

Analysis of International Admissions at the University of Illinois as an Activity System

Group Five

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Abstract

This research report was prepared for the ethnography of the University of Illinois. The report analyzes International Admissions at the University of Illinois as an activity system. The history of international students in America dates back to just after World War II. We studied international admissions processes at the University of Illinois and the University of Michigan because we felt these two schools were similar in their academic standards. However, we uncovered some differences that set these schools apart, such as specific admissions requirements. University of Illinois only accepts the TOEFL exam to ensure competency with the English language whereas University of Michigan allows the TOEFL, as well as two other English aptitude exams. An interview with Aditya Mehta, a current international student, revealed that despite a couple of complications his experience with international admissions at the University of Illinois was positive. An interview with Mark Williams, an International Admissions department faculty member, discussed the various components of the department within the framework of an activity system. The International Admissions application is the most important textual tool for both faculty and prospective students because it contains the admissions requirements which determine who is admitted into the university and who is not.

The most interesting and surprising information uncovered in our research was the fact that international students have a requirement of showing a bank statement showing over forty thousand dollars balance. Not only do they have to show the bank statement, but it must be an original document, photo copies and facsimiles are not accepted. It is questionable whether this requirement is fair to international students who are academically qualified but are not affluent enough to meet this financial requirement. The report also discovered that the University's goal for international enrollment is two fold. First, they want to improve diversity at the University of Illinois by increasing international enrollment. Second, they want to increase the revenue paid to the university through the international student's tuition. A possible problem could arise if less qualified international students are admitted instead of more qualified Illinois residents.

Recommendations for further research include conducting additional interviews and departmental observations. Another recommended research possibility is reviewing what students from the University of Illinois who want to transfer overseas must do to be admitted in another country.

Introduction

Background

This next section provides a history of the international admissions in the United States in order to better understand the current International Admissions department at the University of Illinois.

A Brief History of International Admissions in the United States

Prior to World War II, there was little development of institutional philosophy concerning international education. The world at the time was fragmented with European colonies and the majority of international discourse was focused on imperial domination. The process of selection and enrollment of foreign students could be best characterized as a well-intentioned experiment of trial and error, handled by clerical employees and considered minor assignments.

After World War II, two key developments in postsecondary education in the United States have led to the steady increase of interest from top academic administrators on the subject of international studies. First, there was the large increase of well-qualified foreign applicants eager to study at American universities. As the volume and variety of international students began to grow, universities realized they were unprepared to handle the foreign students' unique needs. This led to the second key development, was the emergence of specialized resources to handle the demand of interested and potential international students. The United States government realized the imbalance of internal assets and personnel dedicated to international affairs and took some necessary steps to lead the country out of its introverted state (AACRAO,1988).

On September 4, 1961, Congress passed the Foreign Assistance Act. As a result, the United States foreign assistance programs were reorganized with a focus on separating military and non-military aid. The Act created an agency whose sole purpose was to administer economic assistance programs, and by November 3, 1961, President John F. Kennedy established the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) (USAID, 2006). Shortly thereafter the USAID entered into a contract with the already existing American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) to develop a more efficient way of handling the increased interest of international students studying in the United States. This commenced the largest examination into the selection, admission, and placement of foreign students in United States universities and colleges.

Each year, qualified foreign academic advisors and researchers are asked to spend two weeks providing credential analysis for AACRAO member institutions. The credential analysts use their knowledge of the global educational environment to examine recent trends and developments in admissions, costs, program offerings, and the progress of international students. To this day, credential analysts have developed a sound institutional philosophy to negotiate the obstacles inherently found in international

academics. Without a solid commitment, universities and colleges in the United States are vulnerable to problems caused by a lack of appropriate resources dedicated to their cause (AACROA, 2006).

Understanding the basic steps needed to realize a successful international studies program is important for all participants in the process. This gives the institution's chief administration officers, deans, and foreign faculty advisors an idea of the complexities of the process of implementing and sustaining a thriving international studies program. The first task for the USAID was to provide a blueprint for the essential resources needed to handle foreign applications.

The USAID first recommended that universities provide an in-house staff of well qualified credential analysts to evaluate international academic qualifications while maintaining a sensitive and understanding disposition of cultural differences. The academic institutions should also provide their credential analysts with opportunities for further professional development through seminars and workshops.

Secondly, the USAID advised institutions to provide suitable office space in which to carry out their day to day operations. This included space for faculty activity as well as the storage of foreign files and resources. It is recommended that the resource library include books, publications, and past records pertaining to international educational systems.

