11-2015

The Global Competition for International Students as Future Immigrants: The role of Ontario universities in translating government policy into institutional practice

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The Global Competition for International Students as Future Immigrants: The role of Ontario universities in translating government policy into institutional practice

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Cite this publication in the following format:

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this research study was to map Ontario universities' strategies, programs and services for international students (IS). In mapping these programs, we aimed to understand the opportunities, challenges and gaps that exist in supporting IS. We focused on services at various levels, including from the first year of study all the way through to graduation, the job search process, entry into the labour market, and students' transition to permanent resident status.

Universities play an important role in enhancing international graduates' employability as they provide IS with experience in the host country's labour market and acclimatize them to the host society, its language and culture. The attractiveness of host country universities, opportunities for employability and future permanent resident status are all key factors in the success of any country's international education strategy. Countries such as Canada that face major demographic challenges are increasingly turning to this new immigration pathway to encourage IS to remain as permanent residents after the completion of their program of study. In keeping with this international trend, Canada's newly released international education strategy sets the goal of attracting and retaining "top talent" international students and encouraging them to convert to permanent residency in order to address the skilled labour shortage "to keep up in a global, knowledge-based economy" (Government of Canada, 2014b, p. 9).

Ontario has worked strategically to "make Ontario the destination of choice for international students" (Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, 2010), and indeed Ontario already attracts the highest proportion of both international students (43.2%) and permanent residents (36.8%) in Canada as per 2014 statistics (CIC, 2015a). However, Ontario competes nationally and internationally with other jurisdictions that share the same policy objectives, creating a need to examine and assess the quality and competitiveness of its higher education system, as well as its educational outcomes and labour market pathways for IS.

Our research examined Ontario universities' strategies, programs and services for IS at the system level in an attempt to address the three key policy concerns for Ontario's higher education system: quality and global competitiveness, student experience and success, and educational outcomes and labour market pathways (Ontario MTCU, 2014). Our three research questions were as follows:

1. How are provincial and national policies to attract IS as future immigrants acknowledged by Ontario universities in their mission statements/goals/visions and/or strategic plans?

2. What are the range and types of programs and services offered for IS by Ontario's universities?

3. What do university staff perceive as factors that facilitate or hinder the transition of IS as future immigrants?

To answer our research questions, we targeted a representative sample of 11 (50%) of Ontario's universities, ensuring diversity in geographical location, institutional size and IS student population. The study was composed of two data collection stages: (a) a web scan of university policies/strategies and

programs/services pertaining to IS, and (b) a survey administered to university managers and front-line staff at six central university student service offices (IS office, IS recruitment services, career services, counselling services, alumni services and language support services).

Our research yielded the following findings:

(a) Institutional strategies and policies: Ontario universities acknowledge, recognize and respond to federal and provincial policies on IS in their own institutional strategies/policies. While there are a few exceptions, most Ontario universities are committed to IS recruitment and increasing IS enrolments. In this sense, there is close alignment between federal, provincial and university policies.

University staff report awareness of these governmental (59%) and institutional policies (51%). However, managers report much greater awareness and knowledge of these strategies/policies than do front-line staff. On the whole, staff from international student offices report higher levels of awareness than do staff from other central student support services (i.e., career, alumni, language centers and counselling). Both managers and front-line staff report professional networks and colleagues as their major source of information about government and institutional strategies/policies, suggesting the potential to leverage professional networks to enhance collegial and institutional cooperation, collaboration and sharing of IS best practices.

(b) IS programs and services: Most Ontario university campuses have invested in international student offices which, along with their various central student service offices, offer a wide range of programs and services to meet the specific needs of IS. These programs and services target the social, academic and professional engagement needs of IS. However, there is a heavier concentration of programs offered in the first year of study than in later years. Staff also report a need for more social programs that enhance interaction between domestic and international students, and for on-going language competency development. In particular, there appears to be a gap in the availability of targeted professional services for IS in their later years of study, such as work-integrated learning programs, including internship and volunteer opportunities. Programs that aim to broaden IS' social and career networks beyond the IS community and beyond campus also tend to be limited.

Staff reported targeted services, individualized attention and a supportive environment as the three greatest strengths of IS programs and services, with smaller institutions offering advantages in terms of one-on-one services, albeit while suffering from limited funding and resources compared to larger institutions. On the whole, staff reported a lack of integration of programs and services, and a lack of coordination and communication between departments in offering IS support programs and services throughout their student life cycle. Such integration was deemed to be necessary by the staff to help build a sense of community and belonging for IS, a key to their future investment as permanent residents. Staff also reported constant pressures on the university due to government policies to secure more resources and introduce new staffing positions. Most directly, universities have been impacted by section 91 of Bill C-35, which has meant the introduction of new staff positions (licensed immigration lawyers or consultants) and/or the need to provide staff certification

programs through the Immigration Consultants of Canada Regulatory Council (ICCRC). For these reasons, the role and support of senior management to IS policy matters.

Despite the variety of services offered to IS, not all services are known to staff and/or seem to be clearly advertised on universities' websites. This suggests that meeting IS' social, academic and professional engagement needs is not just an issue of providing additional services or tailoring available services towards IS' specific needs, but also one of improving the accessibility and awareness of these programs and services to both IS and staff through better advertisement and intra-campus coordination.

(c)   Universities' roles in supporting IS as future immigrants: The majority of staff (71%) was unaware of IS intentions with regards to pursuing permanent residence (PR) in Ontario. They were, however, aware of factors that facilitate and hinder IS transition to PR status, such as perceived career prospects, immigration policies and prospects for applying for PR, and the need for a sense of belonging to Canadian society. They also identified several challenges in encouraging more IS to transition to PR status and recommended better communication and partnership with government, in particular Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), in the policy making, implementation and evaluation process. Since few universities provide support for IS transitions into the Canadian labour market and to PR status post-graduation, it might be reasonable to suggest that universities are not closely aligned with the government's policy goal of encouraging IS to become new permanent residents.

We conclude that universities are key sites for IS recruitment, transition into Ontario society, training and preparation for the labour market, and for meeting the eligibility criteria for PR status. In short, they are a key actor if the Ontario and Canadian governments are to realize their IS policy objectives. To be better aligned with provincial/federal immigration policy objectives, however, universities need more of a whole student lifecycle approach, focusing on progression from recruitment and registration to post-graduate study and into employment. Such an approach will require support from senior management, partnership and collaboration within the different departments of the university, and additional staff training and development. We make specific recommendations so that the three main stakeholders (federal/provincial government, universities and employers) might better collaborate to address the limitations and challenges facing Ontario in its attempt to attract and retain IS. In particular, we highlight the vital importance of addressing policy challenges, namely the recently introduced Express Entry program; Bill C-35, which applies to IS advising on immigration matters; and provincial IS financial policies, in order to enhance policy alignment and consistency in immigration policy.

Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to map Ontario universities' strategies, programs and services for international students (IS). Our aim was to understand the opportunities, challenges and gaps that exist in supporting IS from their first year of study all the way through to graduation, their job search process, their entry into the labour market and their transition to permanent resident status.

The benefits of hosting IS to ensure a skilled and educated labour force are well recognized by several OECD countries, particularly those that – like Canada – face major demographic challenges resulting from low birth rates and an aging population. These countries are increasingly resorting to new immigration pathways, one of which is to encourage IS to remain as permanent residents after the completion of their program of study (Grabke, 2013; Hawthorne, 2008a,b; Lum & Grabke, 2012).

Surprisingly little is known about the IS experience in their transition through their final years of study and in particular their entry into the host country's labour market. Research illuminating the experience of IS as new immigrants is limited both in Canada and internationally (Arthur & Flynn, 2011; Chira, 2013; Desjardins & King, 2011; Gribble, 2014; Nunes & Arthur, 2013). This gap in research is remarkable given the rationale underlying recent government policy changes towards IS both nationally and globally.

Australia, a key contender in the global competition to attract IS as future immigrants, has acknowledged the important role that universities play in enhancing international graduates' employability. It recognizes that opportunities to acquire experience in the host country's labour market are now a key driver of IS choice, and understanding the issues surrounding IS and employment is closely linked to Australia's continued success in the international education sector (Blackmore, Gribble, Farrell, Rahimi, Arber & Devlin, 2014). Australian universities offer IS work-integrated learning (WIL) opportunities within current program structures to better prepare them to enter the labour force (Gribble, 2014). Increasingly government initiatives, such as the Professional Year or the Victorian government's internship programs, are providing IS with an understanding of the Australian job application process and exposure to the Australian workplace, and thus enhancing their future employability. In addition, several Australian universities are providing additional support to further develop IS' English language skills.

A few Canadian provinces and institutions are responding to this global competition and recognizing their role in the IS experience and transition into the labour market. For example, Nova Scotia's Dalhousie University has introduced a new workplace experience program for IS (Brooks, 2014). The Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT) introduced a practicum component for IS as part of its academic programs. It also offers workshops for IS to build their knowledge about the working culture in Canada (Agnihotri, 2012). Memorial University of Newfoundland is making efforts to integrate IS into its broader community (CBC News, 2014) and has developed programs to improve international student connections to the labor market and entrepreneurial opportunities (Office of the Vice-President (Research), 2015, p. 13). At the provincial level, as part of its new international education strategy, Saskatchewan plans to establish a postsecondary

international education council to facilitate conversations and collaborations between government, postsecondary institutions and industry. It intends to offer IS more research opportunities by partnering with industry and individual universities (Healy, 2014).[1]

Ontario has worked strategically to "make Ontario the destination of choice for international students" (Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, 2010), and indeed Ontario already attracts the highest proportion of both international students (43.2%) and permanent residents (36.8%) in Canada as per 2014 statistics (CIC, 2015a). However, Ontario competes both nationally and internationally with other jurisdictions that share the same policy objectives, creating a need to examine and assess the quality and competitiveness of its higher education system, its educational outcomes and labour market pathways.

Our research set out to examine Ontario universities' strategies, programs and services for IS at the system level.

Research Questions

Our three research questions were as follows:

1. How are provincial and national policies to attract IS as future immigrants acknowledged by Ontario universities in their mission statements/goals/visions and/or strategic plans?
   ➤ What is/are the explicitly and implicitly stated role(s) of the universities in relation to these provincial/national policies?
2. What are the range and types of programs and services offered for IS by Ontario's universities?
   ➤ How do these programs and services meet the academic, social and professional engagement needs of IS?
   ➤ How do they meet the needs of IS over their student life cycle, in particular post-graduation and employment?
3. What do university staff perceive as factors that facilitate and hinder the transition of IS as future immigrants?
   ➤ What do they perceive as strengths and gaps in their programs and services?
   ➤ How do they think government policies (national/provincial) have impacted the IS experience and IS services and programs?

This research proposes to address three key policy concerns for Ontario's postsecondary education system: quality and global competitiveness, student experience and success, and educational outcomes and labour market pathways (Ontario MTCU, 2014). Specifically, we provide a framework to have informed discussions on institutional policies in the context of changing provincial/federal policy environments and the sharing and development of best practices. This report contributes to our understanding of how research policy and

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[1] For more details on some national and international best practices, refer to Appendix B.

practice interrelate, how they act upon each other and how research can be translated into practice (Wheelahan, 2001, p. 7).

Brief Review of Literature

IS have come to be viewed as priority human capital, as "ideal immigrants" or "designer migrants" (Simmons, 1999), based on several assumptions about how their experience prepares them to enter the labour market (CIC, 2013; Gui, Safdar, Berry & Zheng, 2014). Because of their Canadian credentials, proficiency in at least one official language, familiarity with Canadian social customs and their Canadian work experience, IS are assumed to integrate more seamlessly than other classes of immigrants into the Canadian labour market and into Canadian society (Government of Canada, 2013, 2014a,b).

However, studies report that IS face several challenges both in entering the labour market and integrating into the host culture as permanent residents. These challenges are often quite similar to the ones faced by new immigrants. The limited research available suggests that even in an area of skill shortage, IS with local qualifications often face multiple barriers to labour market entry (Arthur & Flynn, 2011; Bond et al., 2007; Chira, 2013; Nunes & Arthur, 2013; Oreopoulos, 2009; Scott, Safdar, Desai Trilokekar & El Masri, 2015). Oreopoulos (2009) reveals that employers value work experience acquired in Canada much more than education acquired in Canada. Nunes and Arthur (2013) report that IS feel discriminated against due to their status, lack of citizenship or limited English proficiency. Bond et al. (2007) report on employers' hesitance to hire IS due to their status and the confusing and inconsistent information on regulations for hiring them. Chira (2013) reports that IS in Canada's Atlantic region express anxiety about being unemployed, underemployed or rejected in the Canadian labor market and about being qualified enough to immigrate to Canada.

