, and a master's in business. Canada has also maintained its openness to international students after the United States and United Kingdom increased their domestic security and charge increased fees, like 100-dollar fee for international student validation using the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (Madgett & Bélanger, 2008). Offering an abundance of courses that appeal to international students while employing high-quality faculty are ways that higher education institutions have maintained appeal, negating the effect of exorbitant prices that some charge international students (Mazzarol, 1998; Binsardi & Okulugo, 2003).

Courses and faculty. The types of courses and the quality of the faculty hired are usually left to colleges of universities to fulfill but are also large influencing factors for international students (Mazzarol, 1998). Mazzarol (1998) believed institutions' ability to recruit and retain high-calibre staff is a critical success factor, especially in the education services industry where students select courses on the reputation of teaching staff. Mavondo et al. (2004) found that the quality of teaching was directly related to international student's recommendation, previously explained as an influencing factor, of a higher education institution. Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003) found that when they asked international students what was important when choosing an institution, the third-most important factor was the rating of the teaching at the institution. Bain (2004) defined outstanding teaching as those who help "their students learn in ways that made a sustained, substantial, and positive influence on how those students think, act, and feel" (p. 5). By encouraging colleges to hire faculty that are outstanding in teaching practice, universities can increase appeal to international students.

Mazzarol (1998) also found that an institution's capacity for offering a broad range of programs and courses was a potential source for competitive advantage. Mazzarol (1998) analysed one of the major Australian institutions of higher education that was ranked among the top ten Australian universities in the field of international education and found one of the ways it was able to enhance its appeal to international students was by making all its programs relevant not only to Australian students, but to the students from Asia where Australia imports most of its international students. When Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003) asked international students what was important when choosing an institution, the most important factor that influenced the students was courses on offer. By encouraging colleges to offer more courses that will appeal to international students, especially those in areas that traditionally choose Canada, universities can further increase their appeal to international students.

Technology. Technology is a field that has grown every year and has also been shown to have an impact on attractiveness of higher education institutions (Mazzarol, 1998). Technology has also been linked to the achievement of competitive advantage within the realm of higher education as well as the technical superiority of the institution (Mazzarol, 1998). Mavondo et al. (2004) found a correlation between the technology that higher education institutions offer and international students' recommendation of institutions. To be attractive to international students, universities must offer up-to-date technology that is able to meet the student's needs (Mavondo et al., 2004). Technology has quickly become an important tool for the modern university and its rapid development has led to the creation of online education that can function as both an alternative to and supplement of traditional teaching, also known as face-to-face instruction (Tallent-Runnels, Thomas, Lan, Cooper, Ahern, Shaw, & Xiaoming, 2006). In 2002, Pethokoukis (as cited in Tallent-Runnels et al., 2006) reported that online classes were

increasing by 33 percent per year and that 200 universities offered online graduate degrees. With increasing pressure being placed upon the higher education system by university presidents to grow the online education field (Parker, Lenhard, & Moore, 2011), and the necessity to remain competitive in an increasingly globalised world (Austin & Jones, 2016), it seems higher education institutions must continue being competitive in the field of technology.

Institution image, reputation, and ranking. The reputation of an institution can be defined as the esteem in which people hold it or as the overall valuation in which a company is held by those with an interest (Helgesen, 2006). According to Helgesen (2006), an institution's reputation may be "interpreted as the overall perception of a company, what it stands for, what it is associated with, and what one can assume will be gotten when buying the products or using the services of the company" (p. 57). Nguyen and LeBlanc (2001) described institutional image as "the overall impression made on the minds of the public about an organization" (p. 303). Institutional image and reputation are important to develop and maintain loyal customers and are used in educational services as positioning factors to influence prospective students (Nguyen & LeBlanc, 2001).

The reputation of higher education institutions reflects the history of its past actions; a favourable perception of the reputation by its students was shown to be related to student loyalty in Helgesen's (2006) study. When Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003) asked international students what was important when choosing an institution, the reputation of the institution was the fourth most-important factor behind courses, fees, and the ratings of teachers. An institution's reputation and prestige are assets that allow higher education institutions to convey non-price information to customers and Hazelkorn (2011) believed "reputation is built over time and can be tested, while prestige is intangible and may be based on opinion or perception" (p. 20).

College entry scores and preparatory exams or secondary school scores, also affect an institution's reputation and Hazelkorn (2011) found that parents and students assume that higher entry requirements and the level of selectivity into the university or specific program of study corresponds to better academic quality. Reputation can also be linked to name recognition of higher education institutions and Mazzarol (1998) found this to be a critical factor in the development of competitive advantage of institutions. Mazzarol (1998) used Ivy League institutions and the amount of success they have achieved throughout history as an example of how name recognition and image can overcome shortcomings in other areas. There is also a perceived relationship between high tuition and the reputation of higher education institutions, with institutions increasing tuition substantially in their efforts to become leading institutions (Bowman & Bastedo, 2009). By increasing tuition and restricting financial aid, higher education institutions are trying to attract more high-achievers, which they believe is "correlate[d] strongly with socioeconomic status" (Hazelkorn, 2011, p. 144). Nguyen and LeBlanc (2001) believed that as an organization repeatedly succeeds in fulfilling its promises, the reputation of the organization will increase. Conversely, the destruction of an organization's reputation can be caused by harm to its credibility (Nguyen & LeBlanc, 2001).

Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006) found some institutions, due to a pressure to compete more aggressively for international students, have tried to adopt an image as one of a highly stratified higher education institution even though they were of low status in the higher education strata. This was an issue because it contradicted the image the institution was trying to convey with their reputation in the market. Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006) also noted how the concept of institutional image and reputation in higher education differ from other services organizations. In most services organizations, high sales and high demand are the markers for a

company's high reputation. However, in higher education, the more selective the institution, the more prestige exuded (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006). To this effect, universities trying to increase their image and reputation by advertising newly-built facilities may be harming their standing in the eyes of prospective international students. It may be best served for higher education institutions to focus on other factors, such as lowering fees, offering more scholarships, hiring high-quality faculty, and boosting course offerings, that the university has more direct control over to attract more international students (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006). The rank obtained by universities on national and international lists has also become an important influencing factor, evidenced by the continued rise in national and international rankings publications since 1987 (Hazelkorn, 2011).

Since the inception of "America's Best Colleges" by *U.S. News and World Report* in 1987, media organizations like *Times* in the United States, *Der Speigal* in Germany, *Macleans* in Canada, and *Reforma* in Mexico have published similar lists that rank higher education institutions (Hazelkorn, 2011). Governments, accreditation agencies, and higher education organizations have also developed their own systems that evaluate and rank institutions of higher education, and in 2001 there were over 50 national ranking systems and ten global rankings that vary in significance (Hazelkorn, 2011). Rankings lists are popular because they provide the user with a convenient way to pre-sort through multiple higher education institutions, making quick assessments and comparisons between their favourites without having to spend hours developing in-depth profiles of institutions (Contreras, 2007).

In the United States, a major study of over 1,000 higher-achieving high school students showed that the students believe "where you go to college will play a big role in your social and professional success later in life" (Hearne, 2009, p. 5). A similar study of German students

found over half of the students selected a specific university based on its high reputation (Federkeil, 2009). University rankings were also a significant influencing factor for East Asian students seeking to study in Canada (Chen, 2007); this is significant as the majority of international students studying abroad come from Asia (OECD, 2013). The usage of rankings to influence students into attending universities has also risen sharply over the last two decades (Hazelkorn, 2011).

However, research findings by Clarke (2007) indicate that there is a wide variance among students that use university rankings to influence their choice. High-achieving students, students who have the financial ability to pay full fees without grants or government help, and students enrolling at private colleges were more likely to use rankings than students receiving grant or government financial assistance, wish to attend public universities, were from low-income families, or were first-in-family students (Clarke, 2007). Students interested in certain degree programs also showed variance in the influence of university rankings. Students pursuing engineering, business, or science programs were more likely to use rankings to influence their choice than students interested in arts, humanities, or social science (Federkeil, 2009).

There has been an undeniable increase in the number of prospective higher education-seeking students that use national and international ranking tables, however, it is often not the most important factor influencing students' institution choice (Hazelkorn, 2011). A survey of students in the United States by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) showed "rankings in national magazines" as ranked eighth-important behind other factors like academic reputation, size of university, and graduates getting good jobs (HERI, 2007, p. 2). There is evidence of a growing influence of rankings on students' choice of higher education institutions, but there is no consensus on whether it will ever become the most important factor (Hazelkorn,

2011). Given the many motivating factors driving international students to choose where to continue their studies and the variance across different cultures (Lam et al., 2011; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Mazzarol et al., 1997), universities need to be aware of the specific factors that influenced their international students to attend so they can maximise their recruitment initiatives and remain competitive in the global marketplace (Austin & Jones, 2014; Wagner, 2004). The following section outlines several international student recruitment initiatives of the University of Saskatchewan that were present in several of the *Foundational Documents* that define the University.

University of Saskatchewan Document Analysis

The University of Saskatchewan has posted many *Foundational Documents*, which are university-wide planning documents, on its webpage. The documents are overarching across the colleges at the University and outline the strategic directions the University wished to move in the various areas of interest. Several of the *Foundational Documents* outlined initiatives in regards to international student recruitment. The four documents from the University of Saskatchewan were: *Globalism and the University of Saskatchewan: The Foundational Document for International Activities at the University of Saskatchewan* (2003), *Implementation Plan for the Foundational Document for International Activities* (2009), *International Blueprint for Action 2025* (2018), and *University Plan 2025* (2018). The document analysis was conducted in NVivo where the data was coded so that themes could be generated. From the themes, the recruitment initiatives for the university in regards to international students were identified. The initiatives, along with previous research (Lam, Ariffin, & Ahmad, 2011; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Sà, Florax, & Rietveld, 2004) that identified push-pull factors that influenced international student's choices of universities were used to create the questions for the survey and follow-up

interviews. Table 2.3 lists the various initiatives set forth by the University of Saskatchewan and also notes how many documents mentioned the initiative. The list is organized in descending order according to how many documents mention the initiative.

Table 2.3

Recruitment Initiatives

Initiative	Number of documents
Diversify Faculty by Recruiting Abroad	4
Strengthen International Research Activities	4
Establish More Partnerships with Universities Abroad	4
Promote Academic and Non-academic Success of International Students	3
Add International Focus to Academic Courses	3
Create More Exchange Agreements with Universities	3
Host More International Conferences	3
Increase Financial Awards for International Students	2

International student recruitment initiatives. The first effort to emphasise initiatives for the recruitment of international students to the University of Saskatchewan was in 2003 with the creation of the *Globalism and the University of Saskatchewan* document. In 2018, the University of Saskatchewan continued to provide initiatives that emphasised the recruitment of international students in the documents *International Blueprint for Action 2025* and *University Plan 2025*. Even though there was a 15-year difference between the first and last documents, there were numerous initiatives that were present in all four documents. The following subsections will be organized in descending order, with initiatives that were present in all four documents presented first and ending with initiatives that were only present in two documents.

Initiatives in all four documents. There were three initiatives that were present in all four of the *Foundational Documents*: diversifying the faculty with an emphasis on recruiting from abroad, strengthening international research activities, and establishing more partnerships with universities overseas. Each of the initiatives were ongoing and do not have targeted completion dates, so being present on all four documents over 15 years cannot be seen as a failure to fulfill the initiatives. Being present on all four *Foundational Documents* also shows the priority the University places on each of the initiatives.

The University of Saskatchewan's initiative of diversifying the faculty with professors from abroad was described through several statements and objectives on the different documents. In *Globalism and the University of Saskatchewan* (2003) it was stated that the University needed to "increase the number and diversity of faculty with international expertise to complement areas of strength and respond to emerging opportunities for growth" (p. 6). The initiative was expanded in 2009 in the *Implementation Plan for the Foundational Document for International Activities* where a directive was put forth to "those with administrative responsibilities...in the hiring of new faculty should ensure that an appropriate discussion occurs prior to the authorization to fill a position about the wisdom/necessity of recruiting and hiring someone with international experience or background" (p. 38). This showed that the University sought to expand the number of faculty with international experience and backgrounds and wanted those in charge of filling positions to actively consider adding international diversity to each position as it became available. The *International Blueprint for Action 2025* (2018) emphasised the initiative of international diversity of faculty by stating that the University wanted to "attract leading international researchers to our university" (p. 7) while the *University Plan 2025* (2018) stressed "growth in the recruitment of global faculty and students to all disciplines" (p. 12). There were

no baseline or target numbers provided in any of the documents so it was difficult to measure the long-term success of the initiative.

The second initiative that was present on all four *Foundational Documents* was the establishment of partnerships with institutions around the world. In 2003, The University of Saskatchewan had some partnerships with institutions around the globe but wanted to “enhance the partnerships...abroad to support the University’s internationali[s]ation vision and goals” (*Globalism and the University of Saskatchewan*, p. 7). Some progress was made and the University had established more partnerships by 2009, when it was recommended that the University “establish an International Research Partnership Fund....Funding should be provided on a matching basis for up to five years (renewable) to international partnership plans” (*Implementation Plan for the Foundational Document for International Activities*, p. 51). The funding was to be used on international research projects that were worked on by partner institutions of the University of Saskatchewan where both institutions contributed significantly to the reciprocity of the research. The *International Blueprint for Action 2025* (2018) and *University Plan 2025* (2018) both make the forming of new research partnerships with leading global institutions a significant goal going forward. The forming of new research partnerships goes in conjunction with strengthening the international research activities, the final initiative that was present on all four *Foundational Documents* of the University of Saskatchewan.