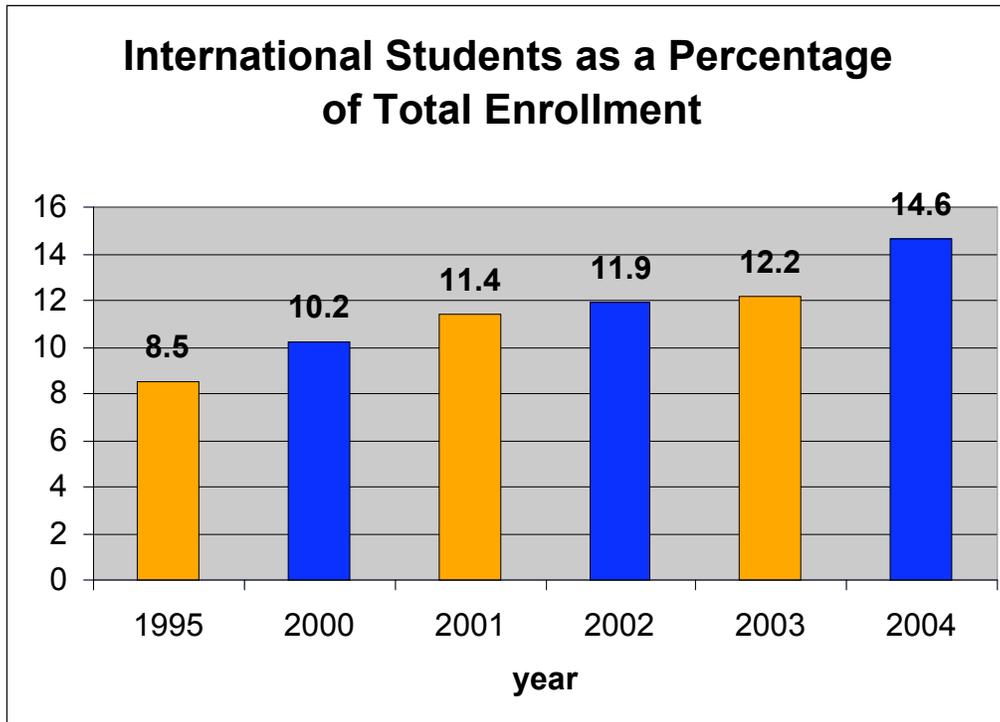
The last provision of the USAID identified the need for well designed application forms and supplementary information targeted at interested students and their families. The supplementary information offered to the students should detail what they need to do, what tests need to be taken, what records are required, the costs of the programs, and where to send the information (USAID, 2006).

A number of opinions have developed over the years on the best ways to operate an international studies program within the United States. The most important fundamental concept researchers of international education systems have developed is the understanding that the admissions process for foreign students is more complex than that of domestic students. A common problem found in international admissions is the unwarranted commitments made to students by universities. University officers recruiting abroad occasionally make offers to students with minimal knowledge of the current educational conditions at their home institutions. These errors have improved recently with the dedication to expanding international resource libraries and databases. This requires a specialized staff with international academic knowledge of current trends and developments, and the necessary resources to create a successful international studies program.

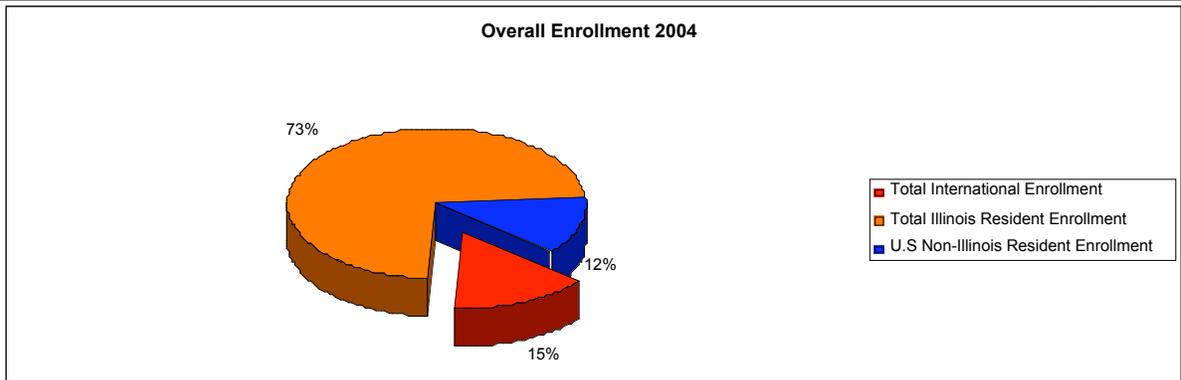
Graphs & Charts

The following graphs and charts were created with information compiled from the University of Illinois' Department of Management Information website. They show demographics about international enrollment. These graphs illustrate the increasing percentage of international students over time. Also, we saw that international students make up about 15% of overall enrollment, but a smaller percentage of undergraduate enrollment, and a larger percentage of graduate enrollment.