English language proficiency is identified as a barrier for IS' smooth integration into the local workforce, even after studying for several years at a host country institution (Blackmore et al., 2014; Arthur & Flynn, 2011). Chira (2013) reports that IS linked accents and language proficiency to a lack of belonging and fears of discrimination in the labour market. Scott et al. (2015) found that even after three to four years in Canada, IS reported challenges meeting other Canadian students, establishing social networks and enhancing their English language proficiency. The most recent survey on IS in Canada, conducted by the Canadian Bureau of International Education (CBIE, 2014), also reports that only 44% of all responding IS indicate having Canadian students as friends. Even those IS who plan to stay in Canada are only slightly more likely to have Canadian friends (46%). Most IS express difficulties getting to know Canadian students, and the report suggests that the barriers to forming social bonds between IS and Canadian students, as well as best practices to address such challenges, remain largely unknown. IS' lack of social networks and perception of limited language proficiency create low levels of self-confidence and a heightened fear of discrimination from employers. Australian research on international graduates has also produced similar findings (Blackmore et al., 2014; Gribble, 2014). Thus, contrary to assumed advantages, the literature suggests that IS face a range of barriers to their labour market entry that negatively influence their sense of belonging and commitment to continue their stay as permanent residents.

Proposed Framework

We propose to view IS strategies, services and programs through the lens provided by the *What Works? Model* (Figure 1) developed by the Higher Education Academy in the UK (Jackson & Livesey, 2014; Thomas, 2012a). The *What Works? Model* was developed over three years of intensive research at 22 UK institutions, with seven distinct projects each providing evidence-based analysis and evaluation of effective practices. Through several case studies, the model offers practical ways to nurture a sense of belonging and identifies six characteristics of effective interventions and approaches to support engaging practices: their embeddedness in mainstream programs/services (an opt-out rather than an opt-in approach for IS to participate in programs/services); a pro-active and developmental nature; relevance to IS needs over the course of their study period and beyond; well-timed programs and services; effective communication (including use of appropriate media), taking into account the distinct needs of the diverse IS population; collaborative development and implementation; and monitoring to assess IS participation, feedback and program review (Thomas, 2012b).

The *What Works? Model* serves as an ideal conceptual framework for this study. At its heart is a recognition of the importance of student engagement, a perspective shared by IS in our pilot study, Desai Trilokekar et al.'s (2014) *International education, labour market and future citizens: Prospects and challenges for Ontario*. Second, and perhaps most importantly, the model speaks to the importance of student engagement in building a sense of belonging, which IS identified as a "deal breaker" in their decision to apply for permanent residence. The *What Works? Model* encapsulates the IS experience because "It … [emphasizes] the human side of higher education…– finding friends, feeling confident and above all, feeling a part of your course of study and the institution" (p. 2).

The model speaks to engagement and a sense of belonging through three different yet inter-related spheres of activity: academic, social and professional services. The academic circle is represented as being larger because, this model contends, the academic experience is at the core of the student experience and it is through this core that engagement in social and professional services can be strengthened. It thus reinforces what scholars such as Tinto (2006) and Astin (1999) have proposed: the importance of both academic and social integration and engagement. This same notion is supported by the Ontario University Student Alliance (OUSA, 2011) and researchers such as Moores and Popadiuk (2011), who suggest that as a "vulnerable population" IS benefit tremendously from such engagement.

The model depicts two outer rings or spheres of influence in student capacity building. The first is the importance of building the capacity of the staff, so that they are in a position to offer different levels and degrees of engagement, keeping in mind the different sites for engagement and the different needs of the heterogeneous student body. Next, influencing both staff and student capacity building is the recognition of the important role that senior management play in creating the necessary infrastructure and in nurturing a culture of belonging and engagement. This model supports a partnership and whole-institution approach; research clearly suggests that the institution's role in promoting collaboration is key to improved outcomes for IS. Finally, as represented by the two-way arrow at the bottom, the model emphasizes the importance of early engagement and encourages institutions "to develop and enhance initiatives which contribute to

success throughout the whole student lifecycle, including progression to post-graduate study and into employment" (Thomas, 2012a, p. 1).

Figure 1: The *What Works? Model* of Student Retention and Success

Institutional management and coordination

Student capacity building

Staff capacity building

Academic

Social

Service

Early engagement extends into higher education and beyond
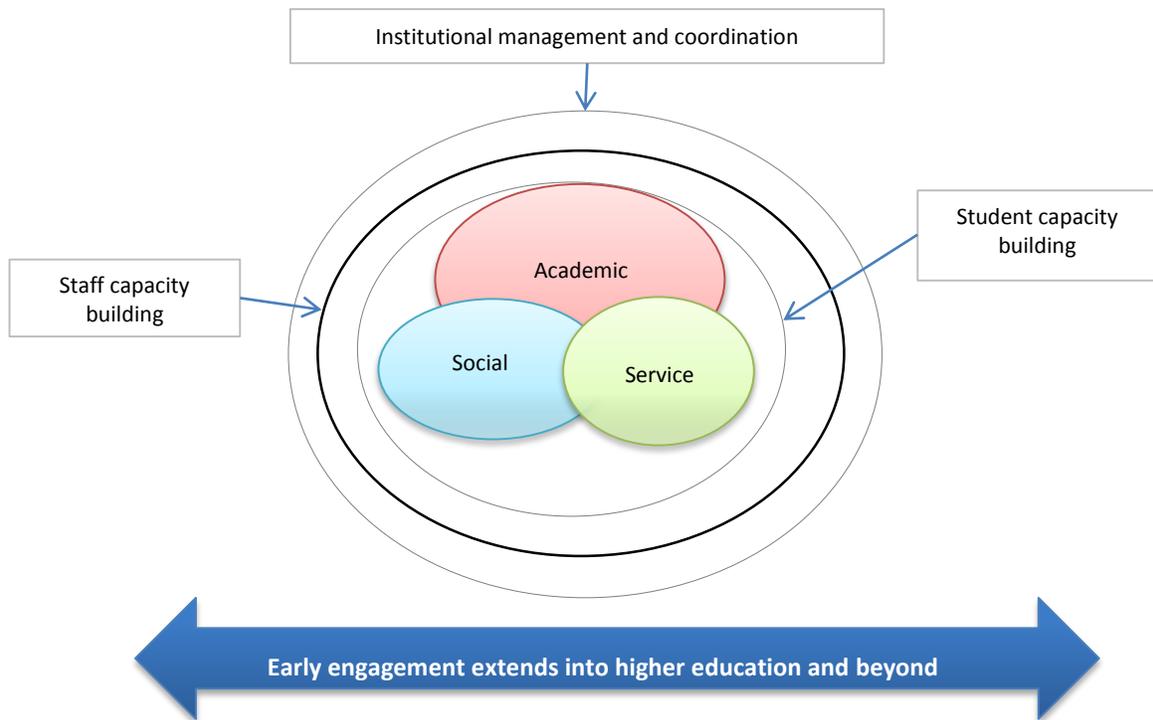
(Jackson & Livesey, 2014, p. 221)

We will review and assess our findings on Ontario universities' strategies, programs and services for international students (IS) against this framework at the end of the report. This analysis is presented in Appendix B.

Research Methodology

We focused on universities' strategies, programs and services for undergraduate IS. Our research excluded colleges and other postsecondary institutions. We included a representative sample of 50% of Ontario's universities that reflected diversity in geographical location, institutional size and IS student population.

There are a total of 20 provincially funded public universities in Ontario that are distributed throughout the province. Our sample included 11 universities: 3 (5 campuses) from Central Ontario, 2 from Eastern Ontario, 3 from Northern Ontario and 3 from Western Ontario.[2] Ten of the 11 institutions were located in regions that would be considered large urban population centers, ranging in size from approximately 100,000 residents to over 5 million residents. One university was located in a mid-sized center (categorized as having a population of 30,000 to 99,999 residents; Statistics Canada, 2011). Overall, 19 of the 20 public, provincially funded Ontario universities are located in large urban centres.

With regards to the sizes of the individual universities, we designated 2 as large institutions, 6 as medium-sized institutions and 3 as small institutions.[3] The total undergraduate student body at these 11 universities accounts for more than 55% of the total undergraduate student body in Ontario.[4] The percentage of international students at each institution ranged from as little as 1% to almost 20% of their total student body (the average for all Ontario universities being 10%; COU, 2015b). Please refer to Figures 2a, b and c for details on our sample.

Figure 2: University Sample Demographics (size, IS %, region)
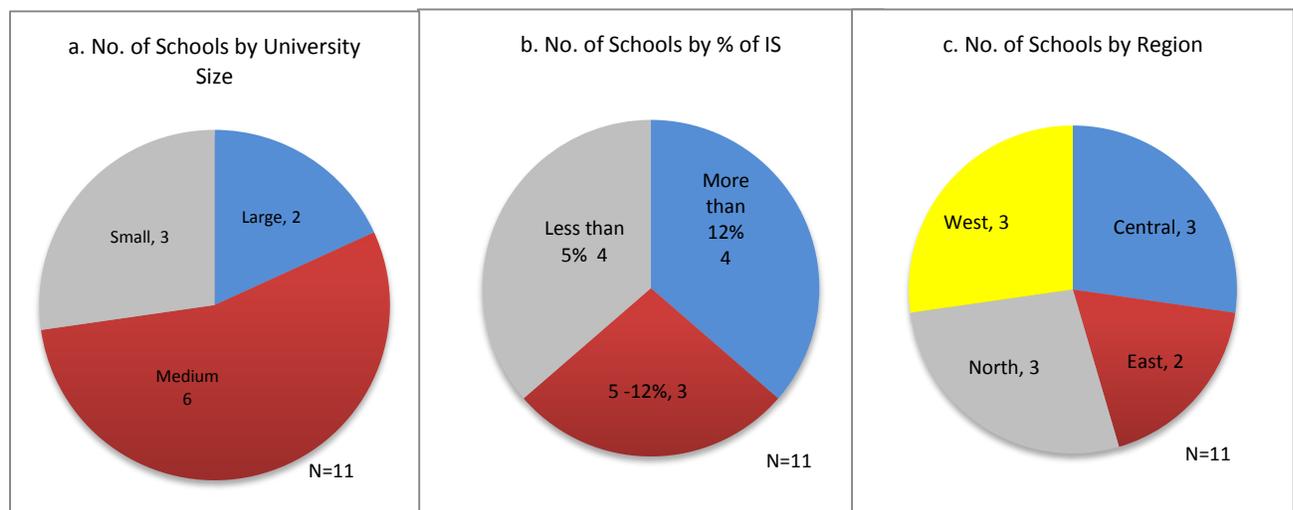
This study was composed of two data collection stages:
Stage 1: Web scan of university policies/strategies and programs/services for IS
Stage 2: Survey administered to university managers and front-line staff

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[2] Overall, Central Ontario is home to five public publicly funded universities. Four are located in Eastern Ontario, four in Northern Ontario and seven in Western Ontario.
[3] Institution size was determined by its relative full-time undergraduate enrolment as of Fall 2014. Large institutions had over 40,000 undergraduates, medium institutions had between 10,000 and 39,999 undergraduates, and small institutions had less than 10,000 undergraduates. By this designation, in Ontario there are two large, 11 medium and seven small public provincially funded universities.
[4] In 2013-2014, 406,400 undergraduate students attended Ontario universities (COU, 2015). Our sample included around 235,000 undergraduate students.

Stage 1: Web Scan of University Policies/Strategies and Programs/Services for IS

Using techniques recommended to conduct internet research (Monash University, 2004; Simon Fraser University, 2010), the research team agreed on several keywords for a systematic web scan. For example, our initial key word 'international student' came to include 'visa student' and 'foreign student.' Similarly, 'counselling' was expanded to include 'mental health,' 'cross-cultural adjustment' and 'acculturative stress support,' but was separated conceptually from academic advising. Agreeing on a set of keywords also maximized inter-coder reliability. We established some inclusion and exclusion criteria (see Appendix A: Table 1 for details) and agreed to focus on the following:

- For strategies/policies: Most recent strategy and policy documents (2012-13); a priori set of strategy documents submitted to the government (e.g., Multi-year Accountability Agreement, Strategic Mandate Agreement, etc.)

- For program and services: Review of six central university student service office websites (IS office, IS recruitment services, career services, counselling services, alumni services, language support services). As central university offices are responsible for institution-wide outreach and for serving all students, including IS, research on the websites of these offices enabled us to capture an institution-wide perspective on IS programs/services.

We also decided to capture data from all campuses affiliated with the selected institutions. As a result, our final sample of 11 universities included two multi-campus institutions, one with two campuses and the other with three campuses (for a total sample of 14 campuses). This proved a useful approach as we noted several differences in IS policy and program approaches across individual campuses affiliated with the same university. The web scans were conducted in October 2014.

Stage 2: Survey administered to University Managers and Front-line Staff

Our survey received ethics approval from York University and the University of Guelph, as well as other universities' ethics boards as requested. The survey was administered to university staff (managers and front-line staff) at the six designated university offices that were researched during the web search process. The director or head of each office was contacted via email and was asked to circulate the survey link among staff, requesting their participation (refer to Appendix C for our letter of invitation). All participants were assured complete anonymity.

The survey was intended primarily to complement data from the web searches and to assess staff's level of knowledge, perceptions and recommendations regarding provincial and university-level policies on IS, and the university's ability or inability to meet IS needs.

The survey consisted of 58 items in total. The first 23 questions were designed to capture general information, such as participant demographics, as well as familiarity with governmental, institutional and immigration policy on IS. Thereafter, participants were directed to department-specific questions

concerning IS program and service availability, use, strengths and gaps (see Appendix C for survey questions).