The third initiative aimed to strengthen international research activities and was explained in a variety of ways. As de Wit (2011) previously described, one of the rationales behind the increase in popularity of internationalism was academic in nature. In 2003, to increase faculty interest in international research, the University of Saskatchewan aimed to “create an environment in which faculty members involved in international research activities are

given appropriate support and recognition” (*Globalism and the University of Saskatchewan*, p. 14) and wanted to increase faculty awareness of international opportunities. In 2009, the University set a target of “increasing [the] amount of international research activity five-fold” (*Implementation Plan for the Foundational Document for International Activities*, p. 35) and proposed paying for the increase in research activity by applying for more grants from federal granting councils to exceed the national average. The *University Plan 2025* (2018) did not provide clear details regarding international research but did call for an increase in “scholarly influence, visibility, and impact” (p. 10), which can be done through international research activities. *The International Blueprint for Action 2025* (2018) described many ways to meet the initiative like establishing an International Research Fund, providing further support services for faculty that engage in international research projects, and increasing the number of Global Research Leadership Awards that are available to faculty. With the recent documents providing many increases in the incentives to promote international research, it was clear that the University was making it a high priority moving forward.

All three initiatives were significant to the University of Saskatchewan as evidenced by their inclusion on four *Foundational Documents* that emphasised international student recruitment. The three initiatives were tested for influence in this study’s survey to see their level of influence on international students’ decision to study at the University. It is worth noting the only initiative in this subsection found in previous studies to influence international students was the faculty at a university (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003; Mavondo et al., 2004; Mazzarol, 1998). However, the previous studies spoke more to the quality of the staff and not the international diversity present. In response, the University aimed to satisfy both diversity and

quality in its goal of enticing the best faculty and staff from across the globe (*University Plan 2025*; 2018).

Initiatives in three documents. The University of Saskatchewan had four initiatives that were present on three of the four *Foundational Documents* analysed. All four initiatives were present over the 15-year gap between the first document in 2003 (*Globalism and the University of Saskatchewan*) and the most recent document in 2018 (*International Blueprint for Action 2025*). The longevity of the initiatives showed their significance to the University of Saskatchewan and were also tested for influence on international students in the survey for the study.

The first initiative that was present in all three *Foundational Documents* was the promotion of academic and non-academic success of international students. In 2003, the University recognized that international students faced different obstacles than domestic students and there needed to be more support and services available for them to be successful (*Globalism and the University of Saskatchewan*). To provide more services and support to international students, the University created the International Student Office and by 2009, the Office was the source for many workshops on immigration issues and provided information on filing international taxes and obtaining Saskatchewan Health Coverage (*Implementation Plan for the Foundational Document for International Activities*). In 2018, the University continued prioritizing the success of international students and aimed to “ensure adequate resources for academic and non-academic international student advising, and for supports to meet student needs and regulatory requirements” (*International Blueprint for Action 2025*, p. 5). The University’s commitment to the success of international students through supports and services is

important and was shown in several studies (Leary et al., 2016; Mavondo et al., 2004; McBride, 1998) to be a significant factor in the recruitment and retention of international students.

The second initiative that was present on three of the *Foundational Documents* was to enhance academic courses to include an international focus. The University felt that instructional programs could provide an introduction to the global environment and “help prepare our students for active participation in the global economy and society” (*Globalism and the University of Saskatchewan*, 2003, p. 5). To make the infusion of international content more apparent, the University recommended in 2009 to add a section on new programs and course forms that would require a comment on the international content that was offered in the program or course (*Implementation Plan for the Foundational Document for International Activities*). The *International blueprint for action 2025* (2018) wanted to design additional courses with the explicit goal of attracting international students from different populations. Ideas for possible courses included “academic/English language bridging programs aligned with student demand; targeted distance education programming; and short-term summer and special interest programming” (p. 4). Mazzarol’s (1998) and Binsardi and Ekwulugo’s (2003) studies found courses offered at universities to be a significant influencing factor on institution choice of international students and further supports the University of Saskatchewan’s support of the initiative.

Another initiative that the University of Saskatchewan emphasised was to create more exchange agreements with universities that would support the exchange of students and faculty. In 2003, the University wanted to expand the number of exchange agreements around the globe and increase student and faculty participation in the exchanges as a way to expand different forms of collaboration like teaching, learning, and research (*Globalism and the University of*

Saskatchewan). The University reported significant progress towards the initiative by 2009, with exchange programs with 58 universities in 18 countries, almost double the amount from six years before (*Implementation Plan for the Foundational Document for International Activities*). The University also joined the National Student Exchange, giving students at the University of Saskatchewan the opportunity to study at 150 additional institutions in the United States (*Implementation Plan for the Foundational Document for International Activities*, 2009). In 2018, the University continued to pledge its support for exchange and international professional development opportunities (*International Blueprint for Action 2025*). Previous studies by Lam et al. (2011), Mazzarol and Soutar (2002), and Sá et al. (2004) did not show exchange agreements to be a significant influencing factor to international students but the University's continued support of the initiative warranted investigation by this study.

The last initiative that was supported on three of the University of Saskatchewan's *Foundational Documents* was to host more international conferences at the University. The initiative was first proposed in 2003 and proposed hosting conferences with international subjects and/or with extensive international participation (*Globalism and the University of Saskatchewan*). In 2009, it was stated that holding more international conferences on the University's campus would "improve our reputation and...promote more contacts with international scholars and students" (*Implementation Plan for the Foundational Document for International Activities*, p. 17). In 2018, the University wanted to establish a recurring conference entitled "Supporting the Well-Being of Communities Around the World" (*International Blueprint for Action 2025*, p. 8). Previous studies by Mazzarol and Soutar (2002), Lam et al. (2011), and Sá et al. (2004) did not show the hosting of international conferences or conferences with the goal to target international scholars to be a significant influencing factor to

international students, however, the University's continued support of the initiative warranted investigation by this study.

The four initiatives that targeted the recruitment of international students in this subsection were important, as evidenced by the University's continued support through three *Foundational Documents* that spanned 15 years. The first two initiatives, academic and non-academic supports for international student success and courses with international elements, were shown in previous research (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003; Leary et al., 2016; Mavondo et al., 2004; McBride, 1998, Mazzarol, 1998) to be significant influencing factors on international student's choice for higher education institutions. Even though there was a lack of support from the aforementioned studies regarding the final two initiatives in this subsection, the University's continued support of the expansion of student and faculty exchanges and a desire to host international conferences merited further investigation by the survey in this study.

Initiatives in two documents. There was one initiative of the University of Saskatchewan that was supported on two *Foundational Documents* that called for an increase in financial rewards for international students. This initiative was more recent than previously mentioned initiatives, as it was first emphasised in 2009 in the *Implementation Plan for the Foundational Document for International Activities* document. The University proposed that colleges review the scholarships they offered and expand their target groups to include international students. Also emphasised to the colleges was that scholarships already available to international students should be used as a tool "to recruit qualified [international] students" (*Implementation Plan for the Foundational Document for International Activities*, 2009, p. 26). The initiative was further supported in 2018 when the University wanted to "offer new targeted international student awards and work-study program funding in support of international enrolment goals"

(*International Blueprint for Action 2025*, p. 5). Previous research by Findlay et al. (2006), Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003), and Madgett and Bélanger (2008) showed that international students were significantly influenced by price variables and lowering costs had a positive impact on their recruitment.

Analytical Framework

Figure 1 shows the analytical framework developed based on the findings of the literature review and the purpose of this study. To gain perspective on the University of Saskatchewan's initiatives regarding international student recruitment, a document analysis was conducted with attention to themes, wording, and phrasing. The data collected from the documents was analysed in relation to migration theory proposed by Lee (1966) and the push-pull factors identified by Lam et al. (2011); Lee and Tan (1984); Mazzarol et al. (1997); and Mazzarol and Soutar (2002). To find the push and pull factors that influenced current international students at the University of Saskatchewan and to get their perspective as to what could be improved in the future at the university, a link to an online survey was sent to international students using convenience sampling. The survey consisted of twenty-six 5-point Likert-scale questions and an open-ended question and the results were analysed in relation to migration theory and the push-pull factors mentioned previously. Follow-up interviews were conducted, individually, with three participants, using random sampling, that completed the online survey to gather qualitative data to help explain, in more detail, their survey responses.

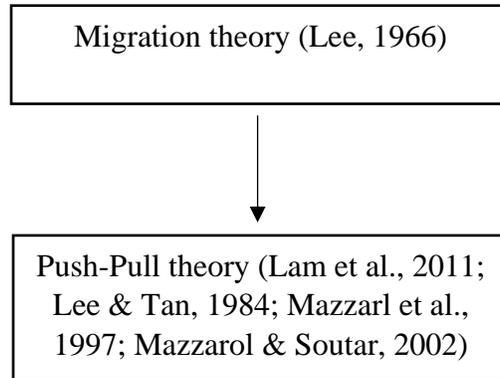


Figure 1. Analytical framework

Summary

The global growth in international education has been strong and many institutions of higher education enjoy the cultural and economic contributions that international students bring (Ross & Grace, 2010). The diversity that international students bring helps universities to acclimatize its students to the political, religious, racial, socio-economic, and cultural differences present in a global society (Leary et al., 2016). International students have allowed institutions to maintain and develop academic programs as government and public funding for higher education institutions has begun declining (Ross & Grace, 2010). Globalisation (Wagner, 2004) and internationalisation (Knight, 2004) have been influencing drivers of international student recruitment at the institution-level and higher education institutions have responded accordingly. As the number of international students continues to rise (Stein & Andreotti, 2016), competition among higher education institutions will increase as well (Austin & Jones, 2016). There are numerous push-pull factors (Lam et al., 2011; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002) influencing international students' decisions to attend higher education abroad and universities have responded with strategic marketing campaigns (Trim, 2003), relationship marketing (Helgesen, 2006; Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006), and an increased Internet focus (Klassen, 2002) as

ways to entice prospective international students. Universities in Canada have been targeting international students as a priority, as 96 percent of Canadian universities include internationalisation as part of their strategic planning, with 89 percent accelerating the pace of internationalisation from 2010 to 2013 (Universities Canada, 2014).

Chapter Three: Methodology

Chapter three introduced: research design, researcher's position, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, participants, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations. A summary was also provided at the conclusion of the chapter.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to analyse the recruitment initiatives of international students at the University of Saskatchewan and compared the results to what international students presently enrolled at the University of Saskatchewan say about factors that influenced their decision to study at the University of Saskatchewan. The percentage of international students that make up the student body at the University of Saskatchewan is one of the lowest in the public university system in the western Canadian provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia (U15, 2017). With increased financial restrictions placed on the University of Saskatchewan with the budget cutbacks instituted by the provincial government (Saskatchewan Advanced Education, 2017), there is an immediate need to increase the number of international students present at the University of Saskatchewan. For that purpose, a study was conducted that analyses the recruitment policies that drive the recruitment of international students. The results of this analysis were used in conjunction with a survey conducted of present international students at the University of Saskatchewan that ascertained the factors that contributed to their decision to study at the university. The goal of the study was to determine what factors influenced the current international students at the University of Saskatchewan and compare the results with the university's initiatives and structures supporting the recruitment of international students so the university may become more efficient in recruiting international students.

Research Questions

- What factors influenced current international students at the University of Saskatchewan to choose it over other universities in Canada?
- What are the recruitment initiatives at the University of Saskatchewan that support the recruitment of international students?
- How can the University of Saskatchewan increase its appeal to international students?

Researcher's Position

The researcher is an international student from the United States. As an international student involved in educational administration, the researcher has a personal interest in international student recruitment at the university-level. The researcher, through research conducted for coursework, noticed the University of Saskatchewan lagged behind comparable universities in Western Canada regarding international student enrolment and wished to better understand what brought other international students to the University of Saskatchewan and what some of the university's recruitment initiatives were.

Research Design

Mixed methods research is a research design that allows the researcher to combine elements of both qualitative and quantitative research methods into a single study while minimizing the limitations of both approaches (Creswell, 2014). Mixed methods provides a “sophisticated, complex approach to research...[and] is a useful strategy to have a more complete understanding of research questions” (Creswell, 2014, p. 218). There are numerous types of mixed methods research but an explanatory sequential mixed methods design is most appropriate for the proposed study. The explanatory sequential mixed methods approach is a

two-phase project “in which the researcher collects quantitative data in the first phase, analyzes the results, and then uses the results to plan (or build on to) the second, qualitative phase” (Creswell, 2014, p. 224). Creswell (2014) explained that a typical first phase would be to collect results from a survey, analyse the data, and then conduct follow up qualitative interviews to help explain the survey responses for the second phase. An explanatory sequential mixed methods approach was chosen because it allowed the researcher to gather quantitative data from the participants using an online survey and then gained a more in-depth insight into the survey responses by conducting follow-up interviews with three participants that completed the survey.

To gain an understanding of the focus of the recruitment initiatives regarding international students, this study conducted a document analysis of four *Foundational Documents* that were available to the public from the university’s web page. The initiatives were used in the design of the survey that was distributed to current international students at the University of Saskatchewan. To determine the factors that influenced international students already in attendance at the University of Saskatchewan, the study conducted an online survey of international students at the university through the International Student and Study Abroad Center (ISSAC) and the PAWS feed at the University of Saskatchewan. There could have been factors that influenced international students that were not present on the survey so three follow-up interviews were conducted to gain more insight. The interviews were conducted with three participants that answered the survey and volunteered to be interviewed at the conclusion of the survey. The participants for the interviews were selected randomly from the group of participants that volunteered. Conducting a survey is a quantitative research method and document analysis and follow-up interviews with participants from the survey are both qualitative methods, thus, the combination of methods calls for a mixed method approach.