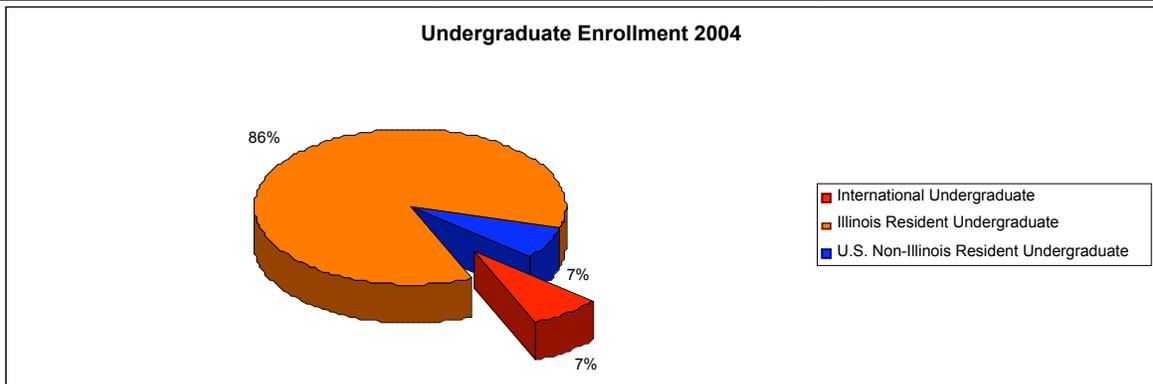
International students as a percentage of total enrollment				
year	Percentage			
1995	8.5			
2000	10.2			
2001	11.4			
2002	11.9			
2003	12.2			
2004	14.6			



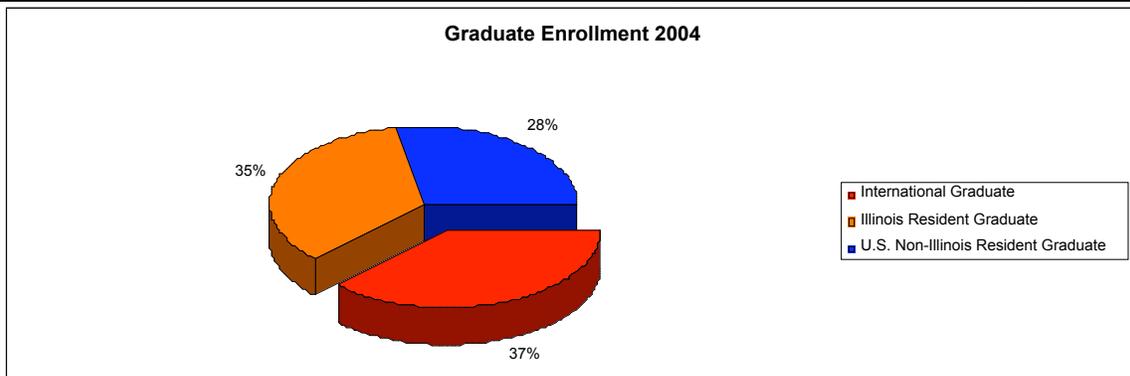
Total Enrollment	Total International Enrollment	Total Illinois Resident Enrollment	U.S. Non-Illinois Resi
40,360	5,904	29,389	4,914



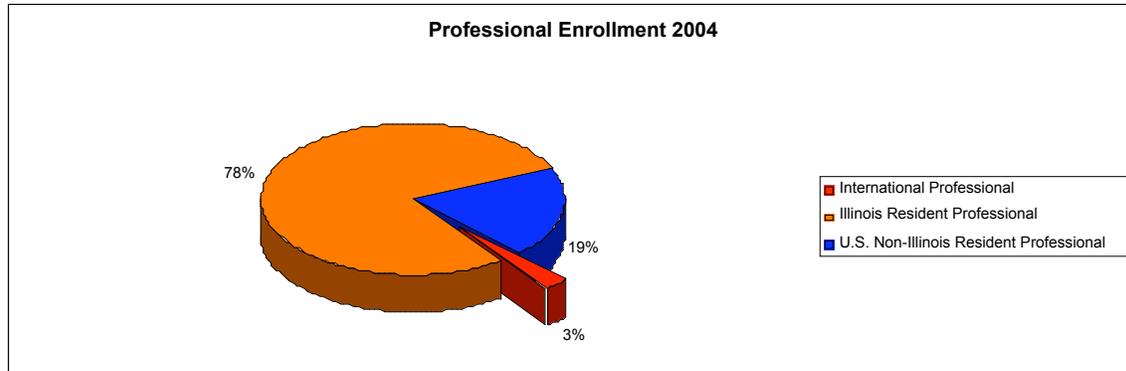
Total Undergraduate Enrollment	International Undergraduate	Illinois Resident Undergraduate	U.S. No
29,294	2,189	25,120	



