Attracting and Supporting International Students in a difficult sociopolitical environment

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SIUE Profile

• PUI; Large Masters Granting Institution
  • 50 Master’s programs, EdD, DNP, 4 cooperative PhD programs with SIUC
    • Undergraduate Enrollment: 12,000
    • Graduate Enrollment: 2000
  • Top public, masters institution in Midwest for research expenditures

• Mission
  • Southern Illinois University Edwardsville is a student-centered educational community dedicated to communicating, expanding and integrating knowledge. In a spirit of collaboration enriched by diverse ideas, our comprehensive and unique array of undergraduate and graduate programs develops professionals, scholars and leaders who shape a changing world.
Edwardsville, IL

• Typical Midwest town
  • Population 25,000
  • Main street was part of Route 66
  • Primarily a bedroom community for St. Louis
  • SIUE is the largest employer and is the primary driver of the local economy
  • Revitalized downtown
Support from who?

- University support
- Local business support
- Local government support
- Community support

Do I feel safe? Am I welcome? Will there be someone I can turn to for help?

Support = recruitment (or at least I hope so)
Spring 2017 Incidence

• Two incidence during the spring semester moved SIUE to re-think support for international students

• Immigration and Custom Enforcement Officers (ICE) showed up to an on-campus, university apartment in search of a student who had left the university six months earlier
  • ICE Officers did not notify campus police prior to showing up
  • ICE Officers flashed badges; insisted on searching the apartment without a warrant
  • The students. feeling intimidated, allowed the officers entry
  • They did not know they had the right to deny entry
  • They didn’t know they could call campus police for support to preserve their rights; even if the ICE officers had a warrant, campus police would review it for validity and make sure the the warrant is executed within its limits
Spring 2017 Incidence

- Second Incidence occurred at the downtown bus stop
  - An international student was waiting for a bus when a local resident began verbally harassing her
  - The harassment continued through the time the student’s bus arrived
  - The local resident followed the student to board the same bus
  - The bus driver seeing the ongoing harassment had the moral sense and courage to deny the local residence entry on to the bus
Spring Sessions

• Sessions were held shortly after these incidences
  • Directed at both the university community and international students
  • Legal counsel with expertise in immigration
    • Talked about international student’s rights and who to contact for legal advice or support
  • Campus police officer
    • Talked about calling campus police as a supportive resource
    • Talked about support for being safe on and off campus, such as calling for a campus escort after dark and using the RAVE Guardian App available through the university
    • Talked about bystander intervention – how to safely defuse or de-escalate a situation when someone is being harassed
• These sessions are repeated and more widely advertised this fall
  • Advocating for community training in bystander intervention
  • Advocating for #youarewelcomehere signs in business windows to identify them as safe spaces
  • Advocating for YouTube videos to highlight these actions
Sustainable and Seamless Support

• Proposal being implemented this fall by the Office of International Affairs for enhancing retention and supporting recruitment and admissions

• Communication begins upon application from International Recruitment and Admissions, that includes information and offers of support services

• Continuous pre-arrival communications upon enrollment from International Affairs

• Pick-up and arrival support program; brief orientation; assistance with check-in and university procedures; assistance with general needs; and 24/7 support to turn to the first days after arrival for any needs

• For retention, systematic outreach and communication throughout the first year
Sustainable and Seamless Support

• Ramp up the Global Ambassador Program
  • Student organization; pairs up “buddies” that meet twice a month to forge intercultural friendships to ease cultural transitions

• Ramp up the International Hospitality Program
  • Community families that “host” international students; provide social and cultural connections;

• Continuing sessions addressing legal rights, legal contacts, personal safety, bystander intervention, campus police support

• Respond quickly to national and international events affecting students