Explanatory sequential mixed methods design was chosen over other mixed methods designs because the follow-up interviews build off information collected in the survey prior to the interview process. In this study, research was conducted in the following phases:

Phase One: identify international recruitment initiatives at the University of Saskatchewan through document analysis; incorporate findings into survey;

Phase Two: quantitative data collection from online survey;

Phase Three: quantitative data analysis;

Phase Four: qualitative data collection from follow-up interviews;

Phase Five: qualitative data analysis;

Phase Six: Triangulation of findings from document analysis, online survey, and follow-up interviews;

Phase Seven: implications based on the qualitative and quantitative data analysis.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

The mixed methods approach to this study required three separate ways of collecting data: one for the qualitative data from the document analysis, one for quantitative data from the survey, and another for the qualitative data from the follow-up interviews. To form questions that were included on the survey, publicly-available documents from the University of Saskatchewan, like the *Globalism and the University of Saskatchewan: The Foundational Document for International Activities at the University of Saskatchewan* (2003), *Implementation Plan for the Foundational Document for International Activities* (2009), *International Blueprint for Action 2025* (2018), and *University Plan 2025* (2018), were analysed and recruitment initiatives that were supported by multiple documents were presented. Document analysis was undertaken using analytic induction, a “strategy that involves scanning the data for categories of

phenomena and for relationships” (Teddlie & Tashakorri, 2009, p. 251) and the categories were compared to the push-pull factors (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003; Leary et al., 2016; Lee & Tan, 1984; Mavondo et al., 2004; Mazzarol, 1998; Mazzarol et al., 1997; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; McBride, 1998) identified in the literature review as structures and initiatives universities use to recruit international students. Several of the categories found throughout the *Foundational documents* were incorporated into the survey questions. The remaining categories that were not present on the survey were used as questions during the follow-up interviews.

Quantitative data were collected from an online survey distributed to international students presently enrolled at the University of Saskatchewan. The survey was created by adapting two existing surveys: *Canada First, the 2009 Survey of International Students* (Canadian Bureau of International Education) and the *BC Student Survey: Final Report* (British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer, 2015). The survey was further personalised to the University of Saskatchewan with the addition of questions related to the international student recruitment initiatives found in the *Foundational Documents* mentioned previously. With the adaptation of the previous surveys, a multiple-choice format was used in the online survey along with an open-ended question that asked the participant, “In your own words, what can be done at the University of Saskatchewan to increase its appeal to international students in the future?” The response format for the multiple-choice questions uses a Five-point Likert type scale. The Likert type scale format was used because it “measure[s] respondents’ level of agreement or disagreement to multiple items related to a topic of interest” (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 234). In this study, wording and meaning of the Five-point Likert type scale were adapted to fit the purpose of the study and research questions. For example, a survey item was as follows: I chose this university because the tuition fees required by the university are affordable. (1)

Strongly agree, (2) Agree, (3) Neither agree or disagree, (4) Disagree, (5) Strongly disagree, and (NA) Not applicable. Every “not applicable” response to a survey item would not be scored and would not be considered for further statistical analysis. A copy of the questions on the online survey is available in Appendix A.

Follow-up interviews were conducted with three international students that participated in the online survey who also agreed to volunteer to be interviewed by the researcher. The interview gave the participants an opportunity to further explain what factors brought them to the University of Saskatchewan, including factors that may not have been present on the online survey. The interview also asked about the participant’s familiarity and opinion with several of the recruitment initiatives identified during the document analysis. The participants were labelled Student A, Student B, and Student C.

Description of the survey. The online survey had five sections. The first section gathered demographical information through multiple choice and open-ended questions. There were three questions in the first section; a confirmation of their status as students at the University of Saskatchewan, that they were an international student when they completed the survey, and the level (undergraduate, Master’s, etc.) of their studies when they completed the survey.

There were three questions in the second section of the survey. The three questions were yes/no response questions that ascertained information regarding how the international student found the University of Saskatchewan. Two of the questions asked if the participant physically visited the province of Saskatchewan or the University’s campus before applying for enrolment. The rationale for these two questions was to find out if the participant had visited the province or campus, either for pleasure, for a conference, or as part of a university tour for prospective

students, before applying or if the participant's first-time visiting Saskatchewan or the University was for the commencement of their studies. The third question asked if the University of Saskatchewan was the participant's first choice for post-secondary education in Canada. The rationale for this question was to see if the University was viewed by the participant as the best-choice for them for post-secondary education in Canada or if it was a fall-back option.

The third and fourth sections of the survey asked questions that were related to the push/pull factors and University's international student recruitment initiatives that were identified in the literature review. The multiple-choice questions in these sections used closed responses and the Five-point Likert type scale response format. The student's reasons for selecting the University of Saskatchewan addressed in section three were selected from the academic pull factors outlined in the literature review like: academic quality, academic reputation, global rankings, availability of information, ease of obtaining academic information, specific programs offered, teaching quality of the faculty, academic publications by the faculty, technology, academic organization and facilities, and the participant's involvement with joint programs with another university. The student's reasons for selecting the University of Saskatchewan in section four were selected from non-academic pull factors and University recruitment initiatives outlined in the literature review like: affordable tuition fees, available financial assistance, exchange agreement with a university in the participant's home country, ease of obtaining non-academic information, services offered by ISSAC, student population demographics, recommendations from friends and family, cost of living, being able to work part-time while completing studies, location, safety and security, and future employment goals. The final open-ended question addressed the third research question of how the university can increase its appeal to international students.

The fifth section had three open-response questions. The first question asked participants what could be done at the University of Saskatchewan to increase its appeal to future international students. This was an opportunity for the participants to explain factors that influenced them that were not addressed on the survey. The second question asked the country of Citizenship of the participant. This question was for the establishment of participant demographics and to see if the participant population resembled the international student makeup at the University of Saskatchewan. The last question asked participants if they would consent to a follow-up interview with the researcher and if so, to provide their email address for contact. Their email address was not used in the data analysis or presentation of results.

Participants

Participants in this research were international students that were enrolled at the University of Saskatchewan when the survey was made available. Participants could have attended a campus other than the main campus in Saskatoon, provided they had access to e-mail and internet so they could complete the survey. Participants could hold either a student visa or permanent residency card. The University of Saskatchewan (2017) had about 2,500 international students in the fall semester of 2017 at the undergraduate and graduate levels, comprising about 11.5% of its student body. Participants were recruited in two ways: through the *Global Connections* newsletter published bi-weekly by the International Student and Study Abroad Centre (ISSAC) and the PAWS news feed/bulletin board system that students can view upon logging into their PAWS account. There were 115 participants for the online survey but only 99 completed the Likert-style sections of the survey. The 16 participants whose surveys were not used completed between two-to-five of the first 32 survey items, which was not enough data to

warrant use in the data analysis. The surveys from the 99 participants that answered the first 32 survey items were used in the data analysis of the study.

Before beginning data collection, the Director of ISSAC was emailed requesting its help in contacting international students that were enrolled at the University of Saskatchewan. The director of ISSAC suggested the best way to get into contact with the international students was by publishing a post in their newsletter that was published bi-weekly. In the newsletter, a brief description of the study was mentioned along with the principal investigator's contact information for any international students that wished to participate in the study. Once the principal investigator was contacted, the potential participant was emailed an informed consent form that had detailed information about the study and survey along with a link to SurveyMonkey. The informed consent form included information related to: the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, potential benefits, confidentiality, a right to withdraw, and a link to the survey at the bottom of the form. After the study was mentioned in the newsletter, only three international students emailed the principal investigator and wished to participate in the study. It was unknown if the three international students that contacted the principal investigator participated, as the survey responses were collected anonymously.

The survey was also advertised on the University's PAWS news feed/bulletin board that students view once they log onto PAWS. A description of the study and the survey was given along with informed consent information. At the end of the advertisement, there was a link to the survey so the students could easily participate in the survey. To limit the occurrence of including non-valid results, the second question of the survey required an answer and asked if the participant was an international student. If participants answered 'no' they would be taken to the end of the survey and their data was discarded (there was no way to ensure the participants were

actual international students as the responses were collected anonymously, IP addresses were not saved, and the participants self-identified that he/she was an international student). The survey offered respondents a \$10 Tim Horton's gift card if they enter their email address at the conclusion of the survey; multiple submissions with the same email address were discarded as invalid. To limit the occurrence of including non-valid results, the link to the survey was only available to students with access to the University of Saskatchewan's PAWS system.

Follow-up interviews were conducted with three participants that completed the online survey. At the conclusion of the online survey, participants were asked if they would like to participate in a follow-up interview with the principal investigator. If the participant agreed to volunteer, he/she entered their email address into the written response for the question. From the 99 participants that were included in the data analysis, 54 provided their email address to volunteer to participate in the follow-up interview. A list of emails that were provided by the participants was created and the researcher chose three at random from the list. The three volunteers were contacted by the researcher and two agreed to participate but one of the emails yielded no response. An additional volunteer was chosen and he/she agreed to participate. This provided an opportunity to go beyond the Likert-scale responses that were given by the participants and for them to provide additional data that was not gathered by the survey. The interviews were semi-structured and the questions asked the participants to provide further explanation behind some of the factors they found to be most influential and some of the recruitment initiatives of the University of Saskatchewan that were found during the document analysis.

Data Analysis

In this explanatory sequential mixed methods design, the quantitative data were analysed first and the data was used to plan the qualitative follow-up interview (Creswell, 2014). SPSS was used to analyse quantitative data to generate mean and standard deviation for the survey results. Microsoft EXCEL was used to analyse frequency for each question and the open-response questions, survey items 33 and 34. Also, the survey data from SurveyMonkey was able to be exported as a spreadsheet of individual responses for each question that could be used on Microsoft EXCEL and SPSS. Individual responses from participants were available in two formats: as the participant's actual answer, i.e. 'strongly agree', or the participant's response as a numerical value based on their response to the Likert-style survey items, i.e. 'strongly agree' would have a numerical value of one. Participants' individual responses that had their actual answers were exported into Microsoft EXCEL while their numerical value responses were exported into SPSS for analysis. NVivo was used in the qualitative data analysis for the document analysis, open-response questions on the online survey, and for the follow-up interviews.

Creswell (2014) stated that researchers needed to separate, code, categorize, segment, and label qualitative data so that general themes could be formed. For the qualitative data, categorical strategies were employed by the researcher to generate emergent themes from the documents gathered, so that the qualitative data could be rearranged to produce categories that facilitate comparisons (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Categories were created in NVivo by analysing the *Foundational Documents* from the University of Saskatchewan to develop themes related to initiatives for the recruitment of international students and also from previous research studies like Lam et al. (2011), Lee and Tan (1984), Mazzarol et al. (1997), and Mazzarol and

Soutar (2002). According to Creswell (2014), the researcher needed to identify some linkage between quantitative and qualitative findings in mixed methods research. Several of the themes generated from the document analysis were used in the development of the survey. The participants' narrative responses to survey item 33, "In your own words, what can be done at the University of Saskatchewan to increase its appeal to international students in the future?" on the online survey were used to answer the research question, "How can the University of Saskatchewan increase its appeal to international students?" A list was created that recorded each participant's response and kept a frequency of same or similar responses. The qualitative data collected from the follow-up interviews with participants from the survey was analysed in comparison to the quantitative results, categorical themes, and used as rationale for future initiatives for the University.

Trustworthiness

Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) and Creswell (2014) noted that there were no unified criteria for data trustworthiness in mixed methods studies. However, Creswell (2014) explained that establishing validity and reliability for both quantitative and qualitative data would be sufficient for researchers, participants, and readers. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained that establishing credibility in qualitative research is also necessary.

Credibility and Validity. Creswell (2014) states that "validity using the convergent approach [of mixed methods research] should be based on establishing both quantitative validity...and qualitative validity...for each database" (p. 223). Qualitative validity, also known as credibility (Anney, 2014), was established using triangulation. Triangulation for this study used different data sources of information, like previous studies outlined in the literature review, *Foundational Documents* of the University, online survey responses from international students,

and interviews conducted with international students, to examine evidence to develop coherent justification for themes (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). As this study was a mixed methods design that utilised quantitative and qualitative data, triangulation also occurred from using different methods (Anney, 2014). If themes were created based on converging several sources of data, then this process can be claimed as adding validity (Creswell, 2014) and credibility (Anney, 2014) to the study. Creswell and Clark (2007) also stated that the experiences of both the researcher and participants could make data credible in a study. As an international student who came to Canada to study, my experience helped maintain the credibility of this study as it focused on international students studying at the University of Saskatchewan.

Another strategy for ensuring credibility was member checks. Member checks meant that the data that was collected from the follow-up interviews was sent back to the participants for them to evaluate and suggest changes (Anney, 2014). This also provided an opportunity for the interview participants to provide additional comments or to change anything he or she felt was misreported (Creswell, 2014). A copy of the informed consent form was also returned to the interview participants, as required by the Research Ethics Office at the University of Saskatchewan.

Content validity was established for quantitative data through the purpose statement and targeting international students for the survey. In selectively targeting international students and utilizing survey items from previous published studies targeting international students, the items measured the content they were intended to measure (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2014) noted that researchers needed to design their surveys based on a review of literature, including existing surveys, to make their own more credible. The survey used in this study was adapted from two published surveys: *Canada First, The 2009 Survey of International Students* (Canadian

Bureau of International Education) and the *BC Student Survey: Final Report* (British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer, 2015).