One hundred and four university staff from 13 out of the 14 multi-institutional campuses participated in the survey. However, not all staff who began the survey completed all questions. In addition, not all questions applied to all staff, as some were department-specific questions (e.g., 23 participants were directed to international student services/IS office questions). Table 1 shows the breakdown of survey participants by department. Participants provided this information after completing the general questions section on the survey. Surveys were administered from December 1, 2014 to February 20, 2015.

Table 1: Breakdown of Survey Participants by Department

Department	Number of Participants
International student services	23
International student recruitment	19
Language services	8
Counselling services	8
Career services	4
Alumni services	3
Other:	
General academic support	5
International relations	2
Vice-provost/dean	2
Academic administration	1
Undeclared	29

Data Entry and Analysis

The data collected from the web searches was entered into both individual Excel sheets for each campus as well as a compiled summary sheet that offered an overview of the data for all campuses (see Appendix A: Figure 21). The survey was mounted on a Qualtrics website that was hosted and managed by the University of Guelph. All responses, particularly from the open-ended questions, were coded and the final stage of data analysis was conducted in SPSS. Several cross-tabulations were conducted to identify patterns between participant demographics, institutional characteristics and IS policy, programs and services.

Reliability and Validity

Validity of the measures (both web scan and survey) was explored by systematically mapping the categories/survey questions onto our three broad research questions (see Appendix A: Figure 22). This was done to assess whether the content we set out to capture through our research questions was being reflected consistently within our data sets. This mapping matrix was continuously updated as new categories or codes were created.

Limitations

As noted, both website searches and survey data are time-bound and are only reliable and useful if they are kept up to date. In conducting our website research, we focused mainly on services offered exclusively to IS and tailored specifically to address their needs. We therefore excluded generic services available to all students. In addition, we also did not scan faculty-specific websites. Our survey data were limited by the fact that participation in the surveys was voluntary and not every participant responded to every applicable question. Lastly, we were not able to obtain survey participation from one of the 14 institutions.

Data Presentation and Analysis

In this section, we present the data that resulted from our web scan and survey questions. We divide our findings into three main themes: institutional policies and strategies, institutional services and programs, and IS as future immigrants.

1. Institutional Strategies/Policies

    a. Acknowledgement of government policies in institutional policy and planning documents

Our web scan search revealed that approximately half of the selected universities (6 of 11, or 55%) referenced one or more of the federal and/or provincial policies pertaining to IS. The remaining five universities did not mention them (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Do University Strategy Documents refer to Federal/Provincial IS Policies?

Webscan (N=11)
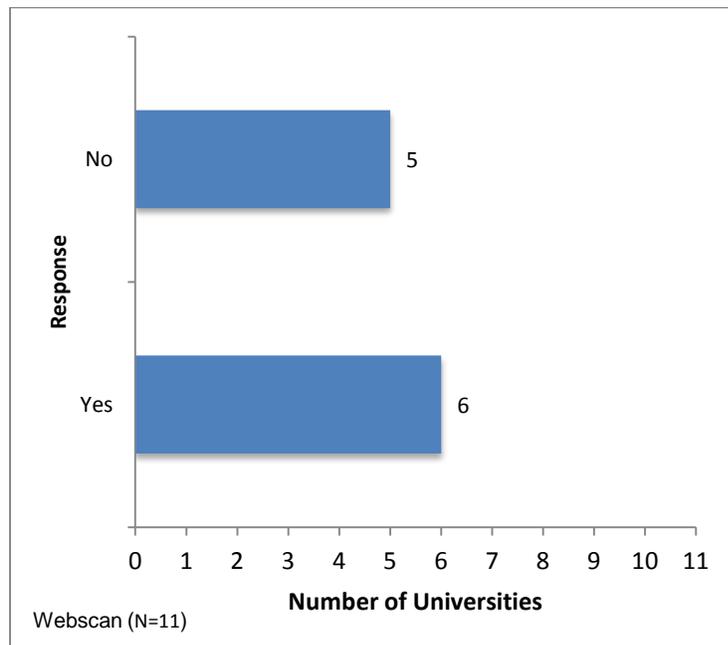
Of those that did make reference to federal/provincial policies, the policies referenced included the 2014 federal international education strategy (*Canada's International Education Strategy: Harnessing Our Knowledge Advantage to Drive Innovation and Prosperity, 2014*), the *Ontario Open Plan 2010*, *Ontario's Immigration Strategy* (2012), and Opportunities Ontario – the provincial nominee program.

Two institutions that made mention of federal/provincial policies also noted inconsistencies in provincial policy on IS. Specifically, they suggested that the existence of the Ontario government's international student recovery fee and its current lack of funding for international graduate students runs counter to the increased IS enrolment goals of the province and its universities, and ultimately serves as a disincentive for institutional recruitment.

Our web scans revealed that all 11 institutions in our sample had a statement on or made reference to institutional internationalization goals or strategies in their policy documents. Although some of the statements contained clear reference to the recruitment of IS, others positioned internationalization within the context of establishing more research links with international institutions, and/or providing more study abroad or exchange opportunities for their domestic students and institutional faculty and staff.

Five of the six universities that reference government policy on IS in their documents position their institutional IS recruitment plans within these broader policy frameworks. Notably, one of the universities that recognizes government policy on IS has chosen to steer away from strategic expansion of IS enrolment, giving priority instead to increasing spaces for domestic students.

It is also important to note that of the five universities that did not mention government strategy, four have prioritized a targeted growth of their IS body. Therefore, a total of nine out of the 11 universities (or 82%) aimed to increase the enrolment of IS at their institutions (see Figure 4). Additionally, seven of the 11 universities (64%) had clear statements suggesting that they were interested in attracting "high-quality" or "the best" IS. They framed these students as an asset to their institutions and as adding to the diversity and international experience of their domestic student populations.

Figure 4: Does the University aim to increase IS Enrolment?
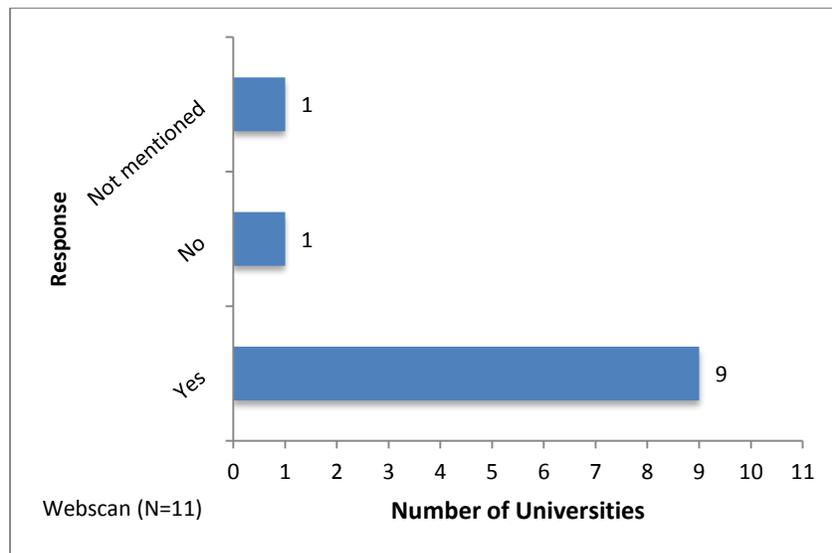
We surmise that most Ontario universities are invested in recruiting IS. However, each university reports its IS target enrolments differently. Some set an annual target, others an aggregate target, and still others set targets by level of study. This made comparison between targets difficult. We also assume that the geographical location of the universities has an impact on their recruitment goals/targets. We observed that the one institution that did not mention IS targets in its documents is situated in northern Ontario and also set its priority on its local aboriginal population. The opposite was observed for universities located in large metropolitan settings; most of them did have plans to increase their IS enrolments.

Interestingly, although nine universities set enrolment targets and all 11 universities made reference to institutional internationalization strategies, only six universities (55%) included specific policies – statements or initiatives in their strategy documents that targeted IS support and engagement. These universities discussed plans for better-developed, coherent, resource-rich and targeted IS services. These included expansion of their IS advising, counselling and academic support services, expansion of staff positions to assist IS with their transition experiences, and even building residence facilities to further accommodate an increased IS presence on campus.

b. *Staff awareness of government and institution policies*

Through our survey, we found that 59% of university personnel were aware of recent changes to federal and/or provincial government policies regarding IS. Although this represents the majority of respondents, further analysis revealed that most of the respondents who reported being aware of policy changes were managers. Front-line staff members who responded to the survey indicated that they were largely unaware of government policy changes (see Figure 5). Awareness was higher within international student service departments, where 100% of managers and 78% of front-line staff reported being aware of government policy changes.

Figure 5: Staff Knowledge of Government Policy Changes in the last five Years
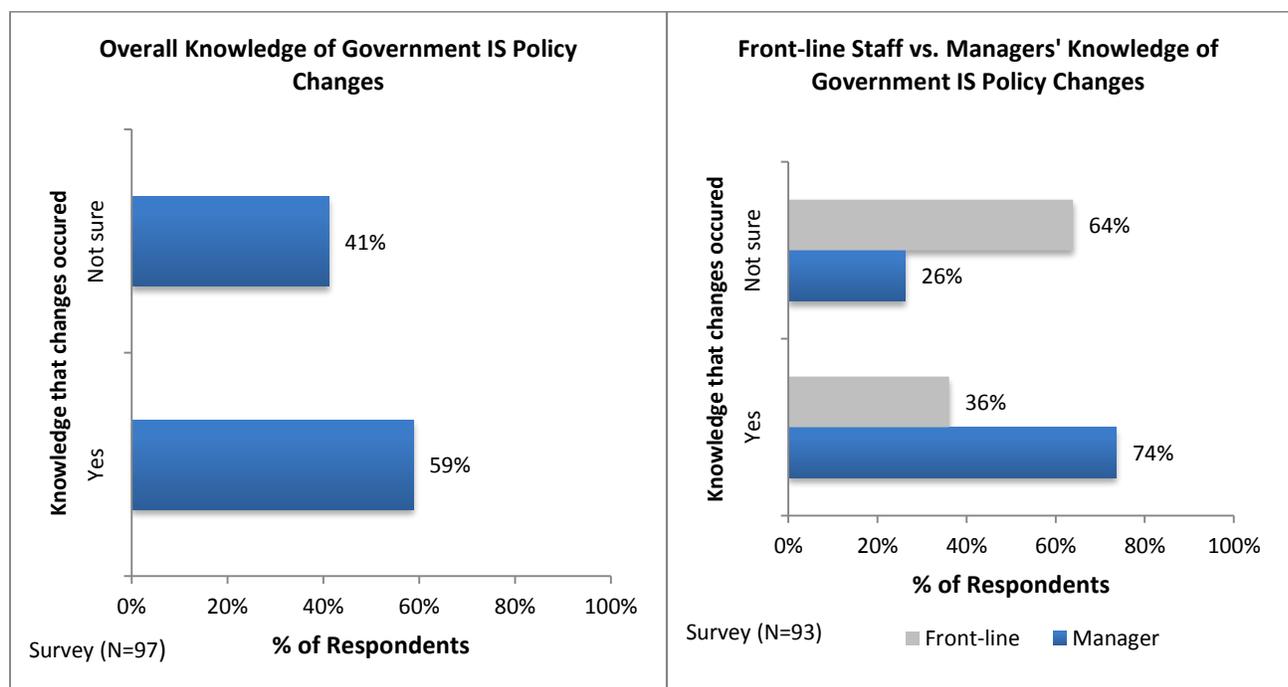
Similar to our findings regarding government policy, our survey revealed that 58% of respondents were aware of the existence of institutional policies at their universities, such as an international education strategy or a student engagement policy (see Figure 6a). Additionally, 51% of respondents were aware of changes to policies at their institutions within the last five years, with the remainder of respondents indicating that they either did not know (40%) or that there had been no changes at all (9%). The majority of respondents who were knowledgeable about these changes were once again managers; the majority of front-line staff members were unaware of university policy changes (see Figure 6b).