Total Graduate Enrollment	International Graduate	Illinois Resident Graduate	U.S. Non-Illinois Resident
9,995	3,684	3,434	2,730



Total Professional Enrollment	International Professional	Illinois Resident Professional	U.S. Non-Illinoi
1,071	31	835	



(University of Illinois Department of Management Information, 2006).

Purpose Statement

We have decided to analyze the department of International Admissions at the University of Illinois. We will inform current students and perhaps prospective students at the University of Illinois about the requirements for admission for an international student. Indeed, International Admissions is its own activity system. In this report we will analyze the different aspects of the activity system including subject, rules, community, division of labor, and motives. These elements may appear mutually independent at first, yet through careful analysis of this activity system, we have discovered that the whole international admissions process is greater than the sum of its integral parts. The report will also take a more in depth look at a specific textual tool within this activity system. We chose to focus on the International Admissions application because it is the most important textual tool for prospective international students as well as faculty. The report concludes by recommending further research into international admissions at the University of Illinois.

Scope

This report analyzes International Admissions at the University of Illinois as an activity system through various researched resources. The report considers International Admissions both from the perspective of faculty and international students.

Discussion

To analyze and understand the International Admissions department here at the University of Illinois, we thought it would be useful to compare our international admissions requirements to another school of similar size and academic standards. The school we chose was the University of Michigan. The next section compares and contrasts our findings about the two schools.

International Admissions at the University of Illinois and the University of Michigan Compared and Contrasted

The University of Michigan is a university that is very similar in some ways when compared to the University of Illinois. They are both in the Big Ten Conference; both schools are in the Midwest, and in general, have the same amount of students. Being apart of the Big Ten Conference, one would think that the admissions requirements for international students would be similar. However, examining the two universities admission requirements reveals that Michigan University's requirements for international admissions are quite different from the admissions guidelines here at the University of Illinois. For the University of Michigan there are different standards for prospective students from each country. The University of Michigan's website contains details about the requirements, specific to each country, that are to be met before applying. The website lists the countries that one would be applying from and then states certain schooling and exam criterion that needs to be met to be admitted to the school. The University of Illinois does not actually go into detail what qualifications are needed for a specific country (University of Illinois, 2006). Other differences with regard to English aptitude, as well as financial requirements, exist between the two Universities. These differences are outlined below (University of Michigan, 2006).

English Aptitude Tests

There are three different exams that can be taken for applying to the University of Michigan but only need to take one exam to be accepted. One is the MELAB (Michigan English Language Assessment Battery) which is an exam for non-native English speaking students and tests them on English composition, listening, grammar, vocabulary, and reading. Not only is it used for Michigan University but other universities use the exam as well, like Dixie University in Utah (Dixie State Testing Center, 2006). The MELAB encompasses both spoken and written English: Part 1 is a 30 minute impromptu composition, written on an assigned topic; Part 2 is a 25 minute multiple choice listening comprehension test, delivered via tape recording; Part 3 is a 100 item 75 minute multiple choice test containing grammar, close reading, vocabulary, and reading comprehension (Michigan English Language Assessment Battery, 2006).

Another exam is the TOEFL (Testing of English as a Foreign Language) which is an exam that is used at the University of Michigan as well as here at the University of Illinois. It examines students' English abilities according to the four main points in communication: structure, listening, reading, and writing of the English language. Over the past years it has been moved to an internet based exam, which means that the results are calculated much sooner than before. It is offered in over one hundred and eighty countries and is accepted by over five thousand colleges (TOEFL Details, 2006). This is the exam that then University of Illinois would like their prospective students to take since it is the general, national exam for international students wanting to study here in the United States (University of Illinois, 2006).

The last exam that University of Michigan will accept is the International Testing System. The IELTS was developed, currently owned and operated by the British Council, IDP: IELTS Australia and the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations. Like the other exams, it covers the four language skills but has two formats: Academic

and General Training. It consists of a multiple choice section and the speaking part of the examination is performed as a one-on-one interview with a certified examiner. It is even recorded on a cassette tape (International English Testing System, 2006).