Reliability. Yin (2009) explained that qualitative researchers need to document the procedures in their study and to document as many steps of the procedures as possible. Creswell (2014) noted that constantly comparing the data to the categories and variables can ensure there will not be a drift in what is being compared within the data. By explaining the process and rationale for identifying the categories from the document analysis, others wishing to replicate the qualitative portion of the study will be able to follow the same procedures.

Reliability of survey items was tested by an analysis of internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha coefficient value. For the academically related reasons international students chose the University of Saskatchewan in section three of the survey, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .852 (N = 10). For the non-academic reasons international students chose the University of Saskatchewan in section four of the survey, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .842 (N = 16). Both sections were considered reliable as they were above the minimum accepted level of .700 for internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978). Fowler (2009) also recommended making the questions as reliable as possible by being as specific as possible with wording, utilizing standardized presentation, and avoiding vagueness in response form.

Dependability. Dependability refers to the extent that the data collected was accurate, stable, and reliable (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Data triangulation, appropriate collection methods, and access to original data are all strategies that help ensure data reliability (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). In this study, the online surveys were completed by participants at their leisure and independently after reading the informed consent and following the link to the survey. After conducting the survey, the data was stored according to Research Ethics Office at the University

of Saskatchewan guidelines. Access to original data will be maintained for up to five years, after which it will be destroyed according to University policy.

Confirmability. Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results of a study could be confirmed or corroborated by different researchers (Anney, 2014). Tobin and Begley (2004) stated that confirmability is “concerned with establishing that data and interpretations of the findings are not figments of the inquirer’s imagination, but are clearly derived from the data” (392). One way to ensure confirmability is through triangulation (Anney, 2014), and triangulation was described previously in the subsection on credibility and validity. Guba and Lincoln (1982) also explained that researchers must check to see if their findings were derived from original data through appropriate analysis and if the interpretation of the data was reasonable. By providing a thick description and storing the original data, an audit trail and replication study could be completed to confirm the results of the study (Anney, 2014).

Transferability. Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts with other respondents (Anney, 2014). There were two methods for ensuring transferability: purposeful sampling and a thick description (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Purposeful sampling is the technique of selecting participants based on specific purposes associated with answering a research study’s question (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). This study’s research question targeted international students so the participants for the online survey and follow-up interviews were required to be international students. Thick description involves the researcher explaining the research processes like data collection, analysis, context of the study, and findings (Anney, 2014). Thick description helps other researchers to replicate the study with similar conditions in other settings (Anney, 2014). A thick description of this study

was given through the purpose statement of the study, research questions, participant selection, quantitative and qualitative data collection, data analysis, and interpretation.

Ethical Considerations and Confidentiality

International students may be seen as a vulnerable population so several steps were taken to ensure they will be protected from harm. Approval of the administration of the survey and follow-up interviews given to students at the university was obtained from the Research Ethics Office at the University of Saskatchewan prior to the administering of the survey and subsequent interviews. Student participation in the survey was voluntary and informed consent forms were attached to the advertisement of the survey. The first question on the survey, issued through SurveyMonkey, required an answer and stated: “I certify that I am voluntarily participating in this research answering questions about the factors that influenced my choice to attend the University of Saskatchewan and consent to the use of my responses about it.” Any participants that did not agree to the statement were thanked for their interest and taken to the end page of the survey and not allowed to answer any further questions. The online survey responses were anonymous.

Participants that were randomly selected by the researcher to participate in a follow-up interview were emailed by the researcher and an informed consent form was attached and was to be read and signed before the start of the interview. No names were used during the interview and the participants were labelled as Student A, Student B, and Student C. The results of the survey and follow-up interviews were kept anonymous and secure as per the guidelines of the Research Ethics Office at the University of Saskatchewan. When analyzing and reporting the quantitative and qualitative data, each participant’s personal identity was well-protected. The e-mail address of the researcher was given in case any students have questions or concerns before

taking the survey or participating in the follow-up interview. Both quantitative and qualitative data was preserved using the researcher's secure Cabinet on PAWS, as is the Research Ethics Office at the University of Saskatchewan's guidelines, to ensure that confidentiality was maintained throughout and after the study.

Summary

Chapter three explained the mixed methods approach of the research study, and outlined the researcher's philosophical grounding and position within the study. An explanation was given regarding the collection of data and how the data was analysed. A description of the survey was given, as were the parameters for the selection of participants. The chapter concluded with a detailed explanation of how the various categories of trustworthiness were maintained throughout the duration of the study. Ethical considerations and a statement on confidentiality were also given.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis and Findings

Chapter four presents and analyses the data gathered from the survey of international students and three follow-up interviews with international students that participated in the survey. The survey answered the research questions: What factors influenced current international students at the University of Saskatchewan to choose it over other universities in Canada; and how can the University of Saskatchewan increase its appeal to international students? The questions on the survey were shaped by previous studies by Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003), Lam, Ariffin, and Ahmad (2011), and Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) that used the push-pull model, and also adapted two existing surveys: *Canada First, the 2009 Survey of International Students* (Canadian Bureau of International Education) and the *BC Student Survey: Final Report* (British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer, 2015). The survey was further personalised to the University of Saskatchewan with the addition of questions related to the international student recruitment initiatives found in the *Foundational Documents* mentioned previously. The follow-up interview conducted individually with three international students gave in-depth and personalised responses that also provided qualitative information related to the research questions. The quantitative findings from the survey are presented in the first section and the qualitative findings from the interviews were presented in the second section.

The quantitative data from the survey were analysed using the mean and standard deviation to show the central tendency and variability of the survey items. Frequencies were utilised to demonstrate distributions of the survey responses. For qualitative data from the interviews, the participants' answers were analysed in terms of support or a lack of support for both the survey items and the recruitment initiatives of the University of Saskatchewan. The major findings from the survey and the interviews were summarised at the end of this chapter.

Quantitative Data Analysis

International students at the University of Saskatchewan were invited to participate in the survey through their PAWS feed and 115, self-identified, international students participated. Sixteen participants did not complete all of the closed-ended questions and were discarded while 99 completed all of the closed-ended questions and their surveys were used in the data analysis. It was interesting that 50 participants answered that the University of Saskatchewan was not his or her's first choice of post-secondary institution in Canada. This showed a mix of desirability to attend the University of Saskatchewan by current international students in attendance. The participants' demographic information will be presented before analysing the results of the survey questions. A copy of the online survey that was distributed is in Appendix A.

Demographic information. Undergraduates were the majority of respondents with 46 participants. There were 44 graduate students that were almost evenly split between Master's and PhD students: 23 Master's participants and 21 PhD participants. Eight participants answered 'other' and provided more information: five were visiting research students, one student working on a postgraduate diploma, and one participant was a recent graduate of animal bioscience. One participant did not provide details on what his or her level of study was. The participants came from 29 countries and six continents. Four countries, Mexico, Peru, Russia, and Zimbabwe had two participants, while 15 countries had only one participant. The top nine countries with participants were shown in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1

Participant's Country of Origin

<i>Country</i>	<i>Number of Participants</i>
India	23
Brazil	8
Nigeria	7
China	6
Vietnam	6
Ecuador	5
Bangladesh	4
Iran	4
United States	4

Note. Five participants did not answer.

At the University of Saskatchewan (2019a) international students from China make up 40 percent of international students at the undergraduate level and 17 percent of the international students at the graduate level, first among all countries in both categories for the 2018/2019 academic year. Nigeria (10 percent), India (8 percent), Bangladesh (6 percent), and Vietnam (4 percent) were the other four in the top five countries represented at the undergraduate level at the University of Saskatchewan (2019) for the 2018/2019 academic year. Iran (12 percent), India (11 percent), Bangladesh (7 percent), and Nigeria (7 percent) were the other four in the top five countries represented at the graduate level at the University of Saskatchewan (2019a) for the 2018/2019 academic year.

Every one of the top five countries that contributed students to the University of Saskatchewan at the undergraduate and graduate level were represented in the results of the survey. From Table 4, it was evident that India was overrepresented in the population sample, so

the results were biased towards the influencing factors of international students from India. China had the most international students at the undergraduate and graduate level but only had six participants included in the survey results. Brazil had the second-highest number of participants for the survey, which was a surprise considering it was not represented among the top five countries contributing international students on either of the lists at the University of Saskatchewan (2019a). The factors that influenced international students to attend the University of Saskatchewan were divided into an academic section and a non-academic section on the survey and are presented in the next section.

Academic factors. There were 10 items in the survey that were academically related factors that influenced international students to attend the University of Saskatchewan. The academically related factors were items 7-16 on the survey and the response rate of this survey section was 100 percent as all 99 participants completed every item in the section (N=99). Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means, and standard deviations were presented and examined. Table 3.2 displayed the quantitative data of items 7-16 in detail below.

Table 3.2

Survey Items 7-16

<i>Survey item</i>	<i>SA (1)</i>	<i>A (2)</i>	<i>N (3)</i>	<i>D (4)</i>	<i>SD (5)</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>STD</i>
7. Academic quality	25	43	22	6	3	2.18	.983
8. Academic reputation/prestige	15	45	27	8	4	2.40	.979
9. University ranking in publications in print or online	13	34	33	14	5	2.64	1.04
10. Effective at providing information related to: my program, academic, and application to the University	35	37	15	9	3	2.07	1.07
11. Particular program offered	42	29	15	11	2	2.01	1.10
12. Teaching quality of faculty	17	34	34	11	3	2.48	1.00
13. Publications by faculty	15	19	41	20	4	2.79	1.06
14. Technology available on campus	16	18	34	25	6	2.87	1.15
15. Academic organization and facilities	14	48	20	14	3	2.43	1.00
16. Fulfill part of a joint program with another university	4	8	11	37	39	4.00	1.10

Note. SA=Strongly agree; A=Agree; N=Neither agree or disagree; D=Disagree; SD=Strongly disagree; M=Mean; STD=Standard deviation.

There were six items that stood out from all of the other academically related factors for choosing the University of Saskatchewan and had a mean of less than 2.5. Three of the six survey items had means that were below 2.20, which meant the number of participants that ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ with the statements greatly outnumbered the participants that chose to ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’. The most influential factor, according to the lowest mean, in this section of the survey was item 11: “I chose the University of Saskatchewan because of a particular program offered at the university” (M = 2.01, STD = 1.10, N = 99) as 71 participants

strongly agreed or agreed with the statement while only 13 participants strongly disagreed or disagreed. The second factor that was very influential among international students was item 10 ($M = 2.07$, $STD = 1.07$, $N = 99$) that stated: “I chose the University of Saskatchewan because they were effective at providing information related to my program, academics, and application to the University” as 72 participants strongly agreed or agreed with the statement while 12 strongly disagreed or disagreed. While not as influential, in terms of its mean, as survey items 10 and 11, survey item 7 ($M = 2.18$, $STD = .983$, $N = 99$), which stated: “I chose the University of Saskatchewan for its academic quality” was significantly more influential than all the other factors surveyed in this section. Survey items 7, 10, and 11 were the most influential academic factors as they had the lowest means and a large majority of participants that ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ with the respective statements.

There were three survey items that did not have means as low as survey items 7, 10, and 11 but still had means below 2.5, which displayed significant influence on the participants. Survey item 8 ($M = 2.4$, $STD = .979$, $N = 99$) stated: “I chose the University of Saskatchewan because of its academic reputation/prestige” and had 60 participants that ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ with the statement while having 19 participants ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’. Another academic factor that had a low mean was survey item 15 ($M = 2.43$, $STD = 1.00$, $N = 99$) that stated “I chose the University of Saskatchewan because of the academic organization and facilities” and had 62 participants ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ with the statement. The last survey item with a mean below 2.5 in the academic factors section of the survey was item 12 ($M = 2.48$, $STD = 1.00$, $N = 99$) that stated: “I chose the University of Saskatchewan because of the teaching quality of the faculty at the university” and had 51 participants “strongly agree” or “agree” with the statement while only 14 participants chose to “strongly disagree” or “disagree”.

The survey items 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, and 15 were the most influential academic factors on international students that participated in the online survey as they all had means of less than 2.5.

There were three survey items that had means less than three but a lot of participants that chose to 'neither agree or disagree' with the statements. Survey item 9 ($M = 2.64$, $STD = 1.04$, $N = 99$) had 33 participants that 'neither agreed or disagreed' with the statement "I chose the University of Saskatchewan because of its ranking in publications, either in print or online, like the Times Higher Education Rankings" that contributed to having a higher mean, even though 47 participants 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statement. Survey item 13 ($M = 2.79$, $STD = 1.06$, $N = 99$) stated: "I chose the University of Saskatchewan because of academic publications by the faculty at the university" but had 41 participants that chose to 'neither agree or disagree' with the statement. Survey item 14 ($M = 2.87$, $STD = 1.15$, $N = 99$) only had 34 participants 'neither agree or disagree' with the statement: "I chose the University of Saskatchewan because of the technology available on campus (i.e. computer labs, wireless internet, iUsask and uSafe phone apps, etc)" but had a large standard deviation. While survey items 9, 13, and 14 had means less than three, there were a large number of participants that chose to 'neither agree or disagree' with the statements compared to the amount that chose to 'strongly agree' or 'agree' and could not be counted as having a large degree of influence on international students.