Figure 6: Staff Knowledge of University Policy and Policy Changes

a. Does your university have any specific policies that deal with IS?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know
- Engagement services not policy
- Forthcoming
- N/A

1.2%
1.2%
1.2%
26.7%
59.3%
10.4%

Survey (N=86)

b. Front-line vs. Managers' Knowledge of Institutional IS Policy Changes

Knowledge that changes occured

Not sure — 60% (Front-line), 27% (Manager)
No change — 6% (Front-line), 11% (Manager)
Yes — 34% (Front-line), 62% (Manager)

% Respondents

Survey (N=90)   Front-line   Manager

As with government policy, staff at international student service departments tended to be more aware of university policy existence and changes than were staff from other departments.

c. Sources of information/knowledge on government and institutional policy/strategy

For both managers and front-line staff, the most cited source of knowledge for changes in both government and institutional policies was their professional networks and colleagues. These were followed by official university-related policies and departmental meetings, with slight variations between the two groups of staff on each of these knowledge sources (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Sources of Knowledge of Government and Institutional Policy Changes among Managers and Front-line Staff
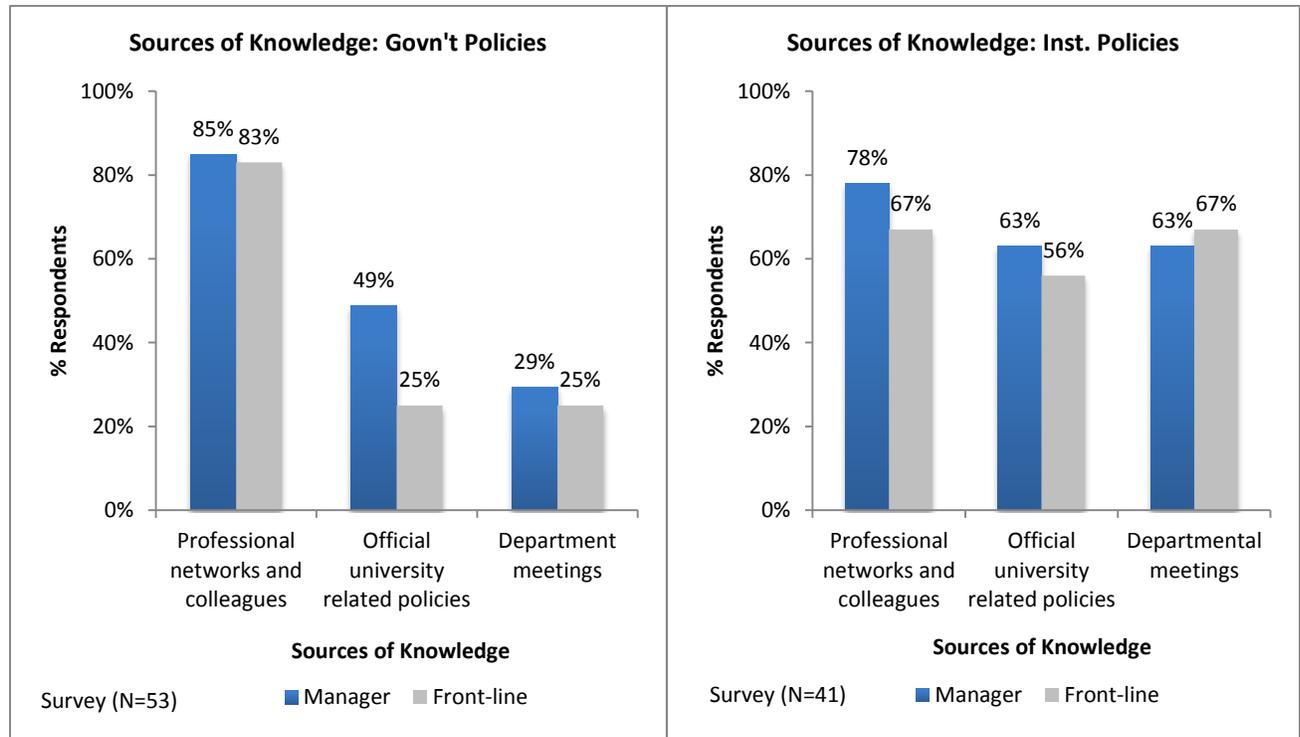
When asked about the level of institutional support that respondents received to help them understand changes related to international student policies, the vast majority (62.5%) reported receiving some support in the form of email updates, departmental memos or meetings. Only 12.5% reported receiving extensive support, such as professional training or information/knowledge provided by specialized staff, such as CIC staff (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Institutional Support to Help Staff understand Changes to IS Policies

Survey (N=88)

Legend:
- No support
- Some support (e.g. email updates, notices, departmental memos or meetings)
- Extensive support (e.g. trainings, availability of specialized personnel)
- Not applicable
- Other

Pie values: 17.0%, 62.5%, 12.5%, 2.0%, 6.0%
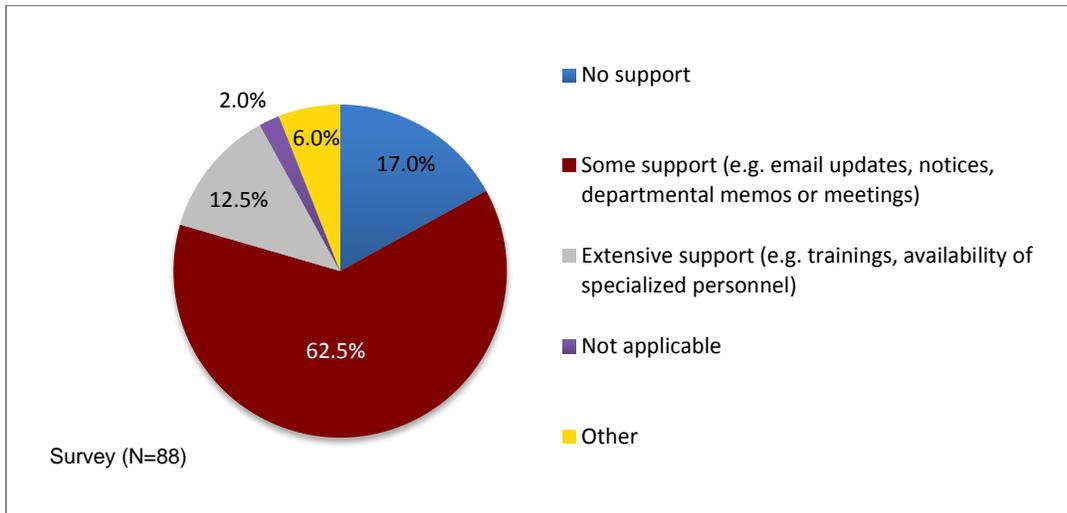
d. Reported changes to institutional services for IS as a direct result of governmental policies changes

When asked whether their university had instituted any changes to service delivery for IS in reaction to relevant government and/or institutional policy changes, 54% of survey respondents reported that changes had taken place, 6% said that no changes had taken place, and 40% did not know if any changes had taken place (see Figure 9a).

Figure 9: Changes to Service Delivery in Response to Government or Institutional Policy Changes

a. Changes in IS Service in Reaction to relevant Government and/or Institutional Policy Changes

Legend:
- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Values: 54%, 6%, 40%

Survey (N=88)

b. New Services/Changes Introduced

Changes	Number of Respondents
Changes in immigration services	25
Additional services/programs	4
Structure: new and separate office	1
Study abroad for domestic students	1

Survey (N=31)
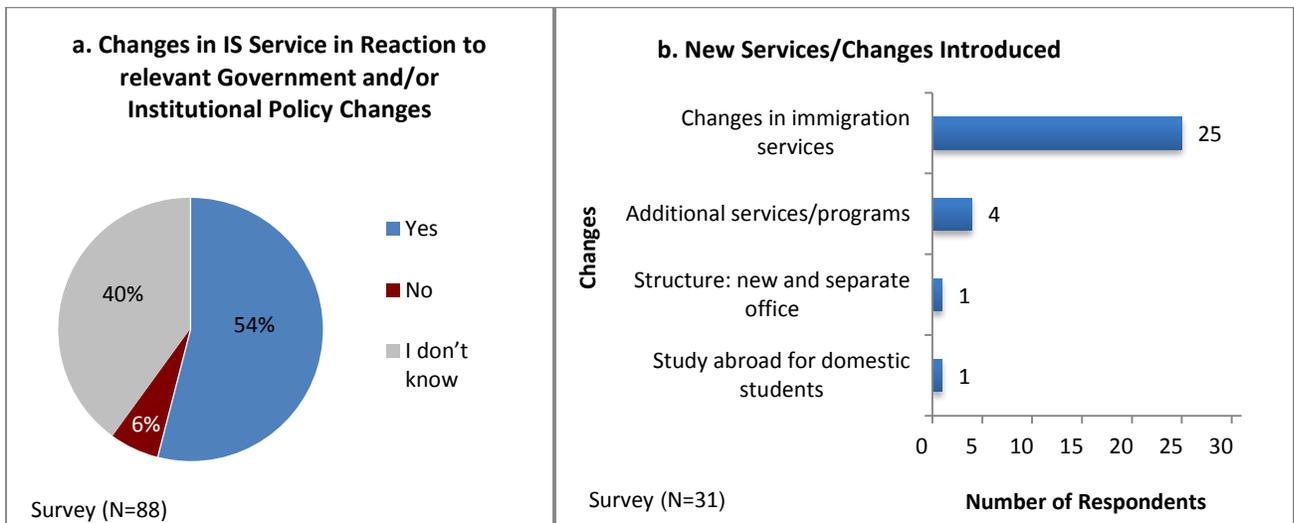
Staff that reported changes to service delivery most often noted changes in relation to the immigration services provided to IS (see Figure 9b), which occurred as a direct result of changes in CIC policy. Here, respondents noted the most recent policy change, Bill C-35 Section 91, which specifies that only individuals having completed the Immigration Consultants of Canada Regulatory Council certification program (ICCRC) can provide immigration advice. Thus, international student advisors, who in the past could provide immigration advice and services to IS, are no longer able to do so. This has meant that universities have had to introduce new staff positions by hiring licensed immigration lawyers/consultants, and/or providing one or more of their staff with the required training.

This shift has changed the workflow and responsibilities at IS offices. Whereas some universities hired or trained their staff to offer immigration services to their IS body, others did not. As one respondent noted, "We no longer offer the same level of advising services... Since Bill C35 Section 91 was passed in 2012, I am no longer able to provide immigration advising to our international student population; there are no staff at the university who are qualified to do so either."

In addition to the requirement for ICCRC certification, respondents mentioned the introduction of other new regulations and processes to address changes to immigration laws. For example, a respondent stated, "New changes to international student program by CIC... require a biannual reporting piece on the status of the international students at the institution."

Apart from changes related to immigration services, respondents reported changes to the funding model through which IS fees have been "[m]odified... to absorb the $750/head tax on international student enrolment imposed by the Ontario government." Respondents also noted the addition of services and programs such as increased ESL support, implementation of academic English programs, and "more training in relation to working with ESL speakers and cultural inclusion." Other new services included health benefits for IS, "increase in students' group programming," and the addition of new IS manuals. Additionally, structural changes were also reported; for example, the "International Student Centre became an independent unit from the broader Student Life Centre" (see Figure 9b).

2. Programs and Services for IS

a. Programs and services provided

The programs and services we identified for IS across all 11 universities were categorized into 12 engagement areas that address academic, social and professional needs (referring to career and immigration support). Some programs and services could be categorized as serving both the academic and social needs of students, as these can overlap. Figure 10 shows how the range of services and programs we encountered break down into these four engagement areas.

Figure 10: Range of University Programs and Services relevant to IS

- Orientation
- 1st year Experience
- Buddy/Mentor

Social/Academic

- Social Events
- Counselling
- Societal Integration

Social

Academic

Professional

- Language Support
- Academic Integration

- On-campus jobs
- Off-campus jobs
- Alumni
- Immigration
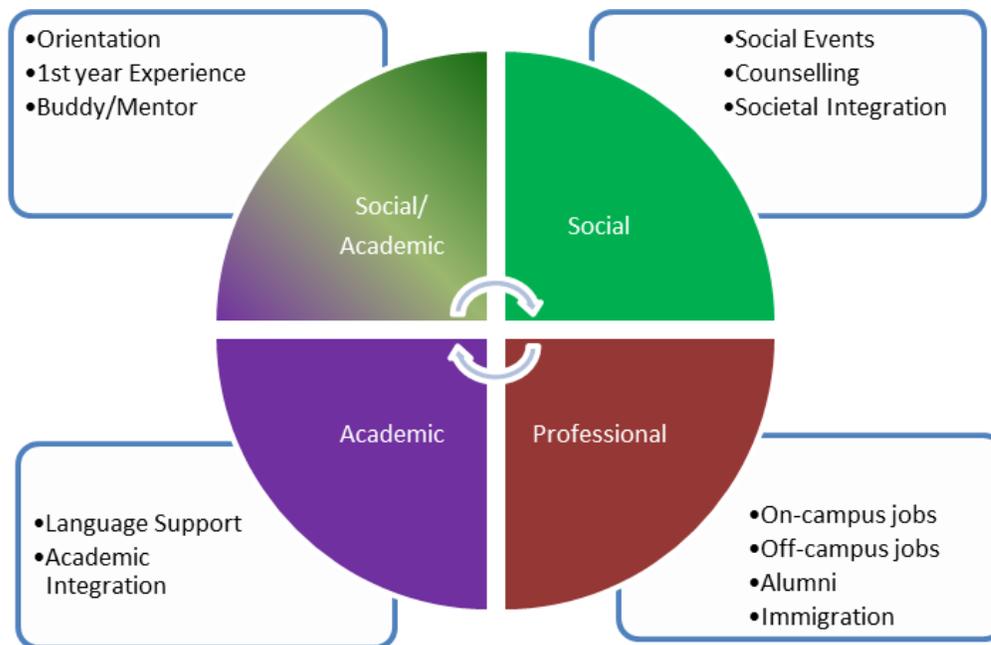
Academic

Language support was identified as a major service by almost all university campuses. These services were offered in various forms. Some campuses offered pre-admission support to improve IS' English skills, while some offered it as a bridging program. Some campuses offered support in the form of intense programs that span over a few weeks; others were drop-in services, while others were relatively long-term ongoing classes offered throughout the IS student cycle. While language support included writing workshops and assistance, there was also support that focused on the social aspects of the English language. For example, conversation programs were offered with the intent not only of improving language skills but also of increasing IS' confidence to initiate and engage in more social interactions.