After comparing the two schools' admission requirements, it is odd how there are three exams for English aptitude that can be accepted at Michigan but only one here at Illinois. Students applying to the University of Michigan have a choice of what exam that they want to take. While reviewing the requirements, some questions came to mind. Why is there no in-house English aptitude exam at the University of Illinois for international students? It can be an exam for international students who want to attend this university specifically. The university can adopt its own standards and create a test accordingly.

Financial Requirements

Michigan only accounts for the eight month academic year instead of a full year. The expenses are \$27,601 for tuition and fees, and \$11,073 for living expenses, which equals \$38,674. International student prospects have to prove an official source of funds showing that they have money for school. However, the university does not specify the type of document they want (University of Michigan, 2006). On the University of Illinois' website, it specifically says that they need a bank statement showing that there is more than forty thousand dollars to cover expenses. The estimated expenses for international students at Illinois are: \$11,207 for living allowances for a full year, \$1,000 for books and supplies for two semesters, and \$24,148 for tuition and fees for two semesters with a total of \$36,135 for a full year (University of Illinois, 2006).

In some countries forty thousand dollars is an immense sum of money. This may bar admission for students coming from less affluent countries. At the University of Illinois, the bank statement shown by students must be an original. On the Michigan website they do not specify the type of document needed, therefore, it is possible that someone can falsify their documentation in order to meet their financial requirement. It is unclear what measures are taken by the University of Michigan to prevent fraudulent information regarding a student's financial status from being provided to the school.

Student Visas

All international students need to obtain student visas in order to study in the United States. If a student wants to come to the United States more than thirty days before the start date of classes, they will need to acquire a visitor visa. When getting a student visa, a student can only apply for the visa a hundred and twenty days before the start date of courses.

The F-1 student visa allows someone to stay in the United States as long as they are a full-time student. When the student with an F-1 visa is done with their education, they have sixty days to leave the country. If a student has an M-1 visa, which is very similar to the F-1 visa, it allows students to have thirty days to leave to the country, but students can receive extensions for up to three years.

Forms that are needed to acquire a student visa are:

- Certificate of Eligibility For Nonimmigrant Student Status For Academic and Language Students
- Certificate of Eligibility For Nonimmigrant Student Status For Vocational Students
- A completed application form
- Have had an interview at the embassy consular
- A passport valid for at least 6 months after that proposed date of entry to the United States
- A 2 x 2 in. photograph
- A receipt showing payment of the visa application and if insurance was purchased

Students might also have to show transcripts from schools that they have attended, scores on exams (GRE, TOEFL, ACT, etc), and financial evidence that they can afford to come to school here in the U.S.

For a student that visits their home country, say over summer break, there are certain documents that the student needs to have in order to come back to school. The documents include:

- A passport more than 6 months old
- An application form
- Receipt from the processing fee
- A new I-20 form from the university they are attending, endorsed by a university official
- Students might have to show a copy of grades from the university and financial documents showing how they are going to pay for school

An international student needs to be able to keep track of documents and make sure that every requirement for a visa is done within the time constraints. If any of the requirements were not met or not done in time, it could prevent a student from getting a great education here in the United States (U.S. Department of State, 2006).

Interviews

After comparing admissions requirements for the University of Illinois and the University of Michigan, we thought that interviews could be useful resources to supplement our information regarding the international admissions processes. We thought the two most useful groups of people to interview would be faculty and actual international students here at our university because they are both actively involved with international admissions. First we interviewed International Admissions counselor Mark Williams. We then interviewed Aditya Mehta, an international student from Singapore.

Interview with Mark Williams:

Mr. Williams has worked in the University of Illinois International Admissions department for over 20 years. He is also an active member of NAFSA: Association of International Educators. This organization holds regional and national conferences in the field of international education. He described his work as challenging, interesting, and rewarding. Mr. Williams answered questions about international admissions within the frame work of analyzing the department as an activity system:

Tools

Mr. Williams indicated that the two main tools utilized by the international admissions staff are educational system resources and the computer. Educational system resources are texts that outline the curriculum taught by schools in different countries. These resources are found both online and as paper documents. The international admissions department uses these resources as both an equivalency guide and to give them an overall picture of a particular prospective international student's educational background. He related that the computer was also vital. The computer is used to store relevant information about prospective students as well as serve as a communication tool. The computer is also a crucial compliment to the department's website.

When asked, Mr. Williams indicated that both the computer and educational system resources have changed and evolved in the more than two decades he has worked in international admissions. The use of the computer, including hosting the departmental website, as well as using email as a tool for communication, was not available at the beginning of his employment in the department. The educational system resources, which are provided both by individual countries and by domestic organizations, and are available either online and in hard copy, are constantly updated to ensure accuracy.