The academic factors section of the survey showed that there were numerous factors that held considerable influence on international students. Three of the survey items had means below 2.20 and three more had means below 2.5, which showed that a lot of participants chose to 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with the statements. There were only two survey items, 13 and 14, that had the majority of participants choose to 'neither agree or disagree' with the statements but still had means less than 3, which showed that the two items had a small degree of influence.

The only factor that was found to be non-influential was item 16 ($M = 4.00$, $STD = 1.10$, $N = 99$) that stated: “I chose the University of Saskatchewan to fulfill part of a joint program with another university” as only 12 participants strongly agreed or agreed with the statement while 76 participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. This showed that not many participants in the online survey were a part of a joint program at the University of Saskatchewan and was similar to findings from survey items 19 ($M = 3.88$, $STD = 1.28$, $N = 99$) and 27 ($M = 3.98$, $STD = 1.20$, $N = 99$) discussed in the following section.

Non-academic factors. There were 16 items that were on the survey that were non-academic factors that influenced international students to attend the University of Saskatchewan. The non-academic factors were items 17-32 on the survey and the response rate of this survey section was 100 percent as all 99 participants completed every item in the section ($N=99$). Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means, and standard deviations were presented and examined. Table 3.3 displayed the quantitative data of items 17-32 in detail below.

Table 3.3

Survey Items 17-32

<i>Survey item</i>	<i>SA (1)</i>	<i>A (2)</i>	<i>N (3)</i>	<i>D (4)</i>	<i>SD (5)</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>STD</i>
17. Tuition fees are affordable for international students (IS)	23	31	20	14	11	2.59	1.29
18. Amount of financial assistance available for IS	25	25	22	17	10	2.62	1.31
19. Exchange agreement with the university and a university in my home country	8	10	9	31	41	3.88	1.28
20. Effective at providing information: tuition, financial assistance, scholarship awards	18	40	21	14	6	2.49	1.13
21. Services offered by ISSAC	14	14	35	29	7	3.01	1.14

22. Size of student population	8	22	31	29	9	3.09	1.10
23. Scenic campus	10	39	23	17	10	2.78	1.16
24. Factors related to its location: climate, city size, transportation, activities in Saskatoon	12	27	17	26	17	3.09	1.31
25. Safe and secure campus	16	31	28	18	6	2.67	1.13
26. Someone I know is currently studying or had studied previously at U of S	16	21	11	30	21	3.19	1.41
27. The university has a partnership or agreement with a university in my home country	6	9	9	32	43	3.98	1.20
28. Advice from parents or relatives	9	19	17	28	26	3.43	1.31
29. My home country's recognition of a degree from the U of S	10	20	19	30	20	3.30	1.28
30. Diverse student population	11	25	30	15	18	3.04	1.26
31. Able to work part-time while studying	15	30	27	20	7	2.74	1.16
32. Cost of living was affordable for: rent, groceries, leisure activities, etc.	19	45	19	7	9	2.41	1.15

Note. SA=Strongly agree; A=Agree; N=Neither agree or disagree; D=Disagree; SD=Strongly disagree; M=Mean; STD=Standard deviation.

Unlike the academically related factors that had several factors that were found to be influential by a large majority, the non-academic factors only had two items that had a mean lower than 2.5, items 20 and 32. Item 20, "I chose the University of Saskatchewan because they were effective at providing information related to tuition, financial assistance, scholarship

awards, and other non-academic areas” ($M = 2.49$, $STD = 1.13$, $N = 99$) had 58 participants ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ with the statement and only 20 ‘strongly disagree’ or ‘disagree’. This was a similar finding to item 10 discussed in the previous section regarding the effectiveness of providing academic information that had considerable influence. Item 32 ($M = 2.41$, $STD = 1.15$, $N = 99$), “I chose the University of Saskatchewan because the cost of living (rent, groceries, leisure activities, etc.) is affordable during my studies” also had a large amount of participants ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’, 64, compared to those that ‘strongly disagreed or ‘disagreed’, 16, with the statement. It was a surprise to only find two non-academic factors that had a mean less than 2.5 in the survey even though the non-academic section had more questions.

There were three survey items in the non-academic section that had a mean greater than 2.5 but less than 2.7. This showed that the non-academic factors had some influence but not considerable influence. Survey item 17 ($M = 2.59$, $STD = 1.29$, $N = 99$) stated: “I chose the University of Saskatchewan because the tuition fees are affordable for international students” with 54 participants that ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ with the statement. Survey item 18 ($M = 2.62$, $STD = 1.31$, $N = 99$) stated: “I chose the University of Saskatchewan because of the amount of financial assistance available to international students” and had 50 participants ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ with the statement. Survey item 25 ($M = 2.67$, $STD = 1.13$, $N = 99$) stated: “I chose the University of Saskatchewan because of its reputation as being a safe and secure campus” but only had 47 participants ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ with the statement. All three survey items had a high standard deviation and a large number of participants that chose to ‘neither agree or disagree’, which contributed to a higher mean. The three survey items showed a degree of influence on international students but were not as significant, based on their mean,

standard deviation, and number of participants that chose to ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ with the statements, as many of the academic factors from the previous section.

There were five items, 19, 26, 27, 28, 29 that had a majority of participants chose strongly disagree or disagree with the respective statements, which showed a lack of influence on their decision to study at the University of Saskatchewan. Survey items 19 ($M = 3.88$, $STD = 1.20$, $N = 99$) and 27 ($M = 3.98$, $STD = 1.20$, $N = 99$) addressed the influence of exchange agreements and partnership agreements with the University of Saskatchewan and a university in the participant’s home country. Survey items 26 ($M = 3.19$, $STD = 1.41$, $N = 99$) and 28 ($M = 3.43$, $STD = 1.31$, $N = 99$) were related to the influence that friends, parents, and other relationships had on the international student to choose the University of Saskatchewan and both were showed to have little impact based on their high means and standard deviation. Survey item 29 ($M = 3.30$, $STD = 1.28$, $N = 99$) stated: “I chose the University of Saskatchewan because of my home country’s recognition of a degree from the university” and also had a high mean and large standard deviation.

It was clear from the closed-ended questions on the survey that there were more academic factors than non-academic factors that influenced international students’ decision to study at the University of Saskatchewan. Six of the 10 academic factors had a mean less than 2.5 but nine of the 10 factors had a mean less than three, which showed all but one of the factors had some degree of influence. Only two of the 16 non-academic factors had a mean less than 2.5 and neither was below 2.4. In a broader context, only seven of the 16 non-academic factors had a mean less than 3, which showed that the University of Saskatchewan should focus its efforts regarding the recruitment of international students on academic factors compared to non-academic factors.

Open-ended response. One of the last questions on the survey asked participants, “In your own words, what can be done at the University of Saskatchewan to increase its appeal to international students in the future?” The question was open-ended and participants had no restrictions on what they could write. The question was not required but 89 of the 99 participants answered the question with a large variance in answers. However, there were six suggestions that were supported by multiple participants. The comment that had the most support was to reduce the differential tuition paid by international students. Lowering the tuition fee for international students was mentioned in the statements of 29 participants. Another comment that was supported by 21 participants involved making more scholarships available for international students. It is worth noting that both statements involve overcoming financial obstacles that international students face when studying at the University of Saskatchewan.

Four other statements were supported by multiple participants but were not as common as lowering tuition and offering more scholarships to international students. Eleven participants felt the best way to increase the appeal of the University of Saskatchewan to future international students was for the university to advertise more so that it would get more publicity. Several participants suggested the University should advertise more about its programs online while others suggested more outreach because he or she felt, “the University itself is great [but] it isn’t really known as more recognised places like in Toronto are more visible.” It was also suggested by four participants that the University build more partnerships with universities abroad and participate in more exchange programs. Two participants believed that increasing the University’s global ranking would increase its appeal and one participant stated, “the research ranking of the university plays an essential role for international students.” Two participants believed that providing more pictures and videos of what the University looked like would help

the University appeal to future international students because, “YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram are great ways for people not able to physically be at the university have a good feel of what it feels like to be a USASK student.” Several of the suggestions made in the open-ended response were addressed in the survey and were present in the questions for the follow-up interviews that were conducted with three participants that completed the online survey.

Qualitative Data Analysis

There were two forms of qualitative data collection and analysis for this study. The first was a document analysis conducted on several *Foundational Documents* that was explained at the end of chapter two. The second form of qualitative data collection was a follow-up interview that was conducted with three participants that had completed the online survey. At the conclusion of the survey, participants were asked to provide their email address if they were interested in participating in a follow-up interview with the principal investigator. From those that provided their information, three participants were chosen at random. Student A was a PhD student in the third year of his program in the chemistry department and his home country was India. Student B was an undergraduate student in the mathematics field that was participating in a summer exchange program with her university in India. Student C was a PhD student in the physics department whose home country was Brazil. Since two of the three participants had the same home country, the interviews, like the survey, were also biased towards India compared to the other countries. Comparatively, the international student population at the University of Saskatchewan (2019) was similar at the undergraduate level, which had 1,455 international students, and graduate level, which had 1,603 international students. However, having two graduate students participate in the interviews was favourable as international students were 37 percent of the entire graduate student population at the University of Saskatchewan (2019) but

only nine percent of the undergraduate population. The participants were asked 15 questions that were related to the survey responses and the themes developed from the document analysis conducted on the *Foundational Documents* of the University of Saskatchewan. The major findings from the interview were noted in the following subsection.

Tuition fees. The differential tuition fee that international students pay was something both Student A and Student C spoke about as being important. Student C felt that if the tuition “was lower than the other universities, it would be more attractive” but also believed that the international student tuition at the University of Saskatchewan was competitive with other universities. Student A had completed his Master’s at the University of Manitoba (UM) and much preferred their tuition system to the University of Saskatchewan. Student A explained at UM, “the first two years you pay the full tuition and for the consecutive years, which is three, four, five, you pay the differential fee, which is not at USASK,” which meant, as long as the international student maintained an acceptable grade point average, he or she would pay the same tuition as a Canadian resident. Student A also disliked that graduate students were not given a bus pass for transportation during the spring and summer terms even though they were required to be registered for classes and had to pay tuition for both terms. In regards to the bus pass for the fall and winter semesters, Student A said, “it doesn’t make sense at all. And even if you register for a course, maybe it’s a no-credit course, you are eligible [for a bus pass]” but graduate students do not receive one for the spring and summer terms regardless of how many classes they are enrolled in. Student B was attending the University of Saskatchewan as part of an exchange agreement and did not have to pay tuition as part of her program.

Student services. All three participants were very happy with the amount of support and services they were receiving at the University of Saskatchewan. All three participants were

familiar with the International Student and Study Abroad Centre (ISSAC) and had accessed their services or events at least once during their time as students on campus. Student A said the education counselor was, “very open-minded, ready to accept new things and they try within their best comfort zone to help as much as possible” and did everything possible to ensure a smooth transition. Student B went on a guided tour of the Farmer’s Market that ISSAC had organised. Before the tour, Student B was experienced some “culture shock,” but the tour with ISSAC made Student B feel “homely” and more at-ease in Saskatoon. Student C had questions about documents and paperwork before applying and arriving at the University of Saskatchewan and found ISSAC to be very helpful and answered all of her questions. Student A also liked that ISSAC organises activities that incorporates a variety of cultures because, “it’s good to interact with different communities rather than clustering into one space-group.” None of the participants could think of more student services or support that they would like to see at the University.

Hosting conferences with an international focus. All three participants believed that the University of Saskatchewan should try to host more conferences that have an international focus. There were two purposes that hosting more international conferences would have. The first would be that there would be more opportunities to network with people globally. As Student A explained, “students are what makes up USASK” and speaking at conferences is a way for students to “showcase USASK to others” because there are representatives from other universities at conferences and also potential employers and industry leaders. Student C also believed hosting more international conferences would be an opportunity to, “have more contact with people from around the world, so it would be interesting.”

The second purpose for hosting more conferences with an international focus would be to help market the University of Saskatchewan to people around the world that might not have heard about the university. Student A believed that the University of Saskatchewan would be more marketable if it showcased what it has “in terms of research opportunities, the amount of funding, and, most importantly, it does have all of the facilities in which the student can not only thrive, but can be the best version of themselves” and all this would be accomplished by hosting more international conferences. Student B also believed that hosting more international conferences would help market the University because it would “give a lot more exposure. And, if I come here, I can see many more things” because being able to physically experience a place is preferable to reading about it online or in other literature.

Partnership agreements. Having partnership agreements between the University of Saskatchewan and universities in the participant’s home country was a divisive topic. Student B was attending the University of Saskatchewan because it had a partnership agreement with the university she was getting her undergraduate degree through in India. Student B’s university in India had a summer student program that paid for her to visit the University of Saskatchewan for two-and-a-half months and advertised which courses students from her university could attend while visiting. Without a partnership agreement, Student B said she would not have come to the University of Saskatchewan, so it was a huge influence on her decision. Student A, who was also from India, was unaware of any partnership agreements between the University of Saskatchewan and any universities in his home country. However, Student A felt that if the University of Saskatchewan did have a partnership agreement with the university he attended in India it would, “would have made a massive difference. In terms of credibility of knowledge, skill sets, and acclimatisation.” Student A believed that having this partnership would have

helped with the process of normalisation and to help graduate students find their research supervisor because each would know and be “aware of the expectations of his or her future lab he or she will be going on as well as a supervisor from here [USASK].” Student C was the outlier as she did not believe a partnership agreement would have influenced her at all. Student C’s rationale was that if a university abroad has an agreement with Brazil, the student has to return to Brazil at the conclusion of their studies for the same amount of time he or she had been gone for and Student C had no intention of returning to Brazil after she completed her PhD.