Academic counselling or services that help integrate IS into the academic environment were also offered to help IS meet academic expectations (e.g., take the right courses on time) and progress in their academic endeavours. However, survey respondents identified that IS require more academic counselling on course selection early in their course of study and that course availability can be an issue.

Social

Social programing for IS was another major service offered for IS; these included both on- and off-campus events. These types of programs aimed at assisting IS to integrate into the university, the neighbouring community and broader Canadian society. They help IS meet each other and/or domestic students. In addition, counselling services and wellness workshops for IS were also available. The primary purpose of these programs was identified as assisting with the integration of IS into Canadian society, managing feelings of being overwhelmed, and/or alleviating homesickness.

Programs that addressed both social and academic needs included orientation, which was one of the most offered programs available on the university campuses. It was considered particularly important to orient IS to both their new social and academic environments, aspects that were critical for the student's transition period. First-year experience programs were offered at almost all campuses surveyed. Buddy and mentorship programs were also commonly in place and paired IS with domestic students or with other senior IS students.
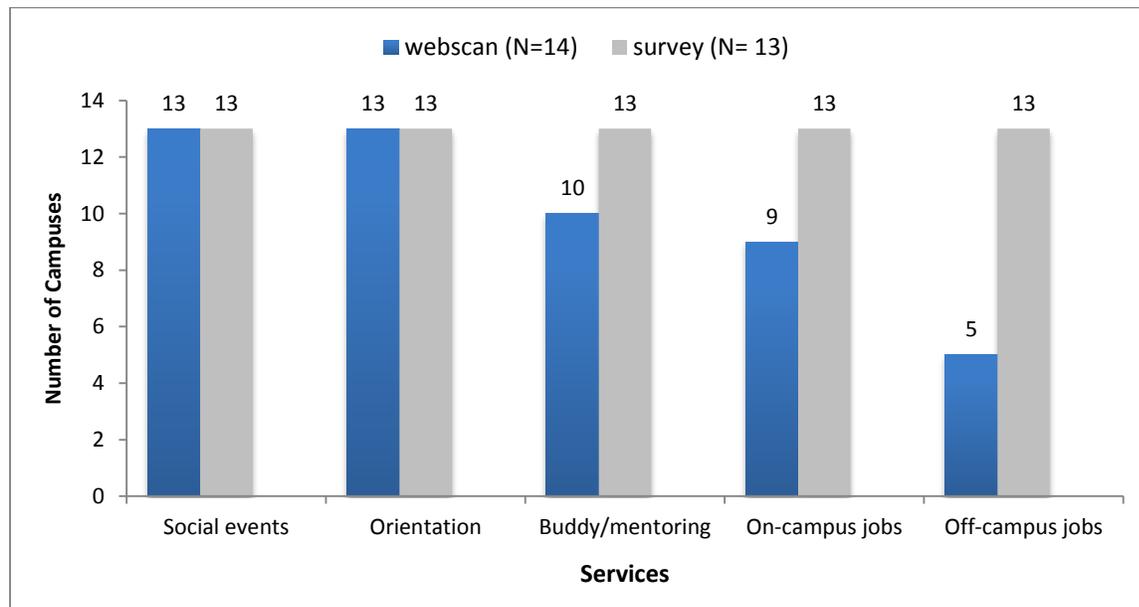
Professional
In our web scan, we identified programs and services for IS' on-campus and off-campus career pursuits. All staff from the career departments surveyed stated that they offer career-specific services for IS who plan to stay in Canada. Career services included resume writing and refining job interview and job search skills. However, both our web scan and survey data revealed that there were more services that connect IS with on-campus employment than those that connect them with off-campus employers.

Although there was mention of support specifically to prepare IS for work in Canada after graduation, career preparation programs took the form of workshops or one-on-one advising in a more general sense, and were not centered specifically around IS' professional needs. Some respondents suggested that more could be done to tailor career counselling to IS' specific needs, including offering them more experiential learning, practical opportunities, and orienting them towards cultural differences between IS and Canadian employers. With regards to alumni programs and services, only one campus flagged IS as a specific target group. However, specialized programs and services were not clearly outlined.

Immigration services, such as support with study permits, work permits and permanent residence applications, were offered by universities in multiple forms. Our web scans revealed that all of the institutions provided links to relevant pages on the CIC website to assist with both visa and work permit issues, as well as permanent residence queries. With regards to one-on-one immigration advising, some university websites explicitly stated that university staff were prohibited by law from providing immigration advice to IS. Only one university website reported that it provides immigration advice to its IS student body. Our survey respondents confirmed the availability of some immigration support for most campuses surveyed. However, as mentioned previously, immigration advice services have been affected by changes in CIC policy.

While both web scan findings and survey respondents indicated the strong presence of social events and orientation programs, when it came to other services such as buddy or mentoring programs, fewer were listed on institutional websites than reported through the survey (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Number of Campuses acknowledging Service Availability (web scan versus survey data)
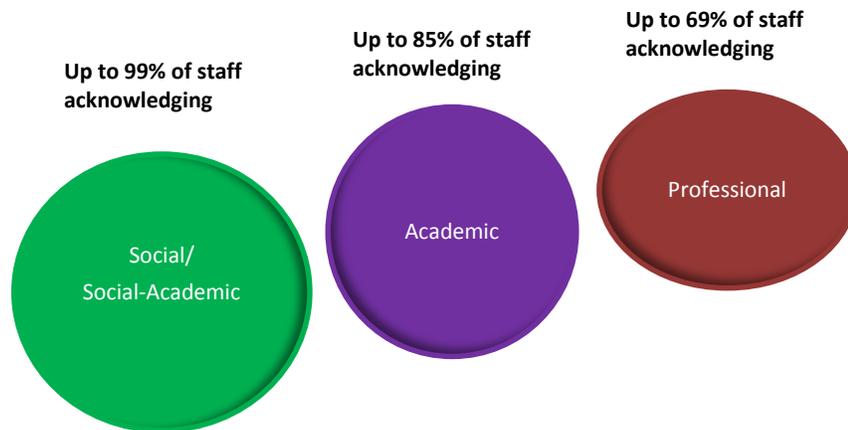

This discrepancy was especially high for professional services, such as assistance with finding on-campus and especially off-campus jobs. These were not found to be advertised on some campus websites, though survey respondents from these same campuses acknowledged their availability.

These discrepancies could be due to a number of factors, including social desirability (i.e., university staff wanting to convey that their campus offers all services), misinterpretation of services (i.e., university staff may have falsely identified their services as falling under the service categories we identified when perhaps they did not) and/or the tendency for university websites to become outdated and fail to mention certain programs. It may reflect communication gaps and barriers between the staff that maintain the websites and those who operate the programs. Regardless, this suggests that institutional websites often do not reveal the entire range of IS programs or services offered.

Overall, we found that staff reported a higher number of IS programs and services that support IS' social needs than programs and services supporting their academic or especially their professional needs. For example, while up to 99% of staff surveyed acknowledged the availability of university services that fall into the social/social-academic category, the maximum percentage of staff that acknowledged academic services for IS was 85%. Furthermore, less than 70% reported being aware of the availability of professional services for IS (see Figure 12). Similarly, campus websites mention social programs for IS with more frequency than they do services addressing professional needs. On the whole, both staff comments and campus website information indicated that professional programs are less frequently acknowledged to be available than social programs.

Figure 12: Professional Programs/Service acknowledged by University Staff (survey data)

Up to 99% of staff acknowledging

Up to 85% of staff acknowledging

Up to 69% of staff acknowledging

Social/ Social-Academic

Academic

Professional

b. *Perceived strengths and gaps*

Participants in the survey were asked to identify strengths and gaps in their IS programs and services. Content analysis of their responses revealed that respondents identified the same issues as both strengths and gaps.

➢ Perceived strengths:

Respondents perceived the availability of targeted services that "recognize the need to have specialized programming for this population" as the number one strength. Within this category, they include targeted communication and social programs for IS as strengths (see Figure 13 for complete rankings of identified programs and services strengths).

Figure 13: Perceived Strengths of Programs and Services offered to IS Students
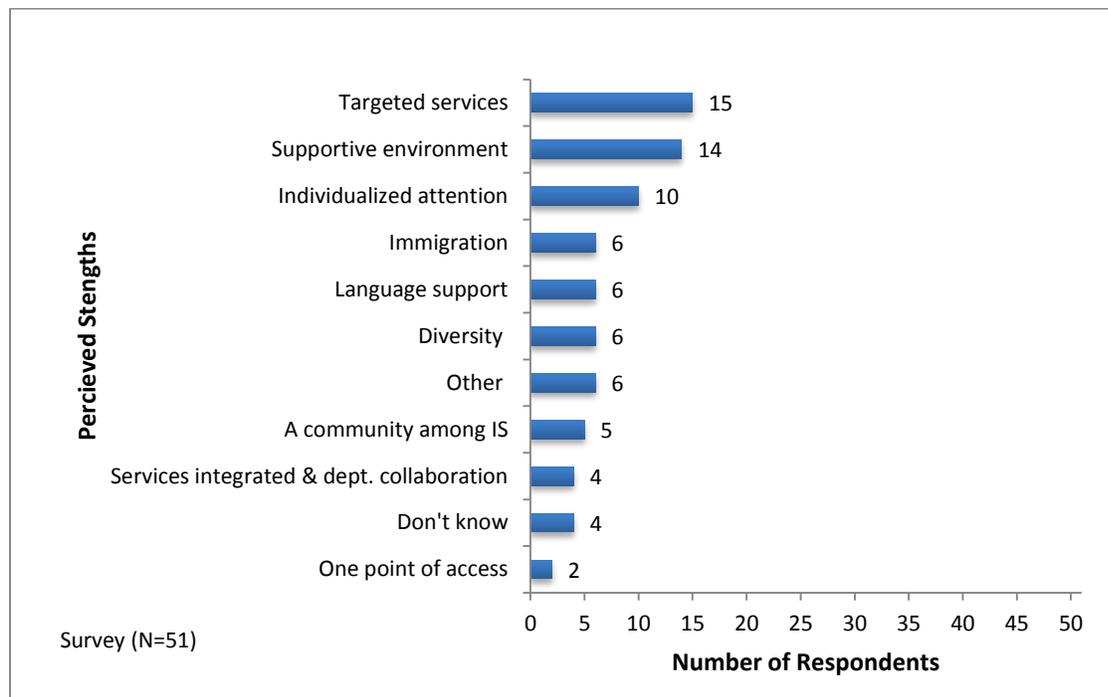
Next, staff identified providing IS with a supportive environment as an asset. This includes welcoming and accommodating IS in a manner in which staff and faculty "go beyond their line of duty to help out students or respond to emergency situations." Some respondents suggested that this supportive environment is not restricted to the academic setting but includes the ways in which staff "help the students feel welcomed and allow them to adjust to not only [to] post-secondary education, but the cultural change they experience here as well."

Individualized attention ranked third, and here respondents stressed personalized and one-to-one support. Most respondents from small and mid-sized universities identified individualized attention as their main strength. They noted, "The main strength at […] is our ability to give most international students individualized attention, due to a smaller number of international students." Respondents from small universities noted that IS in their institutions "know where to go." One respondent believed that this strength made up for limited staff and funding resources: "I am confident that the large majority international students would agree that the level of service and support they receive meets or exceeds their expectation in spite of the department's limited resources."

We clustered the perceived strengths as reported by staff into academic, social and professional services.

Academic
Some staff reported that their institution started offering targeted services for departments/programs of study. Academic preparation programs were highlighted as strengths, as they assist with IS' first-year

transition. English language programs, including writing skills support, were also identified as strengths. Integrating life skills within the academic English program was perceived as a strength as it "helps students integrate in the Canadian environment."

Social
Orientation and transition programs were identified as being an important reflection of the fact that institutions are "mindful of the first-year international student experience." In addition, services that help with "soft landing, orientation and ongoing communication and support" were highlighted, such as social orientation programs, academic bridge programs and language support.

Providing IS with a supportive environment that is welcoming and accommodating and where staff and faculty "go beyond their line of duty" was highlighted as an important strength. Respondents also acknowledged services that help IS create a community with other IS on campus. Helping IS develop a sense of belonging was also considered a core strength, as were programs aimed at helping IS integrate with domestic students.

Professional
Respondents noted the availability of immigration support through ICCRC-certified immigration advisors as a strength in their services. One respondent boasted that their institution was the "only one of the very few universities that offer immigration advising by certified Immigration Consultants – which we have 3 currently on staff and 2 more to be certified by April 2015."

➢ Perceived gaps:
As noted above, offering targeted services for IS was considered by most administrators surveyed to be a strength. Paradoxically, not being able to offer targeted services was identified as the major gap by other institutional staff (see Figure 14 for complete ranking of gaps identified in programs and services).