Motives

Mr. Williams suggested that the short term, as well as long term goal of the department is to increase the international component of the undergraduate population. The two main reasons for this goal are to increase the diversity of the University as well as to raise funds through the tuition paid by international students. It is interesting that the university seeks diversity by promoting international enrollment, instead of seeking diverse individuals within our own state. International students are subject to nonresident tuition, so perhaps international students not only fulfill goals for diversity but also for increasing revenue for the university. When asked about graduate admissions, he indicated that international graduate admissions are hosted by the individual colleges and departments. Each college or department has there own set of standards and qualifications that must be met by perspective students.

Division of Labor

Mr. Williams related that international admissions is a division within the overall admissions department. The workload and responsibilities within international admissions are handled by a processing division and then an evaluating division. The

main responsibility of the processing division is to gather required information from the prospective students. This would include the application and any other necessary documents. After a preliminary screening of the applications by an admissions counselor, the applications are sent to the evaluating division. The evaluating division, which is the division he works in, is responsible for evaluating a perspective student, and ultimately deciding whether or not to admit the student. This division is comprised of a committee of admissions counselors who sit down as a group and decide which students meet the requirements they are looking for.

Community

When asked what different groups of people shape the department with regards to standards and daily operations, Mr. Williams responded that the department is fairly autonomous. They ultimately create their own standards; however, they work closely with various undergraduate colleges, specifically the admissions deans. This collaborative effort ensures that students meet the expectations of both parties.

Rules

Mr. Williams stated that their department must adhere to SEViS. SEViS which is an acronym for “Student and Exchange Visitor Information System,” is a database that contains information on all international students currently studying in the United States. This database is hosted by the United States Department of Homeland Security, and has been in place since July of 2002 as a response to the attacks of September 11th. Besides keeping track of the international students that are already here, this website is also the path to getting students the visas and other documents that are required to gain entry into the United States.

The international admissions department also works along side the study abroad office to enter into direct exchange agreements with Universities around the world. Through these agreements, domestic students can study overseas and foreign students can study at our school, gaining entry into our country through a J-1 visa.

Mr. Williams related that there are certain restrictions placed on prospective international students regardless of academic ability. The first of these restrictions is financial in nature. The student must provide an original bank statement showing a balance of greater than \$40,000. This proves that the student has the ability to meet the financial obligations associated with attending the University. As a result of this surprising requirement, it would seem that most of the international students that attend our university come from somewhat affluent backgrounds. A second restriction is that students who have never attended school in the United States prior to their application to the University must provide a passing score on a TOEFL test. TOEFL is an acronym for “Test of English as a Foreign Language.” This standardized aptitude test evaluates the prospective student’s written and verbal English abilities. The student must meet the minimum requirement in order to be admitted (M. Williams, personal communication, April 14, 2006.)

Interview with Aditya Mehta:

Now that we have seen the activity system from a faculty point of view, we will observe an international student's perspective of the international admissions process. Aditya Mehta is an international student from Singapore. He is currently a junior in Electrical Engineering. He chose to study internationally because the high school he went to utilized a curriculum, including transferable courses, which prepared their students to attend college in different countries.

He was choosing between studying in the US or in England, and decided to come to University of Illinois because of its affordability and its prominent engineering college. He went through the international admissions process and said it was fairly simple. The department looked at his coursework and he had to show certain documents, such as bank statements, in order to get admitted. He also had to take the TOEFL exam required of all international students studying in the US. There were some difficulties he faced when he applied. First, at the time he applied, there was no online application, so he had to mail everything to the school. Also, the department lost his application after they admitted him, so then he had to resend his transcripts. Based on what Mr. Williams said, this could have happened in the International Admissions department due to a mishandling by the processing division. This division is responsible for gathering applications and other required materials. This division is usually very organized and efficient, however, since a paper copy was submitted there was a risk of losing the application.

When comparing the standards for admission, he thought it was a lot harder to get in to colleges as an international student. Out of all the schools he applied to, University of Illinois's application was straightforward. Other schools had questionnaires and many essays accompanying the application. If he had stayed in Singapore, he said the admissions process was much more rigorous. The schools look at the student's grades and recommend a field the student should go into. There is no freedom in deciding what career to pursue, as there is in America. Aditya also said the approaches to study were more liberal here in the US. Overall, Aditya offered great insight of the International Admissions process from a student's point of view.

Connecting the History and Current Perspectives of International Admissions

Since its early history, international admissions have evolved greatly through time to meet the demand of students looking to study internationally. As an example, in the 1960s, the USAID proposed colleges should have in-house credential and equivalency analysts. However, it is apparent after speaking with Mr. Williams that credential and equivalency guides are becoming increasingly homogenous and shared by many universities. These resources are now found in print and online, and provided by domestic agencies as well as the international education community.