Cost of living. The cost of living in Saskatchewan and Saskatoon was important to all three participants. Students B and C did not have much more dialogue beyond that it was affordable to live in Saskatoon and that it was important to each of them when they applied. Student A obtained a lot of information through ISSAC about what to expect once he moved to Saskatoon and did research on things like rent through the website Kijiji. Student A also believed that since Saskatoon is a smaller city with a large research university, there is a lot of appeal since things seemed to be cheaper compared to the large universities in the larger cities.

Scholarships. The importance of scholarships was not mentioned by Student B or Student C but it was one of the main reasons Student A decided to study at the University of Saskatchewan and it was one of the main responses on the open-response question on the survey. Student A felt that the financial aspect of attending university was “critically important for a Grad School program” and that the University of Saskatchewan needs to offer more scholarships to international students or make more scholarships available that international students would be able to apply. Student B had her summer exchange program paid for through the university so she could not speak on the financial part of attending the University of Saskatchewan.

Virtual tour. One thing all three participants agreed upon was that the University of Saskatchewan would be more appealing to them if it offered a virtual tour of the campus online. Student B said it took “two weeks” to adjust to the campus and that it would have been much easier to adjust if there had there been a way to see what the campus looked like and where the different buildings were located. When Student B first arrived at the University, she spent two hours talking to someone in the University book store trying to figure out where different things were located and what she and her friends could visit. Student A believed that offering a virtual tour would be “fantastic” and make it easier to navigate the University’s campus. Student C said she would have used such a service to find the College of Education as she did not know how to get to the interview and had to ask for assistance from her supervisor. Students B and C also used YouTube to try to find out information about the University of Saskatchewan. Perhaps the University could make a video tour of the campus and post it so prospective students could get a feel for what the campus looks like since it was one of the more influential non-academic factors on the survey, item 23, and 89 participants on the online survey answered that he or she had never physically visited the province of Saskatchewan or the University of Saskatchewan before applying for enrolment.

Summary

This chapter presented and analysed the findings from a survey completed by 99 participants and a follow-up interview conducted with three participants that had also completed the survey. All participants self-identified as international students at the University of Saskatchewan. The survey identified three academically related factors that were chosen by a large majority of participants as being influential: offering a particular program; being effective at providing information related to the participant’s program, academics, and application to the

University of Saskatchewan; and the academic quality of the university. The survey also identified two non-academic factors that were chosen by a large majority of participants as being influential: being effective at providing information related to tuition, financial assistance, scholarship awards, and other non-academic areas and that the cost of living was affordable during the participant's studies. The follow-up interviews conducted with the participants further showed a relationship between tuition, scholarships, and the cost of living and the University of Saskatchewan's appeal to international students. The interview participants also believed that the University of Saskatchewan would be more appealing to future international students if it offered more scholarships for international students, lowered the differential tuition, were to host more conferences with an international focus, and if there was a virtual tour offered of the campus available online. In the following chapter, the findings of the surveys and follow-up interviews will be discussed in relation to the University of Saskatchewan's international student recruitment initiatives analysed previously and in relation to the pull factors identified by Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003), Lam, Ariffin, and Ahmad (2011), and Mazzarol and Soutar (2002).

Chapter Five: Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusion

Chapter five discussed the findings of the survey and follow-up interviews in relation to the University of Saskatchewan's international student recruitment initiatives outlined in the document analysis and to the pull factors found in studies by Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003), Lam, Ariffin, and Ahmad (2011), and Mazzarol and Soutar (2002). Implications and recommendations for future research were also addressed in this chapter. The chapter concludes with a summary and explanation of the study.

Discussion

Through the creation and implementation of the four *Foundational Documents* by the University of Saskatchewan: *Globalism and the University of Saskatchewan: The Foundational Document for International Activities at the University of Saskatchewan* (2003), *Implementation Plan for the Foundational Document for International Activities* (2009), *International Blueprint for Action 2025* (2018), and *University Plan 2025* (2018), the University highlighted many recruitment initiatives that targeted international students. The initiatives identified through the document analysis were listed in Table 3 previously. Several of the initiatives were found to be influential for a majority of participants in the survey while others were favourable to interview participants. Not all initiatives had an influence on international students even though they were supported on multiple *Foundational Documents*.

Influential Factors

The survey was divided into two main sections: academic factors, found in Table 5, and non-academic factors, found in Table 6, that influenced international students to attend the University of Saskatchewan. The academic factors had a majority of participants 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with eight of the 10 statements. The non-academic factors only had a majority of participants

‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ with three of the 16 statements. This showed that the international students that participated in the survey were influenced more often by academic factors than non-academic factors. However, participants for the follow-up interview said they were influenced more by non-academic factors like partnership agreements and financial factors.

Faculty. Diversifying the faculty at the University of Saskatchewan was an initiative that was present on all four *Foundational Documents* and the faculty was one of the factors that was found to have an influence on a majority of participants on the survey. Item 12 (M = 2.48, STD = .999, N = 99), regarding teaching quality at the university, and Item 13 (M = 2.79, STD = 1.06, N = 99), regarding academic publications by the faculty at the university, both had a majority of respondents that chose they ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ with the statements. In the interviews, Student A and Student C were directly influenced by a member of the faculty. Student A met researched faculty members in his area of interest for his PhD and met his eventual-supervisor at a conference in Ottawa and was recruited upon the meeting. Student C also researched her area of interest for her PhD and found a faculty member that conducted research in that field.

Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003) found that when they asked international students what was important when choosing an institution, the third-most important factor was the rating of the teaching at the institution. No participants mentioned, on both the open-response question on the survey or the follow-up interviews, that having a more diverse faculty would have influenced their decision to attend the University of Saskatchewan. This showed that the University of Saskatchewan should emphasise the teaching quality of its faculty while highlighting the research areas that faculty members focus on instead of trying to recruit faculty from abroad.

Academic courses and programs. Three *Foundational Documents* mentioned adding more international focus to academic courses as a recruitment initiative but the data from follow-

up interviews was inconclusive. Student B was a mathematics student that was visiting for the summer and did not believe it was possible to tailor mathematics courses to a Canadian or an international perspective. Student C was a physics student and had similar views about a lack of variability for the subject material because, “physics is equal all over the world. So, the courses I take here are the same as in Brazil.” Student A interpreted the question from a cognition standpoint and believed the Canadian system favoured a more critical thinking style of instruction in most courses where, in his experience, the rest of the world favours more of a memorization style of instruction. Student A believed that in the future, both styles of instruction should be present to assist with international students’ transition into the Canadian system.

The survey item that had the most participants ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ was item 11 ($M = 2.01$, $STD = 1.1$, $N = 99$) that asked if students chose the University of Saskatchewan because of a particular program. This was similar to earlier findings by Mazzarol (1998) and Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003), who found the courses offered by universities to be one of the top factors that influenced international students to attend a particular university. In the follow-up interviews, Student A was heavily influenced by the chemistry PhD program and being able to conduct research at the Canadian Light Source. One of the reasons Student B chose to visit the University of Saskatchewan was because there was an exchange agreement between her university in India where she was an undergraduate student and the mathematics department at the University of Saskatchewan that allowed her to shadow several courses over the spring and summer terms. One of the influencing factors for Student C was the physics program offered at the University of Saskatchewan and chose the U of S over a similar program at the University of Toronto. The data showed that international student participants in this study were influenced by

academic courses, so the University of Saskatchewan should continue to offer high-quality courses that appeal to international students. More research needs to be conducted into what courses international students enroll in at the University of Saskatchewan so the university can focus its marketing efforts on courses that have the most appeal to international students from different countries.

Hosting international conferences. Three *Foundational Documents* mentioned a goal to host more conferences with an international focus and this initiative was supported by the three participants in the follow-up interviews and through the open-response statements on the online survey. On the *Implementation Plan for the Foundational Document for International Activities* (2009) it was stated that international conferences would be a great way to “bring more international visitors to our campus” (p. 17) as a way to “promote more contacts with international scholars and students” (p. 17). In the follow-up interviews, Student A believed the University of Saskatchewan needed more opportunities to market “research opportunities, the amount of funding, and, most importantly, it does have all of the facilities in which the student can not only thrive, but can be the best version of themselves” and felt that hosting conferences with an international focus would be the perfect way to showcase the University. Student B believed that hosting international conferences would give the University “more exposure” and Student C felt international conferences would be a good way to “contact with people from around the world.” On the open-response question on the online survey, nine people wrote that the University of Saskatchewan needs more publicity because it is largely unknown in the world, something Student C echoed in her interview as well. Hosting international conferences that interested people from around the world would be an ideal opportunity to give the University of Saskatchewan much-needed publicity and a chance to showcase all that it has to offer.

Financial factors. There were three distinct factors that make up the broad category of financial factors: scholarships, tuition, and cost of living. The only factor mentioned in the *Foundational Documents* was in relation to scholarships and offering more financial rewards for international students and was mentioned on two of the documents, *Implementation Plan for the Foundational Document for International Activities* (2009) and the *International Blueprint for Action 2025* (2018). Survey item 18 ($M = 2.62$, $STD = 1.27$, $N = 99$) stated: “I chose the University of Saskatchewan because of the amount of financial assistance available to international students” and 50 participants ‘strongly agreed’ and ‘agreed’ with the statement, which was a majority. On the open-response question, 21 participants wrote that offering more scholarships for international students would be the best way to increase the University’s appeal to future international students and was the second-most written response. In the follow-up interview, Student A answered that one of the three most-influential factors for him was qualifying for scholarships at the University and also believed that if the University offered more scholarships for international students, the University would be more attractive for future international students. This supported findings by Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003) that found the second-best way to attract international students was by offering more scholarships for international students.

Tuition similarly had influence in previous studies (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; and Sá, Florax, & Rietveld, 2004) and was also found to be influential on the online survey as well. Item 17 ($M = 2.59$, $STD = 1.29$, $N = 99$) on the online survey had 54 participants ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ with the statement that they “chose the University of Saskatchewan because the tuition fees are affordable for international students.” However, there were 25 participants that ‘strongly disagreed’ or ‘disagreed’ with the statement and the follow-up

interview with Student A showed there could be improvements. Student A believed that the fee structure could be set up differently and that if international students maintained a high average, they should pay what Canadian residents pay; as was his case when he completed his Master's degree in the Western Canadian province of Manitoba. Student A also believed that international students enrolled in graduate studies should qualify for bus passes during the spring and summer terms because they are required to be enrolled and pay a higher fee than Canadian residents.

The cost of living while completing a university degree was also an influencing factor for international students that completed the online survey. Item 32 ($M = 2.41$, $STD = 1.15$, $N = 99$) had 64 participants 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the statement that they chose the University of Saskatchewan "because the cost of living (rent, groceries, leisure activities, etc.) is affordable during my studies" and had the most participants that chose to 'strongly agree' and 'agree' compared to any other non-academic factor in the online survey. In the follow-up interviews, Student A and Student C stated that the cost of living was an important factor in them choosing to study at the University of Saskatchewan and liked that it was cheaper to afford rent in Saskatoon compared to bigger cities like Toronto. The findings for cost of living from the online survey and follow-up interviews were similar to what Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003), Findlay, King, Stam, and Ruiz-Gelices (2006), Mazzarol, Kemp, and Savory (1997), and Sá et al. (2004) found in their studies as well.

The data from this study and previous literature showed that financial factors hold a lot of influence for international students. The University of Saskatchewan should ensure that the differential tuition the international students pay is competitive with other universities in Canada while working towards offering more scholarships for international students. Bowman and

Bastedo (2009) found that there can be a perception of higher tuition with the reputation of a higher education institution, but if the goal of the University of Saskatchewan is to increase the number of international students that are enrolled, charging higher tuition may drive potential international students to look at similar universities in Canada with a similar reputation and lower tuition.

Institution ranking and reputation. The University of Saskatchewan has been ranked in the bottom third of universities on the list of the top 15 research institutions in Canada (U15, 2017) but its ranking was still an influential factor for a majority of participants in the online survey. Survey item eight ($M = 2.41$, $STD = .974$, $N = 99$) had 60 respondents that ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ with the statement: “I chose the University of Saskatchewan because of its academic reputation/prestige.” Additionally, on the open-ended response on the survey, three participants believed that increasing the University’s ranking and reputation was the best way to increase its appeal to future international students. The findings from the online survey were similar to what Chen (2007), Federkeil (2009), and Hazelkorn (2011) reported from their studies regarding the influence of an institution’s reputation and ranking. Nine participants in the open response question on the online survey recommended the University of Saskatchewan advertise more to gain more publicity and name recognition abroad. Mazzarol (1998) found a link between reputation and name recognition and found the linkage to be a critical factor for establishing a competitive advantage over other institutions. Mazzarol (1998) also found that institutions could overcome shortcomings in some areas if the institution had enough name recognition also. The University of Saskatchewan should continue working to improve its ranking within the U15 to have a more attractive ranking for future international students but more needs to be done to boost its name recognition abroad. The university could offer

incentives for presenting at academic conferences abroad so that faculty members have more chances to interact with international academics, employers, and students that may be in attendance.