Figure 14: Perceived Gaps of Programs and Services offered to IS Students

Survey (N=52)
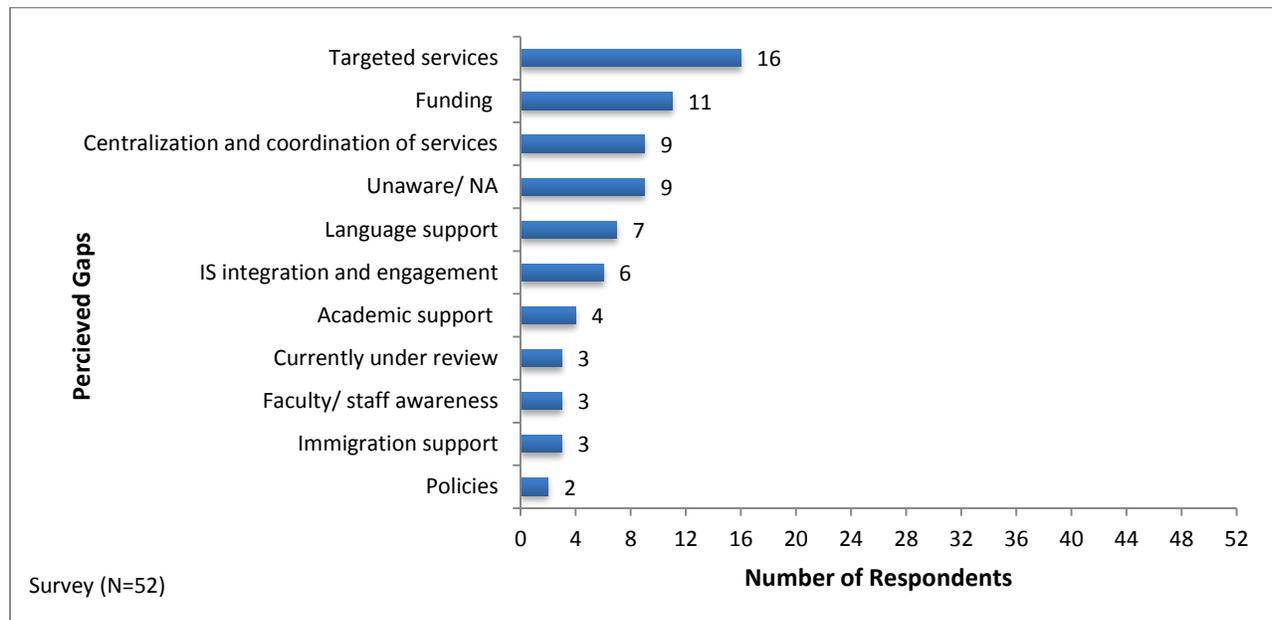
The second most common gap or challenge was funding for programs, services and staff, especially "as international student numbers are projected to increase, more support staff will be needed, as well as an increased programming space." Insufficient financial support for IS was also identified as a gap in available services.

The third most important gap identified was centralization and coordination of services, as "programs for international students tend to be scattered across different departments. We don't always know what other folks are doing on campus. I imagine this must make the system very difficult for students to navigate ... [a] central location for services and resources would be great." Staff also noted the importance of "broader integration of the international student experience into content and programming… across the undergraduate student experience." They expressed disappointment at being a "decentralized university," as this has meant "uneven delivery of [IS] support services."

We clustered the perceived gaps as reported by staff into academic, social and professional services.

Academic
Language support programs and services beyond the early stages of IS life were identified as insufficient at some universities. Respondents noted the need for ongoing ESL support and more editing, proofreading and writing support beyond ESL classes. Some staff stated that IS express the need to have access to such services but they are not currently offered. Others highlighted the need to address IS' academic needs proactively by connecting them with academic accommodation service units as early as possible in order to benefit from available academic support.

University staff noted that integration into the academic environment and its expectations was an area to be improved in order to better meet academic engagement needs. Survey respondents identified that IS require more counselling in course selection early on, as course availability can be an issue. The lack of communication between academic and non-academic units was stated as a challenge by some, while others reported a notable gap in faculty members' perceived lack of understanding of the special needs of IS.

Social

Respondents at most institutions indicated that programming aimed specifically at assisting IS integrate into Canada was available at their institution. However, data indicated that culturally appropriate counselling services targeted specifically to IS' transition and sociocultural needs are not often readily available. In fact, some respondents from counselling departments stated that IS' feelings of isolation and desire to build friendships with domestic students need to be addressed. Staff from various departments at some institutions noted the need for the improvement and expansion of social events that bring IS and domestic students together. It is interesting to note that in our web scan, we noticed that one university conflated IS with first-generation students, marketing their peer mentoring program on the IS services website. This may indicate a possible lack of understanding of the different needs of the two distinct student groups. Overall, respondents pointed to the need for more pre-arrival programming and for better coordinated efforts between different departments.

Professional

Many respondents stressed the need for more upper-year and alumni programming pertaining to immigration and career advising. Providing immigration support through certified advisors was stressed. Most respondents from the career department stated that half to three-quarters of IS express an interest in working in Canada after graduation. However, they indicated that several roadblocks exist to this transition that could be addressed by improving services and staff support early on in the student cycle. According to some staff, there could be more opportunities to offer counselling better tailored to IS' specific needs. Staff reported that IS expressed a need for support in the form of cover letter and resume writing and feedback, as well as mock interviews. Specifically, staff suggested the need to reach IS early enough to build a foundation for post-graduation employment (enough time to make a plan), to orient IS to cultural differences that may exist between IS and employers, and to create (more) specialized programs that would help IS gain practical experience.

Survey respondents from the alumni department stated that they do offer alumni services to IS, such as assistance with career, networking with alumni, insurance, banking and continuing education, but not information or support on immigration issues for IS alumni. However, as per our web scan, only one university advertised alumni services tailored specifically for IS. Overall, while these seem to be services generally available to all (domestic and IS) students/alumni, data on the specific nature of post-graduation career and alumni services for IS were not easily accessible through the web scan, nor were they reported by survey respondents.

Many programs and services within the three engagement areas (academic, social and professional) are available. However, most are time-specific, i.e. offered during a specific phase of the IS student cycle. For example, there is an abundance of pre-admission language programs, orientation and first-year experience

programs offered during first year. However, as mentioned, academic and professional programs and services, and programs and services targeting upper-year IS are not offered as consistently and intensively. Staff described the lack of integration and coordination of programs and services between university departments. This disjunction makes referrals to the right program difficult. IS and staff do not always seem to be aware of which services are offered and where. Therefore, meeting IS' social, academic and professional engagement needs is not just an issue of providing additional services and/or of tailoring available services to IS' specific needs, but also one of improving the accessibility of these programs and services to both IS and staff through better advertisement and intra-campus coordination.

3. IS as Future Immigrants and Universities' Role

We asked university staff about the percentage of international students who express an interest in working in Ontario after graduation, their perceptions of the factors that facilitate and hinder their immigration, and the support they need to help IS who wish to pursue this opportunity.

a. Staff awareness of IS intentions to pursue permanent residence in Ontario

When asked whether they are aware of IS' intentions with regards to pursuing permanent residence in Ontario after graduation, 71% of the respondents were not sure of IS intentions (see Figure 15).

Figure 15: Percentage of International Students who express an Interest in working in Ontario after Graduation

How many IS at your institution express an interest in becoming a PR of Ontario?

- 10% to 24%
- 25% to 49%
- 50% to 74%
- Over 75%
- I don't know

8%
7%
10%
4%
71%

Survey (N=76)
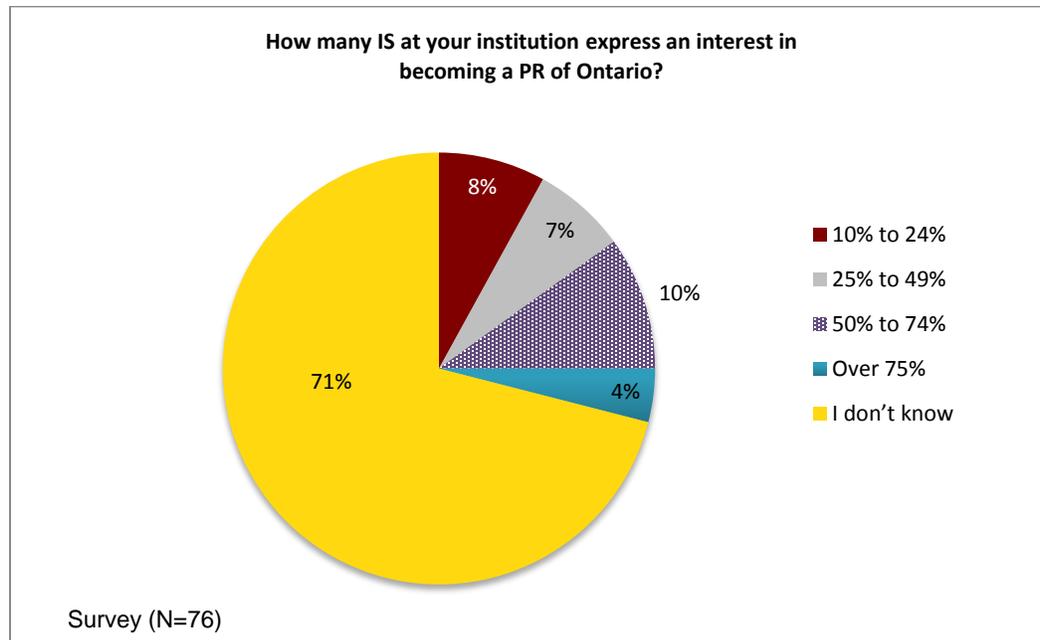
b. Staff perceptions of factors that facilitate/hinder IS transition to PR status

Approximately 40% of our survey sample attempted to identify factors that they perceived to facilitate/ hinder IS transition to PR status. The low percentage of responses is perhaps a reflection of the low number of staff who interact directly with IS and/or on a one-on-one basis. Additionally, as noted above, the majority of participants indicated that they were unaware of IS' intentions to become permanent residents (see Figure 15). This also contributed to the low number of responses for factors that may facilitate or hinder IS' transition to PR status, as the 72% of respondents who were unaware of IS' intentions did not comment on these factors.

Career prospects, immigration policies and prospects to apply for PR, and sense of belonging emerged as the three most important factors that facilitate and/or hinder IS transition as future immigrants (see Figures 16 and 17).

Figure 16: Factors that facilitate IS Transition to PR Status
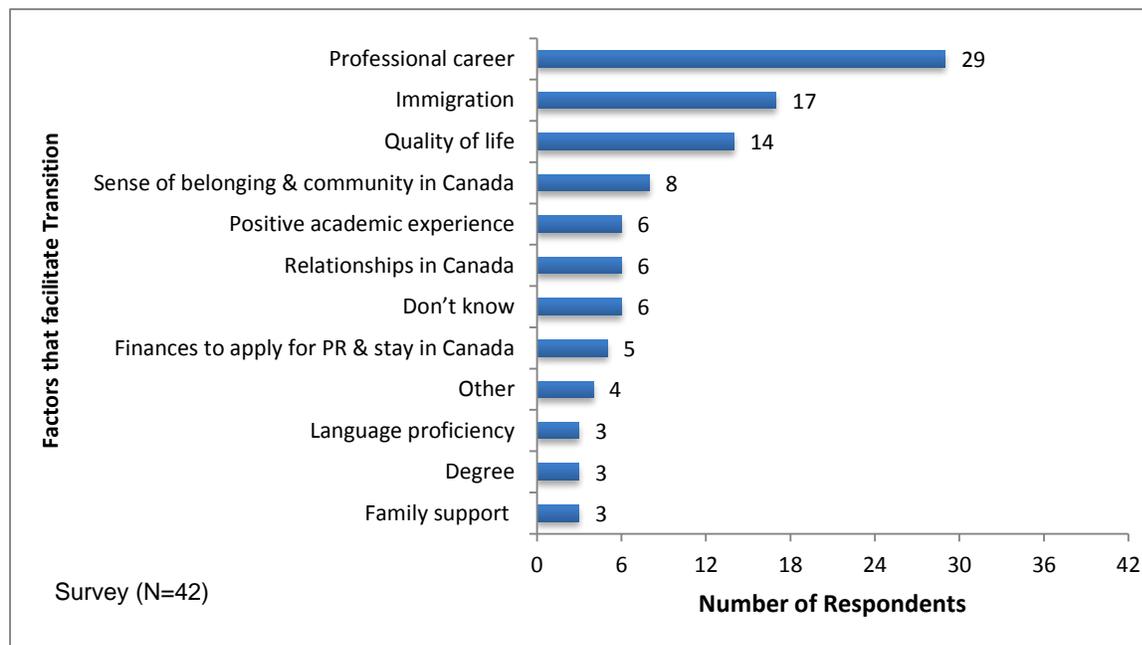
Figure 17: Factors that hinder IS Transition to PR Status
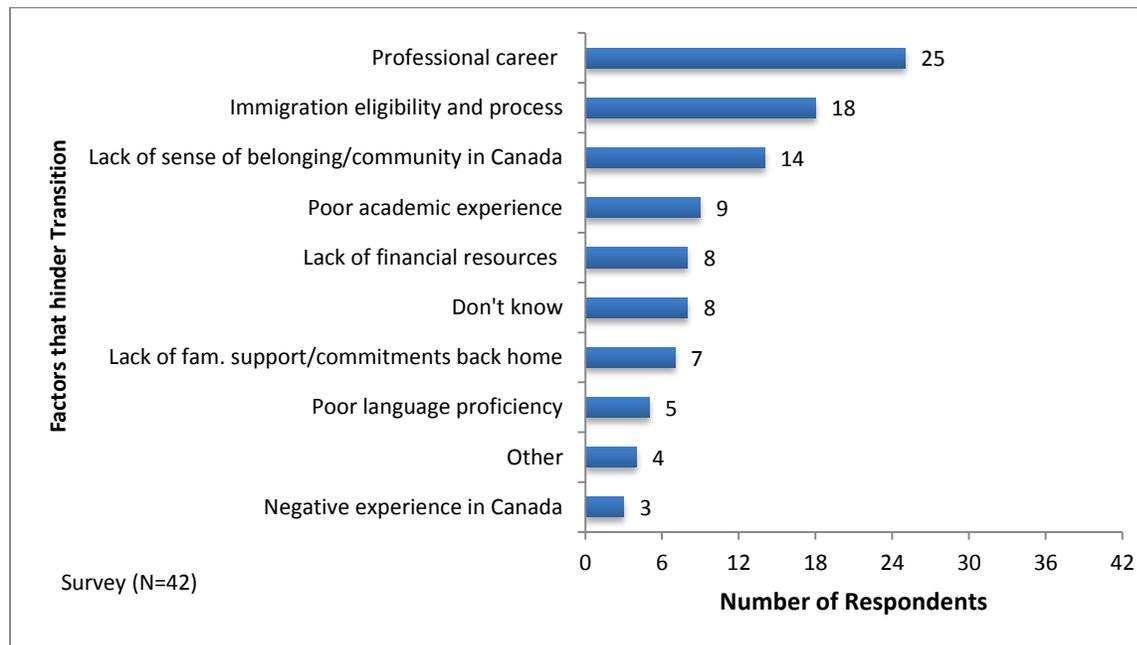
Professional career prospects