By looking at these two perspectives of international admissions through the faculty and a student's point of view, we can draw a more clear idea of how this activity system functions. Aditya stated that his application was lost because it was submitted through

the mail. Mr. Williams suggested that one of the improvements made to the international admissions process included the availability of online access to the application. Though this has improved the efficiency and convenience of the admissions process for both student and faculty, it can not be completed entirely online. The student is still expected to mail an original bank statement, therefore still allowing the chance for mishandled or lost documents.

After examining the charts, we see that the number of international students has increased steadily over the years. This would not be possible without the commitment of universities to increasing diversity and seeking potential in students outside the United States to improve education.

Analysis of Textual Tools

University of Illinois International Admissions Application as a Textual Tool

After observing our activity system, we felt it was important to choose a textual tool pertinent to the International Admissions department. We researched and found that the International Admissions application contained some interesting elements, and we believe this textual tool is an essential part of the application process.

The application itself is a document that is identical to the application used by domestic students, except international applicants must fill out an additional page on the application including special prerequisites required by the student. The application instructs the prospective student how to send the correct documentation verifying financial eligibility. Additionally the application instructs the student to submit proof of an acceptable passing TOEFL test score. The application is available both online and in paper format.

The International Admissions Requirements include a Declaration and Certification of Finances form and bank statements if you need to obtain, or are currently studying in the US on, the F-1 or J-1 student visa, official transcripts in original language and certified English translations, certified true copies of external exam certificates, official SAT I or ACT scores, official TOEFL scores and the correct processing fee.

Since the University of Illinois does not provide financial aid to international students, these students need prove that they will be able to sustain themselves financially while attending the university. For this reason the University requires comprehensive and accurate information regarding the prospective student's sources of financial aid. A Declaration and Certification of Finances form includes a signature from the student's financial sponsor as well as an official bank statement or letter with the sponsor's name showing funds for at least one year of tuition, \$40,000. These documents are required to obtain a student visa issued through SEVIS, the Student Exchange Visitor Information System. This visa is necessary for International students to enter the country.

Another requirement is the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL test) and this is an essential English language proficiency prerequisite that needs to be met in order to be admitted to the university.

These requirements, along with other requirements which are the same for the domestic application, make up the International Admissions Application (University of Illinois Admissions, 2006).

This textual tool is specific to the University of Illinois and they chose these specific requirements for a reason. The school wanted the application process to be similar to the domestic application and felt that this would benefit international students by making it a little easier for them, compared to other schools which had many varying requirements. The application is the deciding factor setting apart the many students that apply to the University of Illinois and is an intricate part of the admissions process. We chose this as our textual tool because of the significance of the application and its interesting requirements.

Other textual tools

Other textual tools that we used in our research project included the International Admissions department website, brochures, and pamphlet. We felt the application was the most prominent textual tool in this activity system, however these tools were also important to the department.

The website for International Admissions is a textual tool that our group thought was useful for both faculty and prospective students. It is a tool that is going to be used by most people that are interested in attending the university since many prospective students cannot receive a brochure or other materials as quickly; the website is a fast, reliable source of information. Also, the faculty expresses what they are looking for, as far as admissions requirements, on the website.

The Office of Admissions offers a few brochures that pertain to International Admissions. The first document is Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) Information and Registration Bulletin for Internet-based Testing. This booklet provides prospective students with information regarding the TOEFL test. Since a passing score on the TOEFL is required to be admitted as an international student, this booklet can be a valuable resource.

The second document is a pamphlet entitled “gateway to success.” This pamphlet, which is geared toward transfer and international students, lists all of the available undergraduate academic programs. It also offers admission guidelines with regard to prerequisites and G.P.A. requirements for admittance to the various colleges of the University. The pamphlet also shows a chart estimating expenses of attending for residents and nonresidents, financial aid information, and contact information for the Office of Admissions and Records.

Conclusion

The International Admissions as an activity system is a multi-faceted department. This report allowed us to observe the community, subject, tools, object, rules, and division of labor of the system. All of the components of this activity system exist within the community of the University of Illinois. The subjects of our report are International students and faculty of the International Admissions Department. The tools we analyzed include the International Admissions application, website, brochures, and knowledge held by the faculty. The application was our main textual tool and we chose it because the requirements it contains are important to both faculty and prospective students. The object of this activity system is two fold. From the perspective of the University of Illinois admissions department, increasing diversity among students as well as increasing revenue for the school through tuition are the overall goals. Students, on the other hand, seek a quality education when applying to college and see the University of Illinois as meeting this requirement. In order for international students to attend the university, both faculty and students must adhere to certain rules and qualifications. The faculty must provide the US government with information about international students that wish to study in the America. This must be done through the SEViS website. The international students must meet certain qualifications in order to be admitted to the university. Amongst these are English aptitude and financial requirements. Studying the division of labor reveals the admissions process. First students apply to the university. Then the application is handled by the two divisions within the International Admissions department. The first division, which is the processing division, gathers data from prospective students. The second division, the evaluation division, reviews the application and makes a decision regarding admittance.