Information. Providing potential international students with the information requested in a timely manner was not something that was mentioned in any of the University of Saskatchewan's *Foundational Documents*. However, Mazzarol et al. (1997), Mortimer (1997), and Sá et al. (2004) found that the knowledge and awareness of an institution that was made available via information that had been disseminated to the student and the ease with which that information was able to be obtained was a very influential factor for international students. There were two survey items that targeted the effectiveness of the University of Saskatchewan to provide information to the international student participants. Survey item 10 (M = 2.07, STD = 1.07, N = 99) had 72 participants 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with the statement, "I chose the University of Saskatchewan because they were effective at providing information related to my program, academics, and application to the University" and had the second-lowest mean in the academically related factors section of the survey. Survey item 20 (M = 2.49, STD = 1.12, N = 99) had 58 participants 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with the statement, "I chose the University of Saskatchewan because they were effective at providing information related to tuition, financial assistance, scholarship awards, and other non-academic areas" and also had the second-lowest mean in the non-academic factor section of the survey. Even though there was no mention in the *Foundational Documents*, the survey results showed that the University has prioritized the providing of information to prospective international students. The University of Saskatchewan should continue to provide information effectively and efficiently to prospective international students as many participants showed it was a significant factor. By getting pertinent

information to prospective students effectively, the university is showing it values the prospective international student and may influence the student to choose the University of Saskatchewan over other universities that take longer to send information or send the incorrect information.

Factors with Mixed Results

There were three recruitment initiatives that were mentioned in the University of Saskatchewan's *Foundational Documents* and supported by previous studies but had mixed results from the online survey. Four *Foundational Documents* prioritized the establishment of more partnerships between the University of Saskatchewan and universities abroad. However, survey item 27 ($M = 3.98$, $STD = 1.20$, $N = 99$) had 75 participants 'strongly disagree' or 'disagree' with the statement, "I chose the University of Saskatchewan because the university has an agreement or partnership with a university in my home country." Survey item 27, regarding agreements and partnerships with universities in the participant's home country, also had the highest frequency of participants that chose to 'strongly disagree' or 'disagree' with any of the influencing factors in the non-academic section of the survey. The follow-up interviews and the open response question on the online survey found different results though.

During the interview, the three participants were asked if he or she knew of a partnership agreement with a university in their home country. Student A was unaware of any partnership agreements between the University of Saskatchewan and any universities in his home country of India, where the University had a partnership with 28 different institutions (University of Saskatchewan, 2019b). However, Student A believed if the University of Saskatchewan had a partnership agreement with the university where he had completed his undergraduate agreement, it would have "made a massive difference. In terms of credibility of knowledge, skill sets, and

acclimatisation” and this would aid both the prospective student and their future supervisor with the process of normalisation. Student B’s university where she was getting her undergraduate degree had a partnership agreement with the University of Saskatchewan and was only in attendance as a result. On the open-response question for the online survey, four participants wrote that the University of Saskatchewan needed to build more partnerships abroad as the best way to attract future international students. Building more partnerships abroad was the fourth-most written response by participants behind reduced tuition, more scholarships for international students, and increased marketing of the University abroad.

Another international student recruitment initiative supported on multiple *Foundational Documents* was to support the academic and non-academic success of international students. The initiative was mentioned on three of the four documents, first appearing in *Globalism and the University of Saskatchewan* in 2003 and recently in the *International Blueprint for Action 2025* (2018). International students were primarily supported through the International Student and Study Abroad Centre (ISSAC) at the University and the influence of ISSAC was tested on survey item 21 ($M = 3.01$, $STD = 1.12$, $N = 99$). Only 28 participants ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ with the statement, “I chose the University of Saskatchewan because of the services offered by ... (ISSAC)” compared to 36 participants that ‘strongly disagreed’ or ‘disagreed’ with the statement. The findings from the online survey opposed findings by Leary, Hotchkiss, and Robb (2016), Mavondo, Tsarenki, and Gabbott (2004), and McBride (1998) that showed student services were an important recruitment tool for recruiting international students. On the follow-up interviews, none of the participants answered that services provided by ISSAC or by the University were among their top influential factors. However, all three felt that ISSAC was providing more than adequate support and services for international students. Student A had

positive experiences with the education counselor and received timely advice on submitting the paperwork required for his student visa; Student B benefitted from several events organised by ISSAC that were meant to assist international students with acclimatisation; and Student C had a positive experience when she asked ISSAC about several official documents like her passport and obtaining a driver's license. The findings from the follow-up interviews supported Leary et al.'s (2016) belief that receiving effective student services was important to the retention of international students. The findings from the follow-up interviews also implied that, while ISSAC may not directly influence international students' decision to attend the University of Saskatchewan, the services and supports provided by ISSAC enhanced the experiences of all three interview participants, and could be a factor for future international students and their decision to complete their program at the University of Saskatchewan or transfer to another university.

It was a surprise to find few participants on the online survey were influenced by recommendations from friends, family, or someone the participant knew that had attended the University of Saskatchewan. Several studies (Mazzarol et al., 1997; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Mavando et al., 2004) found recommendations by relatives, alumni, and friends to have a lot of influence on prospective international students. A study by Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003) found the second-most effective promotional strategy was to involve alumni, friends, and relatives. The online survey had two items with statements regarding recommendations. Survey item 26 (M = 3.19, STD = 1.41, N = 99) had 37 participants 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with the statement, "I chose the University of Saskatchewan because someone I know is currently studying or had studied previously at the university" but had 51 participants 'strongly disagree' or 'disagree' with the statement. Survey item 28 (M=3.43, STD = 1.31, N = 99) had 28

participants 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with the statement, "I chose the University of Saskatchewan because of the advice from parents or relatives" but had 54 participants 'strongly disagree' or 'disagree' with the statement. None of the three interview participants mentioned recommendations by others as an influential factor on their decision to attend the University of Saskatchewan during the follow-up interviews. In the open response question on the survey, no participants suggested enhancing alumni networks or anything related to recommendations as a way to make the University of Saskatchewan more appealing to future international students. Enhancing the alumni network in key geographic locations for student recruitment abroad was an initiative of the *International Blueprint for Action 2025* (2018), but the findings from the online survey and follow-up interviews showed little influence on current international students.

Research Questions

This study asked three research questions in chapter one. The first research question sought to find the factors that influenced the current international students enrolled at the University of Saskatchewan. To answer this research question, an online survey was created, which was based on two previous surveys administered in Canada: *Canada First, the 2009 Survey of International Students* (Canadian Bureau of International Education) and the *BC Student Survey: Final Report* (British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer, 2015). The adapted surveys, in addition to the survey used in this study, incorporated many of the pull factors identified by (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003; Leary et al., 2016; Lee & Tan, 1984; Mavondo et al., 2004; Mazzarol, 1998; Mazzarol et al., 1997; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; McBride, 1998). The online survey was able to identify several academic and non-academic factors that influenced international students to attend the University of Saskatchewan. For further clarification, follow-up interviews were conducted with three participants from the online

survey and they provided in-depth answers as to what influenced each of them to choose the University of Saskatchewan.

The second research question wanted to identify the recruitment initiatives at the University of Saskatchewan that supported the recruitment of international students. To identify the recruitment initiatives, a document analysis was performed on several *Foundational Documents* that were publicly-available on the University of Saskatchewan webpage. The documents analysed were: *Globalism and the University of Saskatchewan: The Foundational Document for International Activities at the University of Saskatchewan* (2003), *Implementation Plan for the Foundational Document for International Activities* (2009), *International Blueprint for Action 2025* (2018), and *University Plan 2025* (2018), and were analysed using NVivo software. To analyse the data, categorical strategies were employed by the researcher to generate emergent themes from the documents gathered, so that the qualitative data could be rearranged to produce categories that facilitate comparisons (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Categories were created in NVivo by analysing the *Foundational Documents* from the University of Saskatchewan to develop themes related to initiatives for the recruitment of international students. The themes generated from the document analysis were also used in the development of the online survey and follow-up interviews.

The third research question gathered current international students' ideas as to what could be done at the University of Saskatchewan to be more appealing to future international students. This was answered through two mediums. One of the last questions on the online survey was open-ended and asked participants, "In your own words, what can be done at the University of Saskatchewan to increase its appeal to international students in the future?" The final question of the follow-up interview also asked the same question and gave an opportunity for the

participants to give a more detailed answer. The qualitative data collected from the online survey and follow-up interviews was analysed in comparison to the quantitative results, categorical themes, and used as rationale for future initiatives for the University.

Implications

There were several implications for the University of Saskatchewan that resulted from this study. Participants from the survey and interviews showed that there was a lot of influence from financial factors, both academic and non-academic, on international students and their decision to choose the University of Saskatchewan. Ensuring that international students have access to more scholarships and keeping the tuition for international students competitive compared to other universities in the U15 will be paramount for the future recruitment of international students. Many participants were influenced by the University's effectiveness at providing information, both academic and non-academic, but the open-response questions and interviews showed that the University was lacking in its publicity internationally. If future international students have not heard of the University of Saskatchewan, there will not be anyone for whom to provide information.

Many participants on the survey and interviews were also influenced by the academic programs that were offered at the University of Saskatchewan, so a diverse offering of high-quality courses should be maintained throughout the University. The participants for the follow-up interviews struggled to find relevant media for the University's campus on Instagram or YouTube and found it difficult to navigate the campus upon attendance. Survey items 4 and 5 asked participants if he or she had visited the province of Saskatchewan or the University of Saskatchewan in person before applying. Considering that 89 of the 99 participants for the online survey had never visited either Saskatchewan or the University of Saskatchewan before he

or she applied for enrolment, the University should provide the relevant information that someone would gain by physically visiting the campus. This could be remedied by offering a virtual tour of the University of Saskatchewan's campus, either through videos or an interactive map, that would include information about where departments are located, bus stops, and how to navigate the campus. This could be something similar to what the University of British Columbia (2019) offered on their webpage.

There were two factors that were not found on the survey to have as much influence as other factors but need to be mentioned. Services and supports provided by ISSAC was not a main reason that many of the international students enrolled chose the University of Saskatchewan, but the follow-up interviews showed that the services and supports provided by ISSAC helped international students complete the proper paperwork required for admittance, become acclimated to Saskatoon and the university, meet people, attend social events, and provided academic assistance. Research by Leary et al. (2016) showed that international students that received support and services as needed were more likely to remain enrolled at a university. This implies that the University of Saskatchewan should remain committed to ISSAC and the services and support it provides.

Another factor that did not have a lot of influence on current international students at the University of Saskatchewan was partnerships between the university and a university in the participant's home country. However, during the follow-up interview, all three participants believed building partnerships with universities abroad was vitally important to attracting future international students. As Student A said, establishing partnerships aids "credibility of knowledge, skill sets, and acclimatisation" for potential international students. As the University of Saskatchewan continues to build partnerships abroad, it is possible that there will be an

increase in international students from those partnership institutions as there would be more publicity and awareness for the University of Saskatchewan. More research regarding partnership agreements with the University of Saskatchewan and universities abroad needs to be completed to see if partnership agreements are an effective means for recruiting international students.

Recommendations for Future Research

The results of the study supported the research questions but there were several recommendations for future studies. This study analysed the recruitment initiatives that pertained to international students that were available on several *Foundational Documents* that were available to the public on the University of Saskatchewan's website. Due to time constraints and delimitations, members of the recruitment office at the University of Saskatchewan were unable to contribute to the study. Future research could involve contact with the recruitment office to gain an understanding of what tools and methods the office utilised to recruit international students and compare what could be found to the results from the online survey of this study.

The country of origin for participants in both the online survey and follow-up interviews was not proportional in relation to the student demographic makeup at the University of Saskatchewan. Due to time constraints and when the data collection occurred, the principal researcher was unable to achieve an unbiased population sample. Data collection for the online survey and follow-up interviews occurred several times over a two-month period during the spring and summer terms and this may have contributed to a misrepresentation of several countries compared to overall international student population. Future researchers could do data collection several times over multiple terms, especially the fall and winter terms, and use a

purposive sampling technique to ensure the sample population in the study is more representative of the student population demographics and their countries of origin.

One of the survey items asked participants if the University of Saskatchewan was his or hers first choice for post-secondary education in Canada and 50 of the 99 respondents answered 'No.' Future researchers could ask open-ended follow-up questions to determine what university the participant wanted to get into instead of the University of Saskatchewan and why they did not attend their first choice of university. If the University wants to achieve its international student recruitment goals, it needs to increase its desirability among international students and to understand what other universities are taking priority above itself.

The data collected from the three follow-up interviews had a lot of variance between participants. One participant gave an interview that was twice as long as the other two participants, with more explanation given for answers that allowed for more in-depth analysis. There could be several reasons for this. The principal researcher was a male, as was the participant that gave the longer interview, while the shorter interview participants were both female. There could have been a cultural dimension that had the female participants feeling less comfortable speaking to a male interviewer. The principal researcher also spoke fluent English as he was raised in the United States. The interview participant that gave the longer interview had spent eight years in Canada and seemed very comfortable conversing in English while the other two participants struggled to understand the interviewer and had trouble articulating their responses sometimes. When the interview participant did not understand a question, the researcher would repeat the question slower and in a clearer voice and ask if the interview participant understood the question. Future researchers that wish to conduct interviews with international students may collect more data by having both a male and female researcher or

research assistant converse with the interview participant before initiating the question-and-answer process of the interview to gauge which person the participant is more comfortable speaking with. Future researchers may also wish to provide the interview participant with a list of possible questions before the interview and give an opportunity for the participant to ask for clarification on terms he or she may not understand or want more clarification on.