The most cited factor that was perceived to facilitate IS' transition to permanent residence was availability of jobs and perceived positive career prospects. Securing job offers before or immediately after graduation, or at least having perceived positive employment opportunities to work in Canada after graduation, was perceived to be an important factor in facilitating IS' transition to PR status. However, some respondents noted that IS were not looking for 'just any job'; they looked forward to meaningful employment that is related to their field of study and interests and that has future career growth prospects. To achieve this goal, respondents noted the importance of providing IS with proper career advising and support. On- and off-campus work experience and volunteering were acknowledged to be important factors to help IS securing jobs after graduation.

Looking at the other side of the coin, respondents noted poor career prospects/job opportunities as the main obstacle for IS' transition into PR status. The perceived limited labour market in Ontario was alleged to be a major deterrent for IS. One respondent stated, "There simply are no jobs, for anybody, regardless of their immigration status." IS' inability to secure jobs in Ontario was not just limited to the perceived unavailability of jobs but was also linked to IS' inability to navigate the Canadian labour market, as they might lack "networking… and marketable skills." Other respondents highlighted that IS' lack of Canadian work/volunteer experience was a major obstacle. This may stem partially from the "[lack of] paid scholarships for research or paid co-op placements."

Immigration eligibility and process and prospects to apply for PR

Factors that staff considered important under this category included the availability of immigration support, meeting eligibility criteria, length of immigration process, obtaining permits to work post-graduation, and securing approved National Occupational Classification (NOC) skill level jobs (see Figure 18).

Figure 18: Staff Reports of IS Immigration Concerns

Survey (N=18)
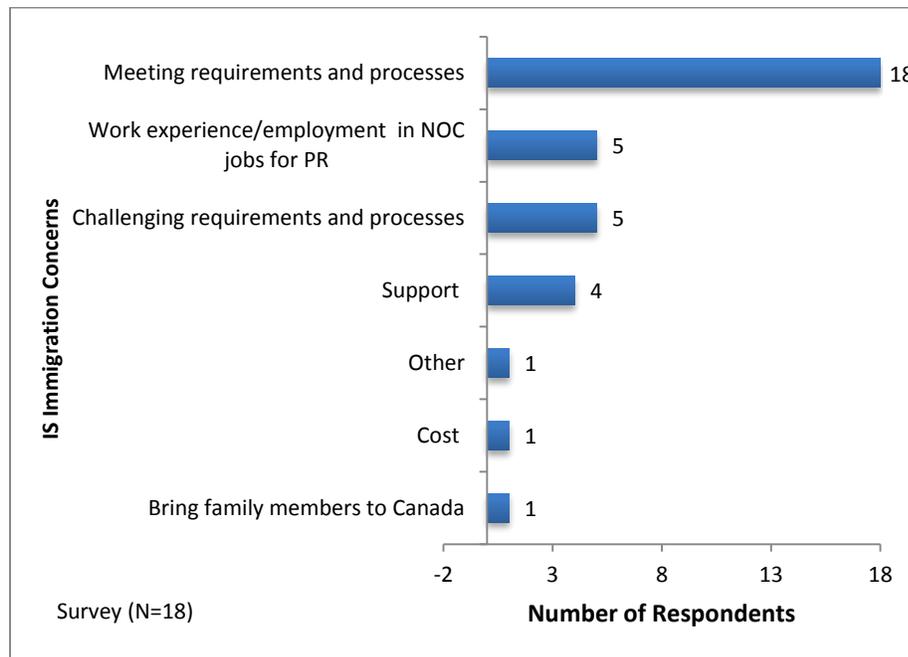
International student services staff reported that IS were particularly concerned about meeting immigration eligibility requirements and following the application process. For example, staff reported that IS express concerns about maintaining legal status, especially when it comes to extending/renewing study permits, temporary resident visas and work permits. Furthermore, meeting immigration eligibility with regards to work experience and the perceived challenging, complicated and unclear application process were also cited as concerns that IS have in their pursuit of changing their status from IS to permanent resident. In particular, respondents highlighted perceived "bureaucracy," "complicated paperwork," "systemic difficulties" in the immigration processes and "changing immigration policies" as factors hampering IS' transition to PR status.

Others suggested that IS' "lack of understanding of the immigration process and [awareness of] options available" as well as regional differences become major challenges for IS. For this reason, the availability of immigration support services at institutions was reported by respondents to be a very important factor facilitating IS' transition to PR. Yet staff lamented that "[t]he government and community resources in terms of immigration advising and assistance with this process in our region of northern Ontario is practically non-existent." A facilitating factor identified by staff, however, was the perceived "ease of application under current Canadian Experience Class (CEC)" and the availability of different immigration routes.

Quality of life and sense of belonging

The next most important factors influencing IS' application for PR status according to university staff included quality of life and sense of belonging and community in Canada. Respondents listed perceived "higher living standards" and "better living conditions" in Canada compared to IS' home country as factors facilitating application to PR. They noted that IS are more inclined to stay if they perceive Canada to be providing them and their families with better "social security," "political stability," "cultural exposure" and "a safer living situation" than their home countries. "Feeling a sense of community" and "a welcoming environment" are important factors to ensure "engagement in academic and larger community" and "integration into Canadian culture." This is made easier by a strong "support network" and through communities that help IS maintain their "cultural identity and integrat[e] into their community of choice." On the other hand, IS' sense of isolation and alienation "as though there are [no] people to turn to for advice and help or to connect them to resources" was perceived as a hindrance affecting their ability to integrate as future immigrants.

c. Supports needed to improve programs and services

When asked in an open-ended question about the kind of support that would help staff provide better programs and services to assist IS with immigration matters (including applying for permanent residency), the majority of respondents identified the need for more support from CIC (see Figure 19).

Figure 19: Sources of Support identified by Staff to facilitate better Assistance with Immigration Matters
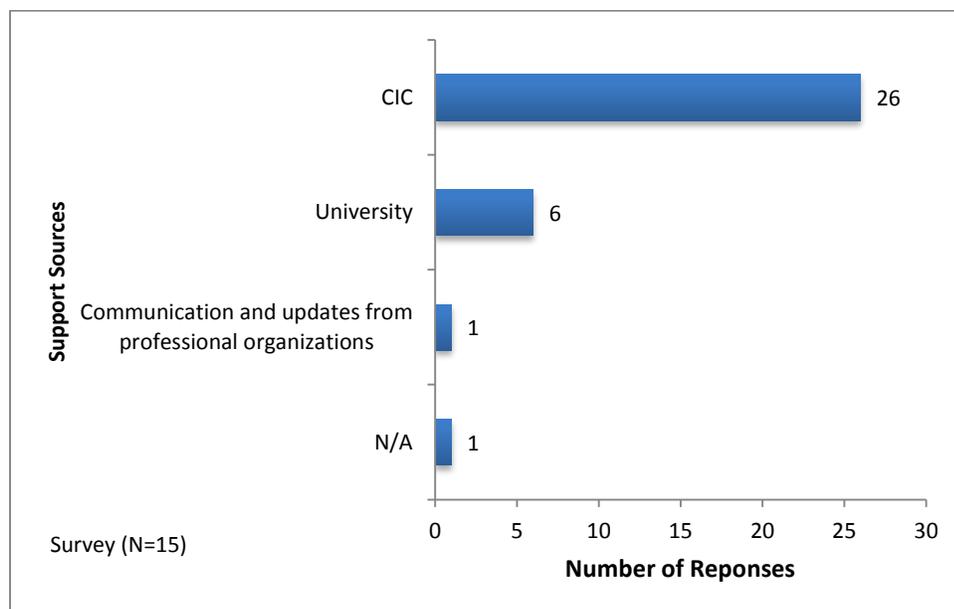
CIC

Respondents highlighted the need for clear, consistent and updated information from CIC staff on new policies and procedures. They expressed an interest in connecting with CIC before new policies are implemented. For this purpose, they requested direct access and closer contact with CIC officials. Based on

staff responses, there seemed to be a general call for CIC to initiate outreach activities to improve accessibility of information.

Some staff recommended more student-friendly resources, such as handouts and online videos in multiple languages that would help direct and advise IS. Regular visits and workshops by CIC processing agents to campuses were identified as a need, especially when it comes to detailed information on issues such as NOC titles/job descriptions and the state of the labour market.

The lack of availability of settlement services for IS was identified as a challenge. One respondent noted, "Settlement services for all age groups are provided in the community by CIC EXCEPT for university-level students." Another respondent noted that "CIC or the federal government should provide additional funding to institutions to provide these services if they plan to keep increasing the intake of international students in Canada."

Universities
As for support needed from universities, respondents noted the need for more funding to address staff and resources shortages. This funding would help "increase/improve services," increase "training opportunities relevant to post-secondary immigration issues," and ensure that "all the employees [are] certified as RCIC to support requests for PR information" and "reach a larger pool of students." Respondents also noted that senior administration could show "increased awareness and appreciation of the value of these services."

Professional organizations
Some respondents referred to the roles that the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) and Student Advisory Chapter (SACE)[5] play. They called for more collaboration and communication between professionals in the international education field through discussion forums and listservs. As discussed earlier, our findings highlight the important role that professional networks are currently performing in disseminating professional knowledge (see Figure 7).

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[5] SACE is a professional interest group within the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) that provides support to international student advisors. See http://net.cbie.ca/english/membership/chapters_sace_e.htm

Key Findings

1. Institutional Strategies/Policies

➤ Our study revealed that federal and provincial government policies to attract IS have been acknowledged by Ontario universities on their websites. Universities for the most part recognize, report and respond to these policies in their institutional strategies, policies and services. Most Ontario universities are committed to IS recruitment and increasing IS enrolments. In this sense, there is close alignment between federal, provincial and university policies.

➤ There are a few exceptions to this finding. Our web scan found that some university websites do not make explicit the institution's alignment with government policy. Of course, a lack of mention of policy orientation does not necessarily translate into a lack of alignment between an institution and government policy.

➤ Most university staff are aware of government policies pertaining to IS (59% of our survey sample), and fewer (51%) are aware of institutional IS policies. However, this awareness was not uniform across respondents, with managers reporting greater awareness than front-line staff.

➤ Awareness and knowledge are also variable across the student service offices, with staff from international student offices (both managers and front-line staff) reporting higher levels of awareness than staff from other central student support services such as careers, alumni, language centers and counselling.

➤ It is encouraging to find that professional networks and colleagues are a major source of information on government and institutional policies pertaining to IS. This strong professional network can be leveraged to enhance collegial and institutional cooperation, collaboration and sharing of best practices.

2. Services and Programs for IS

➤ Most Ontario university campuses have international student offices and offer a range of programs and services specific to the needs of IS. By virtue of their size, smaller institutions are often in a position to offer a wider range of one-on-one services.

➤ Staff report that limited funding and resources challenge their ability to address IS' diverse needs.

➤ While a wide range of programs and services addressing IS' social, academic and professional engagement needs are reported, staff report the existence of a greater number of social programs, especially in the first year, compared to academic and professional programs. In particular, there is a gap in programs and services for IS in later years of study. Although we cannot comment whether or not domestic students also experience similar gaps in service in their later years of study, our previous research indicates that IS report a gap in services and programs during the different stages of their student life (Scott et al., 2015).

➤ Respondents reported a need for programs that broaden IS' social and career networks beyond the IS and campus communities. On-going language competency programs and programs to enhance interactions between domestic and international students are needed.

➤ Respondents reported a lack of integration of programs and services, and a lack of coordination and communication between departments and programs.