When analyzing the ethnography of the University of Illinois, international students are important because they comprise a substantial percentage of the student population. This is evidenced by the fact that when analyzing enrollment by race or residency, international students are the third largest group behind Caucasians and Illinois residents. They are a larger percentage than both African American and Latino students. Subsequently, it is pertinent and interesting to study the activity system of international admissions here at the university. Our research has uncovered that the current state of international admissions is a product of historical events that have shaped international education as a whole. Furthermore, the international admissions department functions efficiently due to its organization and structure. Also, the academic quality of the University of Illinois continues to attract excellent students from around the world. Throughout the years, international students as a percentage of total enrollment has steadily increased. The way international admissions exist today ensures that this trend will continue into the future.

Beneath The Surface

The next section looks a little deeper into the information that was uncovered, discussing important observations and possible issues.

Exploring the facts further, The University of Illinois' admissions requirements are different from other Universities in the country, and even within the Big Ten. This is likely the result of the fact that different institutions have varying academic goals and standards. It seems fair to have different international admissions standards since the universities have different general admissions standards. It is apparent that both universities we examined have tried to make the application process and academic requirements for international students as close to that as domestic students as possible. The differences exist mostly with regard to obtaining visas and meeting financial requirements.

Prospective international students who want to attend the University of Illinois have a requirement of showing a bank statement, from either their own account or that of a sponsor showing a balance of at least forty thousand dollars. It seems a bit unfair that otherwise academically qualified students will be denied admittance because they cannot meet this requirement. International students are not eligible for financial aid from our government, so it seems that there is an admissions bias favoring affluence over academic excellence. Perhaps the University should increase the number of scholarships awarded, specifically to international applicants, which could be used to meet the financial requirement.

Another potential issue with regard to international admissions here at the University concerns the stated goals for international admissions. The goals are to increase diversity and revenue by increasing international enrollment. The problem could emerge from the latter goal. The University is constantly carrying a deficit, work orders for necessary repairs to campus facilities are consistently pushed back as a result of the financial situation. It seems a moral hazard exists for the University, since admission decisions are not completely transparent to outsiders. The University could accept lesser qualified international applicants over more qualified Illinois residents to receive the larger non-resident tuition. There should be some sort of inquiry or supervision by parties outside the University to ensure that this situation does not occur.

Recommendations

To assist the ethnography of the university project, with regards to studying admissions, we offer the following recommendations:

1. Further Research into International Admissions at the University of Illinois – Due to the time constraints of this report we were not able to draw upon all available resources. We recommend further interviews with international students and departmental faculty. Conducting observations of a typical day in the department might also yield interesting information. We also believe interviewing various professors about the impact of international students in the classroom could aid in further understanding the topic.
2. Research into admissions processes for University of Illinois students to transfer to universities in other countries – It would be interesting to analyze the international

admissions process that a U of I student would go through if they wished to study in another country and compare it to the process we have studied in this report.

This challenging, yet rewarding project allowed our group an opportunity to investigate an interesting topic unfamiliar to us. We hope this report is a useful resource pertaining to the study of International Admissions; furthermore, providing a valuable addition to the Ethnography of the University.

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Appendix

Interview Questions

Mark Williams Interview Questions

International Admissions as an activity system:

Tools

Can you tell me about the two tools that are most vital to the staff of the international admissions?

Have these tools changed since you started working here?

Motives

What would you say are the immediate goals of the int. admissions dept.?

What are the long term goals?

Division of Labor

How is the work load and responsibilities divided up amongst the dept.?

What are the different positions within the dept.?

Community

What different groups of people shape the international admissions dept, with regards to standards and daily operations?

Rules

Are there any special laws, codes, conventions, customs or agreements that must be followed within the dept.?

Are there any interesting or little known facts about international admissions?

Aditya Mehta Interview Questions

Why did you choose to study internationally?

What other schools were you looking at? What criteria were you looking for when applying?

What is your overall feeling about international admissions process?

Did you encounter any difficulties during the application process?

Do you think the standards for domestic and international students are different?

Have you studied in any other countries, besides your native country, and how did their admissions process compare to University of Illinois'?

Are the approaches to studying and classes different or similar?