Conclusion

This study found the international student population enrolled at the University of Saskatchewan lagged behind other universities in the U15 that reside in Western Canada and a growing importance placed upon the recruitment of international students by the Canadian government. The principal researcher proposed three research questions to try to understand what the international student recruitment initiatives and structures were at the University of Saskatchewan, what influenced the current international students in attendance at the University, and what could be done in the future to make the University of Saskatchewan more attractive to international students. A review of literature found several studies (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003; Lam et al., 2011; Mazzarol & Soutar 2002) that utilised a push-pull model that found factors that influenced international students. This study utilised the findings from previous studies that used the push-pull model in the creation of this study's survey and the analysis of the results. The document analysis of the four *Foundational Documents* found eight themes, five that were present on previous studies that used the push-pull model. This study used a mixed-methods approach that incorporated document analysis, survey, and follow-up interview data collection methods. The data was analysed using NVivo, Microsoft Excel, and SPSS software.

University recruitment initiatives and structures. The recruitment initiatives and structures that pertained to international students were found on four *Foundational Documents*

that were on the University of Saskatchewan's webpage: *Globalism and the University of Saskatchewan: The Foundational Document for International Activities at the University of Saskatchewan* (2003), *Implementation Plan for the Foundational Document for International Activities* (2009), *International Blueprint for Action 2025* (2018), and *University Plan 2025* (2018). To find and organise the initiatives and structures, a document analysis was conducted using NVivo. There were three initiatives and structures that were present on all four documents: diversify the faculty by recruiting abroad, strengthen international research activities, and establish more partnerships with universities abroad. There were four initiatives that were supported on three of the four documents: promote academic and non-academic success of international students, add international focus to academic courses, create more exchange agreements with universities, and host more international conferences. An increase in financial awards for international students was supported by the *Implementation Plan for the Foundational Document for International Activities* (2009) and the *International Blueprint for Action 2025* (2018) but was found to be a significant influential factor on the online survey for this study and from previous research studies (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003; Findlay et al., 2006; Madgett & Bélanger, 2008).

Factors that influenced international students. The factors that influenced international students were identified through an online survey conducted on the institution's survey tool. There were 99 responses from participants used in the data analysis of the online survey. Follow-up interviews were also conducted with three participants from the online survey. The survey was broken into two main sections, academic and non-academic factors. The survey identified three academically related factors that were chosen by a large majority of participants as being influential: offering a particular program; being effective at providing

information related to the participant's program, academics, and application to the University of Saskatchewan; and the academic quality of the university. The survey also identified four non-academic factors that were chosen by a large majority of participants as being influential: being effective at providing information related to tuition, financial assistance, scholarship awards, and other non-academic areas and that the cost of living was affordable during the participant's studies. The follow-up interviews conducted with the participants further showed a relationship between tuition, scholarships, and the cost of living and the University of Saskatchewan's appeal to international students.

Increasing the University's attractiveness. This research question was addressed through one of the final questions on the online survey and one of the questions for the follow-up interview. On the online survey, the question, "In your own words, what can be done at the University of Saskatchewan to increase its appeal to international students in the future?" was open-ended and participants had no restrictions on what he or she could write. The question was not required but 89 of the 99 participants answered the question with a large variance in answers. However, there were six suggestions that were supported by multiple participants.

The comment that had the most support was to reduce the differential tuition paid by international students. Lowering the tuition fee for international students was mentioned in the statements of 29 participants even though it was unprompted. Another comment that was supported by 21 participants involved making more scholarships available for international students. It is worth noting that both statements involve overcoming financial obstacles that international students face when studying at the University of Saskatchewan. Eleven participants felt the best way to increase the appeal of the University of Saskatchewan to future international students was for the university to advertise more so that it would get more publicity. Several

participants suggested the University should advertise more about its programs online while others suggested more outreach because he or she felt, “the University itself is great [but] it isn’t really known as more recognised places like in Toronto are more visible.” It was also suggested by four participants that the University build more partnerships with universities abroad and participate in more exchange programs. Two participants believed that increasing the University’s global ranking would increase its appeal, as one participant stated, “the research ranking of the university plays an essential role for international students.” Two participants believed that providing more pictures and videos of what the University looked like would help the University appeal to future international students because, “YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram are great ways for people not able to physically be at the university have a good feel of what it feels like to be a USASK student.” Several of the suggestions made in the open-ended response were addressed in the survey and were present in the questions for the follow-up interviews that were conducted with three participants that completed the online survey.

The final question of the follow-up interview conducted with three participants asked the same question as the online survey and found similar responses. Student A believed the University would be more attractive to future international students if it offered more scholarships for international students and if it hosted more international conferences. This was similar to what Student C, who said the University would be more appealing to international students if it lowered the differential tuition fee and advertised more, especially in the research areas it offers. Student B believed the University would be more attractive to future international students if it offered a virtual tour or something similar to help navigate the campus and if there were more activities for international students, similar to ones organised by the International Student and Study Abroad Centre.

Based on comments from the online survey and follow-up interviews, the University of Saskatchewan was considered an ideal place to study for international students with a positive academic environment. Participants were influenced by the cost of living in Saskatchewan but felt there needed to be more scholarships offered for international students in the future. Participants were influenced by the effectiveness of the university to provide academic and non-academic information but many participants felt the University of Saskatchewan lacked in awareness and name-recognition internationally; being unaware of the University of Saskatchewan could have contributed to a lower number of international students in attendance compared to similar universities in Western Canada. Many participants in this study believed there would be more international students wanting to enroll in the future if the university can find a way to market itself internationally through building partnerships, as proposed in several *Foundational Documents*; hosting/attending international conferences, also proposed in several *Foundational Documents*; and social media outlets like Instagram and YouTube. The Ministry of Advanced Education (2017) for the province of Saskatchewan set a provincial goal of raising the number of international students studying in all of Saskatchewan's post-secondary institutions by 75 percent over the 2011 baseline of 5,144 international students. Listening to what influenced current international students enrolled at the University of Saskatchewan and adjusting its recruitment initiatives to reflect the findings of this study could help the university become a premier destination for international students in the future and meet the province's goals for international student recruitment.

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Appendix A

Online Survey

Section One: Consent Statement

I certify that I am voluntarily participating in this research answering questions about the factors that influenced my choice to attend the University of Saskatchewan and consent to the use of my responses about it.

- (1) Yes (2) No

Section Two: Confirmation of information

Please select the response that applies to you.

1. To confirm, are you currently a student at the University of Saskatchewan?

- (1) Yes (2) No

2. To confirm, are you an international student? (You have citizenship in a country other than Canada even though you may have permanent residency in Canada.)

- (1) Yes (2) No

3. What best describes your current level of studies?

- (1) Undergraduate degree (2) Master's degree (3) Doctorate degree (4) Post-doctoral
(5) Other

Section Three: Finding the University of Saskatchewan

Please select the response that applies to you.

4. Did you visit the province of Saskatchewan before applying for enrolment at the University of Saskatchewan?

- (1) Yes (2) No

5. Did you visit the University of Saskatchewan before applying for enrolment?

- (1) Yes (2) No

6. Was the University of Saskatchewan your first-choice for post-secondary education in Canada?

- (1) Yes (2) No

Section Four: Academic Influencing Factors

Please select the response that best-describes your level of agreement with the following statements. This section of the survey asks questions that are directly related to academic factors of the University of Saskatchewan.

7. I chose the University of Saskatchewan because of its academic quality.

- (1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Neutral (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree
(6) Not Applicable

8. I chose the University of Saskatchewan because of its academic reputation/prestige.

- (1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Neutral (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree
(6) Not Applicable

9. I chose the University of Saskatchewan because of its ranking in publications, either in print or online, like the Times Higher Education Rankings.

- (1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Neutral (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree
(6) Not Applicable

10. I chose the University of Saskatchewan because they were effective at providing information related to my program, academics, and application to the University.

- (1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Neutral (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree
(6) Not Applicable

11. I chose the University of Saskatchewan because of a particular program offered at the university.

- (1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Neutral (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree
(6) Not Applicable

12. I chose the University of Saskatchewan because of the teaching quality of the faculty at the university.

- (1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Neutral (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree
(6) Not Applicable

13. I chose the University of Saskatchewan because of academic publications by the faculty at the university.

- (1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Neutral (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree
(6) Not Applicable

14. I chose the University of Saskatchewan because of the technology available on campus (i.e. computer labs, wireless internet, iUsask and uSafe phone apps, etc).

- (1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Neutral (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree
(6) Not Applicable

15. I chose the University of Saskatchewan because of the academic organization and facilities.

- (1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Neutral (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree
(6) Not Applicable

16. I chose the University of Saskatchewan to fulfill part of a joint program with another university.

- (1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Neutral (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree
(6) Not Applicable

Section Five: Non-academic Influencing Factors

Please select the response that best-describes your level of agreement with the following statements. This section of the survey asks questions that are not directly related the academic areas of the University of Saskatchewan.

17. I chose the University of Saskatchewan because the tuition fees are affordable for international students.

- (1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Neutral (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree
(6) Not Applicable

18. I chose the University of Saskatchewan because of the amount of financial assistance available to international students.

- (1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Neutral (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree
(6) Not Applicable

19. I chose the University of Saskatchewan because of an exchange agreement with the university and a university in my home country.

(1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Neutral (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree
(6) Not Applicable

20. I chose the University of Saskatchewan because they were effective at providing information related to tuition, financial assistance, scholarship awards, and other non-academic areas.

(1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Neutral (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree
(6) Not Applicable

21. I chose the University of Saskatchewan because of the services offered by the International Student and Study Abroad Centre (ISSAC).

(1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Neutral (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree (6) Not Applicable

22. I chose the University of Saskatchewan because of the size of the student population.

(1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Neutral (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree
(6) Not Applicable

23. I chose the University of Saskatchewan because of its scenic campus.

(1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Neutral (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree
(6) Not Applicable

24. I chose the University of Saskatchewan because of factors related to its location (climate, city size, transportation, activities in Saskatoon, etc.).

(1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Neutral (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree
(6) Not Applicable

25. I chose the University of Saskatchewan because of its reputation as being a safe and secure campus.

(1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Neutral (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree
(6) Not Applicable

26. I chose the University of Saskatchewan because someone I know is currently studying or had studied previously at the university.

(1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Neutral (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree
(6) Not Applicable

27. I chose the University of Saskatchewan because the university has an agreement or partnership with a university in my home country.

(1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Neutral (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree
(6) Not Applicable

28. I chose the University of Saskatchewan because of the advice from parents or relatives.

(1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Neutral (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree
(6) Not Applicable

29. I chose the University of Saskatchewan because of my home country's recognition of a degree from the university.

(1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Neutral (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree
(6) Not Applicable

30. I chose the University of Saskatchewan because of the diverse student population at the university.

(1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Neutral (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree
(6) Not Applicable

31. I chose the University of Saskatchewan because of the ability to work part-time while studying.

- (1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Neutral (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree
(6) Not Applicable

32. I chose the University of Saskatchewan because the cost of living (rent, groceries, leisure activities, etc.) is affordable during my studies.

- (1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Neutral (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree
(6) Not Applicable

Section Six: Open Response

Section five asks three open-ended questions. Your responses are voluntary and you do not have to answer every one to submit the survey.

33. In your own words, what can be done at the University of Saskatchewan to increase its appeal to international students in the future?

34. What is the country of your citizenship? (Permanent Residency in Canada is not the same as citizenship)

Section Seven: Gift Card

Thank you for your participation in the survey. If you would like to be entered into a drawing for a \$10 Tim Horton's gift card, please provide your email address. Your contact information will not be used in any part of the study or as a way to identify you; your responses will remain anonymous. If you are not interested, do not enter anything into the response.

Section Eight: Follow-up Interview

Would you be interested in a follow-up interview with the researcher? The questions will be about any additional context you could give regarding your responses and for influencing factors that may apply to you but were not included in the survey. If you are interested, please provide your email address so the researcher may contact you. If you are not interested, do not enter anything into the response.

Appendix B

Structured Interview Questions

1. What were the 3 most-influential factors that made you want to attend the University of Saskatchewan?
2. Were there any factors that influenced you to attend the University of Saskatchewan that were not addressed in the survey?
3. What were the steps you took before deciding to apply to the University of Saskatchewan?
4. What did you do after you were accepted into the University of Saskatchewan? (Did you do further research into the U of S?)
5. How did you find information of the University of Saskatchewan?
6. Were you aware of any partnerships between the University of Saskatchewan and universities in your home country?
 - If yes: Did that influence your decision to attend the University of Saskatchewan?
 - If no: Would having a partnership with a university in your home country influence your decision to attend the University of Saskatchewan?
7. Did the university you previously attended have an exchange agreement with the University of Saskatchewan?
 - If yes: Did that influence your decision to attend the University of Saskatchewan?
 - If no: Would having an exchange agreement your previous university influence your decision to attend the University of Saskatchewan?
8. Are you satisfied with the amount of student services and support available to international students at the University of Saskatchewan?
 - If no: What changes need to be made to make you satisfied?
9. As an international student, would you want your courses that you take at the University of Saskatchewan have more of a focus on Canadian content or would you want them to have a more international focus? Why or why not?
10. If the University of Saskatchewan hosted more conferences with an international focus, would that make the university more appealing, less appealing, or unchanged? Why?
11. Was the cost of living in Saskatchewan important in choosing the University of Saskatchewan?
12. Would lowering the differential tuition for international students have a large impact on your decision to study at the University of Saskatchewan or would it be a minor impact? Why?

13. Would offering a virtual tour of the University of Saskatchewan's campus make the university more appealing, less appealing, or unchanged? Why?

14. What do you think the University of Saskatchewan can do in the future to be more attractive to international students?