> ➢ Despite the variety of services offered to IS, not all services are known to staff and/or seem to be clearly advertised on university websites. This has repercussions on IS' awareness of the availability of these services and their ability to access them. We caution here that our research did not capture data on social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, which universities may be using to announce activities and workshops.

> ➢ Universities are under constant pressure to secure more resources and introduce new staffing positions. Most directly, universities have been impacted by immigration policy changes. In particular, Bill-C35 Section 91 has meant the introduction of new staff positions (licensed immigration lawyers/consultants) and/or training for staff certification programs through the ICCRC. For these reasons, the role and support of senior management to IS policy matters.

3. IS as Future Immigrants and Universities' Role

> ➢ The majority of staff members (71%) were unaware of IS' intentions to pursue permanent residence in Ontario. However, 40% of respondents did report factors that could influence this decision, such as perceived career prospects, immigration policies and prospects for applying for PR, and a sense of belonging.

> ➢ Few universities provide support for IS transitioning into the Canadian labour market and to PR status post-graduation.

> ➢ University staff perceived a lack of communication and partnership with government as problematic. They recommended more involvement of universities and IS advisors in CIC's policy making, implementation and evaluation processes. CIC and professional organizations can play a key role in better information dissemination, policy coherence and coordination.

Discussion and Policy Challenges

The Ontario government identifies three key policy concerns related to the recruitment of international students: quality and global competitiveness, student experience and success, and educational outcomes and labour market pathways (Ontario MTCU, 2014; see Figure 20). Our research directly addresses the importance of international student experience and success in Ontario's postsecondary education system as it relates to improving their educational outcomes and labour market pathways, and Ontario's educational quality and global competitiveness more broadly. As a province, Ontario exhibits many strengths. However, our research also points to some policy limitations and challenges if Ontario's postsecondary education system is to compete nationally with other provinces and internationally with other countries to attract the best IS and support their transition into the labour market as future permanent residents.

Figure 20: Policy Concerns for Ontario's Higher Education System
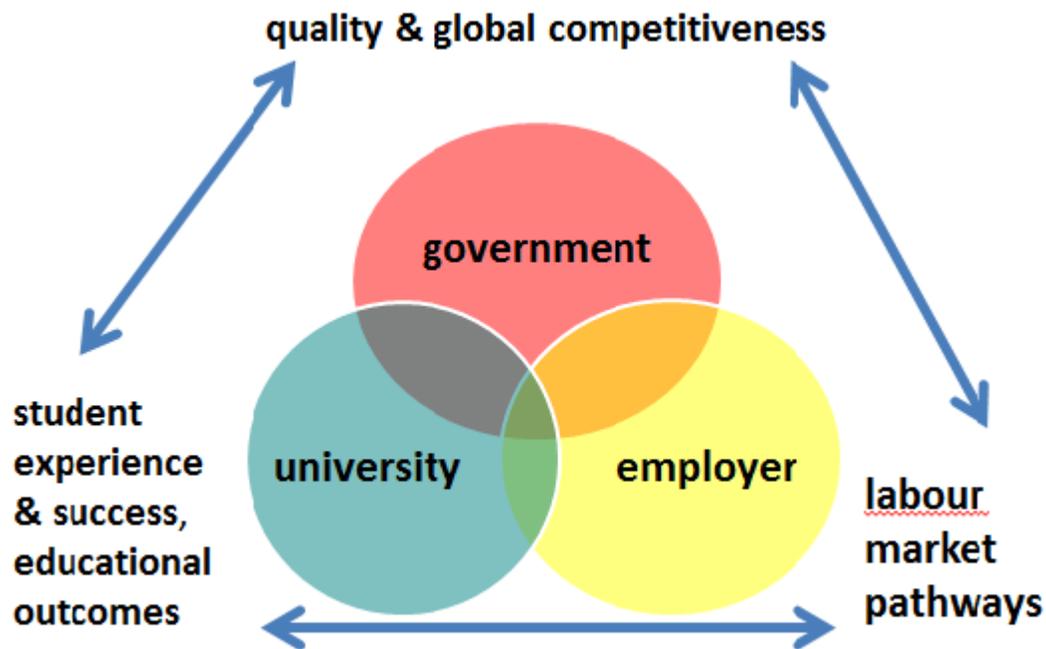
Using the proposed framework of the What Works? model (Figure 1), we provide a brief review and assessment of our findings on Ontario universities' strategies, programs and services for IS. It is evident that universities have committed to the importance of IS engagement and to investing in programs and services that help build a sense of belonging to the campus community. The model speaks to engagement and a sense of belonging through three different yet inter-related spheres of activity: academic, social and professional services. Our findings suggest that while universities, and especially their international student offices, have committed to providing social and cultural services to IS, engagement in the academic arena, which is core to the student experience, could be strengthened further, as could engagement through professional services.

The model highlights the importance of building the capacity of staff so that they are in a position to offer different levels and degrees of engagement, keeping in mind the different sites of engagement and the different needs of the heterogeneous student body. Here again, our data suggest room to enhance the knowledge and engagement of front-line staff, as well as better coordination and communication between staff from the IS offices and other student service and academic programs. It also points to the importance of professional networks outside the institution as sources for staff capacity building. Our data highlight the important role that senior management can play in creating the necessary infrastructure and in nurturing a culture of belonging and engagement. This point was emphasized by comments made by both managerial and front-line staff. Staff capacity building and support from senior management are identified by the model as two essential spheres of influence on student engagement/experience.

Finally, the model supports a partnership and whole-institution approach. Our respondents clearly suggested the importance of such an approach and the need for greater institutional collaboration across administrative and academic units to improve communication, knowledge and effectiveness of IS programs and services. What is clearly lacking as per the model is a whole student lifecycle approach, i.e. student engagement that includes progression to post-graduate study and into employment" (Thomas, 2012a, p. 1). The emphasis is currently on early engagement, in during the first year.

In Appendix B, we identify a set of best practices from the Ontario universities we researched that meet one or more of these six characteristics and/or the principles of the proposed framework.

In conclusion, our findings suggest that federal and provincial government policies to attract IS have been acknowledged by Ontario universities. University staff, especially at the managerial level, tend to be aware of the government's interest in retaining IS as permanent residents, but speak to a number of barriers and challenges that IS face in obtaining permanent residence and employment. Among the most important external barriers to the institution are inconsistency in policy, frequent changes in regulations, and a lack of communication of policy changes with university staff.

The Express Entry Program
One example of these barriers can be found in the federal government's recent introduction of the Express Entry program. As of January 1, 2015, the Express Entry program was implemented as a new electronic application management system that applies to most immigration routes (CIC, 2015b). Under the new system, IS immigration applications are processed and ranked alongside those of other immigrants. This change has given rise to debates about whether the new program "hinders [IS] access to permanent residency instead of promoting it" (Keung, 2015, para 1) and contradicts one of the main "selling features for Canada's international education," which "is the opportunity for foreign students to immigrate and stay in Canada after earning their Canadian experience" (Keung, 2015, para 21 & 22).

The Express Entry program also explicitly links the needs of the Canadian labour market to the immigration process. While IS are still viewed as a valuable pool of talent that has the potential to contribute positively to the labour market, the new program favours immigration applicants, including IS, who can contribute to the labour market immediately. This more targeted approach to immigration may in turn require more targeted services for IS and a greater need for collaboration between universities, potential employers, the Ontario government and CIC in order to leverage the young talent that is already in Ontario and is willing to join the labour market. Within the immigration system, IS are privileged when it comes to their personal and educational attributes. However, the new program puts more pressure on IS and universities to develop the relevant skills, build professional networks and gain relevant work experience prior to graduation to be well equipped to maneuver the Canadian labour market and secure job offers. While our study revealed that universities offer ample and diverse services during the early stages of the IS student cycle, we also found that these services decrease toward the graduation and post-graduation stage, at which time labour market-oriented assistance would be most relevant and most required. To fill this gap, universities, employers and the government need to collaborate to offer targeted career and professional services for IS willing to stay in Canada after graduation (see Appendix B.2 for details on initiatives that demonstrate how other provinces have already taken the lead in this direction).

Bill C-35
As of May 2013, universities received a final edict that Bill C-35 (An Act to Amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act) applies to them. This means that educational institutions and their employees are prohibited from providing advice to students with regard to immigration applications, including but not limited to visas or student/work permits or permanent residency. Although this change aims to ensure that IS receive the proper assistance with often complex immigration procedures from licensed and well-informed personnel, it poses many challenges for IS and universities. These new regulations tax already stretched university resources by requiring that staff be trained or recruited to provide advice on immigration matters. They also place universities in the precarious position of being caught between promoting government immigration policy and their own goals to increase IS recruitment. Finally, these changes highlight the lack of communication between university staff and CIC officials, and an overall lack of input from the academic community in CIC's policy-making process.

ICCRC has been working with CIC and the Canadian Consortium for International Education (CCIE) to address the challenges posed by the new regulations and recently announced a new "restricted credential for Regulated International Student Immigration Advisor (RISIAs)" (Immigration Consultants of Canada Regulatory Council, 2014, p. 6). Still, the future of this initiative is vague and it has yet to be put in place.

As our study revealed, a few universities have reacted to this policy change by hiring immigration lawyers and/or training staff to ensure that they can continue to offer this service to their students, resulting in an added expense to the university's operation budget. For students who are enrolled in universities that do not offer this service, this policy change represents an added personal expense. These students must now seek the help of private immigration lawyers, who are not necessarily familiar with issues particular to the PSE settings, at an extra cost, or continue to face challenges in communicating through CIC website and with front-line staff.

Lack of policy alignment
We also observe that policies on IS recruitment are not aligned between the federal and provincial levels of government, and between the governments and universities. MTCU's announcement in 2012-2013 that it "will be eliminating subsidies to colleges and universities to assist with their international recruitment activities" (Ontario MTCU, 2012, p. 5) poses another challenge for Ontario's PSE sector. As indicated earlier, two of the institutional policies/strategies we examined highlighted the Ontario government's lack of funding for IS graduate students and the existence of the International Student Recovery Fee as disincentives for institutional recruitment efforts. PSE institutions may have to increase IS tuition further to absorb these fees, which raises questions about the Ontario PSE sector's ability to compete with other provinces and international jurisdictions. The ex-president of the University of Toronto, David Naylor, laments this, saying, "We not only further narrow the backgrounds of international students who can afford to attend universities in Ontario. We also may lose ground to universities in other Canadian provinces where tuitions are not adjusted upwards to cover the costs of a government claw-back" (quoted in Custer, 2012, para 5).

The University of Windsor's Vice-Provost, Students and International, Clayton Smith, questions the contradiction this International Student Recovery Fee presents compared to the Open Ontario Plan, saying, "It [Student Recovery Fee] certainly struck us as odd given Open Ontario's focus on increasing international students by 50%." The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) notes that "to achieve the objective of increasing international student enrolment … financial disincentives that inhibit achievement of the goal should be eliminated" (2013, p. 9) and "[f]inancial incentives to increase international student enrolment, particularly at the graduate level, should be created" (2013, p. 18).

As noted by one of our survey respondents, "In spite of the public relations spin on our federal government's objective to attract large numbers of highly skilled and well educated immigrants, the staff's experience and what we hear from international students, graduates, potential students, the application and/or transition to permanent residence is often a very complicated, confusing, difficult and expensive process." Universities offer programs and services for international students in three overlapping areas: academic, social and professional. However, if these offerings are to be better aligned with provincial and federal immigration policy objectives for IS, they need to nurture more of a whole student lifecycle approach, "including progression to post-graduate study and into employment." Such an approach will require support from senior management, partnership and collaboration within the different departments of the university and staff training and development. The discrepancy in awareness and the knowledge gap between managers and front-line staff, as well as between international student service departments and other student services, is a cause for concern. It raises questions about the effectiveness of knowledge dissemination mechanisms employed and of policy implementation. Most importantly, what is required is partnership and collaboration between the university, provincial and federal government, CIC and employers. Perhaps leveraging professional networks that most staff identified as key to policy sharing and best practices will be essential to enhancing collaboration and cooperation across key stakeholder groups, namely governments (provincial and federal), academic institutions and the labour market.

Future Research

To build on this research, we identified best practices with respect to IS policies, programs and services. This discussion can be found in Appendix B of the report.

Our research provides a framework to have informed discussions about institutional policies in the context of changing provincial/national policy environments. It contributes to our understanding of how policy and practice interrelate, collide or work at cross-purposes. Ontario universities exhibit many strengths in attracting IS. However, our research also points to considerable policy limitations and challenges if the province is to continue to remain competitive both within Canada and internationally.

To provide a glimpse of the IS experience in Ontario, we started by examining IS experiences in Ontario universities and in transitioning to the Ontario labour market and permanent residence through an earlier MTCU-funded study titled *International education, labour market and future citizens: prospects and challenges for Ontario* (Desai Trilokekar et al., 2014). Our current study focused on universities' responsiveness to government policy in attracting and retaining IS as future immigrants by looking at their institutional policies, programs and services and the perceptions of their staff. Our next step will involve in-

depth interviews with key informants at the senior administration level at a few Ontario universities, federal and provincial immigration policy makers, and Ontario employers. These interviews will provide better insight into the successes and challenges of interfacing policy and creating synergies between these three core stakeholder groups.

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