

ABSTRACT

Plymouth State University is among the thousands of colleges annually taking on students from the global community. However, first-generation immigrant students are not considered international, though they may share commonalities. Through student interviews, **this research aimed to identify the experience of being an international student, an exchange student, or a first-generation immigrant student at Plymouth State University.** The information derived can create a lens of empathy for the PSU community and provide useful information on how PSU can better serve and celebrate the global community on campus.

METHODS

Over a period of three months, the author conducted (n=5) **semi-structured interviews** with:

- 1 international student
- 2 first-generation immigrants
- 2 exchange students

Informants were asked a series of questions pertaining to campus **culture differences**, their **support system**, **choosing PSU**, **highlights of their time at PSU**, and **pitfalls**.

RESULTS

Each interview spanned from **1 hr. To 2 ½ hrs.** This provided in-depth, qualitative information.

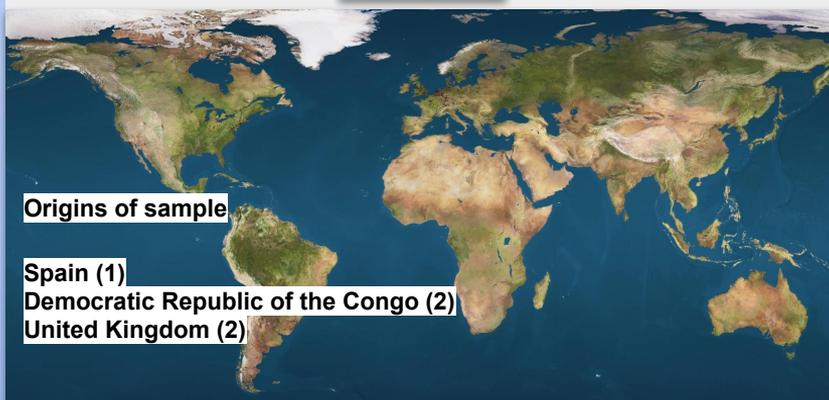
Informant	Year	Major	Status
#1	Junior	History	Exchange
#2	Freshman	Criminology	1 st .gen. immigrant
#3	Junior	Psychology	Exchange / international
#4	Freshman	Computer science	1 st .gen. immigrant
#5	Junior	International studies	Exchange

Table 1. *Informant Demographics*

Plymouth State University's global community needs more support & acceptance from faculty and students



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Origins of sample

Spain (1)
Democratic Republic of the Congo (2)
United Kingdom (2)

RESULTS *cont...*

Key findings in international & exchange students

- *Issues & lack of communication surrounding class registration*
- *Cited examples of faculty "targeting (them)" or "making them feel uncomfortable" in class discussion surrounding nationality*
- *A lack of support and guidance from PSU*
- *Examples of students making inappropriate or rude comments on mannerisms*
- *Benefitting from smaller, community-based campus & town*
- *Building better relationships with professors at PSU than home-university*
- *Enjoying the proximity to outdoor recreation*
- *Unanimously not-wanting to leave PSU*
one student is in process of upgrading visa to finish degree
- *Benefitting from American-college classroom structure*

Key findings in first-generation immigrant students

- *Feelings of social isolation*
- *Lack of support from faculty " . cry all the time and feel like I'm drowning"*
- *Issues & disagreements with roommates*
- *Small classroom size is helpful for English-learners*
- *Proximity to home*