Accessing Support Services for Post-Secondary International Students

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Agenda Pt. 1

1. Research Background
2. Research Objectives
3. Methodology
4. Research Findings
   • Support Service Needs
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4. Research Findings:
   - Barriers in Accessibility
   - Gaps in Services
   - Trends in Support Service Delivery
   - Current SPO/PSI Collaborations
   - Barriers to Service Delivery
Agenda Pt. 3

5. Recommendations
6. Directory
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Research Background

International students

- Bring social, cultural, and economic benefits to communities in BC
- Provide opportunities for BC students to have more global education experiences
- Help meet labour market needs
- Require specific settlement support services
Research Background cont.

• Research funded by the Ministry of Jobs, Trade, and Technology (JTT)

• Additional advice and input from the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training (AEST)
Research Focus

Public and private post-secondary institutions (PSIs)

• that are eligible for the Post-Graduation Work Permit Program (PGWPP)

Settlement service provider organizations (SPOs)

• that receive funding from BC Settlement and Integration Services (BC-SIS) to support international students
Research Objectives

1. Understand what settlement support services post-secondary international students in BC need

Pre-arrival  During studies  Pathway to citizenship
Research Objectives cont.

2. Identify **gaps and overlaps** in service delivery

3. Identify **barriers or challenges** to accessing or delivering support services

4. Explore current and potential areas of **coordination and collaboration** between PSIs and SPOs
Methodology

- Surveys of PSIs and SPOs
- Dialogues with SPOs and PSIs
- Survey of International Students

Qualitative & quantitative Analysis
SPO & PSI Surveys

• 20 SPO staff and 36 PSI staff responded to the survey

• 93% of respondents work directly with international students
SPO & PSI Survey Respondent Demographics cont.

- Metro Vancouver, 33 respondents (59%)
- Vancouver Island, 12 respondents (21%)
- Interior BC, 5 respondents (9%)
- Fraser Valley, 4 respondents (7%)
- Northern BC, 2 respondents (4%)
SPO & PSI Dialogues

• 2 teleconference dialogues with SPOs and PSIs outside of Metro Vancouver
• One in-person dialogue with Metro Vancouver SPOs and PSIs
• Staff from 14 SPOs and 7 PSIs participated
SPO & PSI Dialogues cont.

- Metro Vancouver, 12 participants (57%)
- Vancouver Island, 2 participants (14%)
- Interior BC, 2 participants (10%)
- Fraser Valley, 3 participants (9%)
- Northern BC, 2 participants (10%)
Survey of International Students

- 76 international students responded
- 88% of participants were attending or had attended a PSI in Metro Vancouver
- 66% were enrolled in or had completed undergraduate studies
- 29% were enrolled in or had completed graduate studies
- 63% intend to remain in BC after graduation
Support Service Needs

1. Orientation Support
2. Support with Immigration & Documents
3. Career & Employment Services
4. Social, Cultural, and Emotional support
5. Financial & Material Support
6. Legal & Crisis Support
7. Support for Families
Barriers to Accessibility

1. Lack of awareness of available supports
   – 60% of student survey respondents didn’t know where to go for help
   – 35% didn’t know they could ask for help with a given issue
Barriers to Accessibility

2. Culture Barriers or Social Stigma

– 21% of student respondents didn’t feel comfortable asking for help
– 10% experienced language or other cultural barriers
– 5% were afraid that disclosing issues could affect their immigration status
Gaps in Services

• **Financial & Material Aid** for unexpected financial hardship
  – On average, student respondents reported 53% satisfaction with available support

• **Support Finding Off-Campus Housing**
Gaps in Services cont.

Student survey respondent accommodations

- Yes, I have always lived in residence while studying: 13%
- I lived in residence during part of my studies: 29%
- No, I never lived in residence: 58%
Trends in Support Service Delivery

PSIs
• Usually primary point of contact
• Greater capacity for service delivery

Other Sources
• Friends, family, online, paid services

SPOs
• Often through referrals
Complementary SPO Services

• **Post-Graduation Support Services**
  – PSIs offer limited alumni services

• **Support for Families**
  – 70% of SPO staff and 28% PSI staff reported offering support for spouses & dependents
Complementary SPO Services

- Specialized Support
- Multi-lingual Services
- Broader Community Connections
- Geographic convenience
- Off-campus alternatives
Current SPO & PSI Collaborations

• SPO & PSI collaboration varies greatly in different communities
  – Student referrals
  – Cross-promotion of services
  – Sharing information on client needs
  – Coordinating services
  – Partnering to deliver programs or events
Barriers to SPO-PSI Collaboration

1. Lack of awareness of cross-sector services
   - SPO staff reported an average of 63% familiarity with cross-sector services
   - PSI staff reported an average 34% familiarity with cross-sector services
Barriers to Collaboration

2. Limited organizational capacity
   – SPOs may have limited staff, space, and funding to meet growing demands
   – Long wait times for PSI services

3. Limited certified immigration consultants on staff at SPOs & PSIs
Recommendations for Coordination & Collaboration

• **83% of SPO & PSI staff expressed an interest in increasing cross-sector collaboration**
Increase Awareness of Support Services

• Identify local support services providers

• Create a binder of resources for staff including:
  – Addresses and hours of operation
  – A list of services offered
Establish a Liaison Person

- Identify staff members who can be contacted for referrals, questions, and ideas for collaboration

“Relationship is a big piece”
– SPO participant
Annual Meetings

- Identify emerging needs
- Coordinate services
- Consider areas for collaboration
- Share organizational capacity
Establish a Pathway for Referrals

- Coordinate services, especially for:
  - Pre-arrival advising
  - Post-graduation advising
  - Multilingual support
  - Access to certified immigration consultants
  - Support for spouses and dependents
  - Legal aid and crisis support
  - Time-sensitive support
Collaborate with Key Stakeholders

• Religious institutions
• Cultural community groups
• Secondary schools
• Social services
• International students
• **In progress**: Directory of settlement services that post-secondary international students are eligible for.
Concluding Remarks

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