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Postpandemic Potential: Ready for the New Era of International Student Enrollment

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted global student mobility, leading to sharp declines in international student enrollment at U.S. higher education institutions (HEIs). Research on the effects of the pandemic highlights key challenges faced by international students, including financial instability, mental health concerns, and experiences of racism and xenophobia. Institutional responses varied, with some universities leveraging distance technology and policy adaptations, whereas others failed to provide adequate support. As mobility restrictions ease, international enrollment is rebounding, presenting HEIs with new opportunities to engage and attract students. Using push-pull theory as a framework, this study examines how HEIs can strengthen pull factors—such as reaffirming the value of international students, expanding recruitment into new markets, and enhancing institutional infrastructure to support students during global crises. By understanding the lessons learned from COVID-19 and preparing for future disruptions, U.S. HEIs can position themselves competitively in an evolving global education landscape.

Keywords: International student recruitment, COVID-19 pandemic, distance technology, international education, international student mobility, postpandemic recovery

International student mobility has long been a defining feature of global higher education, with the United States consistently ranking as a top destination for students seeking academic and professional opportunities abroad and enrolling over 1 million international students before the pandemic (Institute of International Education [IIE], 2024). However, the COVID-19 pandemic profoundly disrupted this mobility, introducing unprecedented challenges such as border closures, visa restrictions, and financial instability, which resulted in the sharpest decline in international student enrollment in decades (Institute of

International Education [IIE], 2024). While the pandemic caused an immediate and dramatic drop in international student numbers, early postpandemic data suggest strong potential for recovery, particularly as higher education institutions (HEIs) refocus their efforts on internationalization (Fisher, 2023). Previous government administrations announced the needed prioritization of internationalization at HEIs to train globally competent cohorts of domestic students ready for the international economy (U.S. Department of Education International Strategy, 2023; U.S. for Success Coalition, 2023), although the tides may have shifted under the helm of a new presidential administration. Despite these indications of renewal, it remains unclear whether prepandemic recruitment strategies will be sufficient or if new approaches are required to address a new market of international students and a new global geopolitical context.

The literature on international students during the pandemic has focused largely on immediate challenges, including mental health struggles, financial precarity, and experiences of racism and xenophobia (Koo et al., 2023; Maleku et al., 2022; Olatunji et al., 2023). Additionally, studies have examined the role of distance learning technologies and institutional responses—both effective and inadequate—during the crisis (Veerasamy & Ammigan, 2022; Xiao, 2021). However, while existing research provides valuable insight into the vulnerabilities of international students, it has not yet fully explored the implications of these findings for future international recruitment strategies. Furthermore, little attention has been given to how institutions can leverage postpandemic shifts in global higher education to attract and support international students in more sustainable ways.

This paper addresses these gaps by analyzing postpandemic international student enrollment trends and proposing strategic approaches for U.S. higher education institutions (HEIs) to strengthen their appeal to global students. Using Push–Pull theory (Maringe & Foskett, 2010) as a guiding framework, this study examines how HEIs can develop new “pull” factors—such as reaffirming the value of international students, engaging new recruitment markets, and enhancing institutional support structures—to mitigate the lingering “push” factors that deter students from studying abroad. By integrating lessons learned from the pandemic with projections for the future of global student mobility, this paper offers a roadmap for HEIs seeking to respond to new developments in an evolving international education landscape.

METHOD

This study employs a systematic approach to examining the challenges faced by international students in the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic, the role of technology in mitigating these challenges, institutional responses, and trends in international student enrollment. The research process involved a structured keyword search, a thematic analysis of preliminary findings, and a selection of 25 scholarly articles on the basis of their relevance to the study’s core themes.

The initial phase of this research involved conducting keyword searches via academic databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and ProQuest. The primary search terms included “international students,” “COVID-19,” “United States,” and “higher education.” Alternative search terms were considered to ensure a comprehensive dataset, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Primary search terms and alternatives

Primary Search Terms	Alternative Terms/Synonyms
International students	Foreign students, global students, international scholars
COVID-19	Coronavirus, pandemic
United States	USA, America, U.S., United States of America, American higher education
Higher education	Postsecondary education, universities, colleges, tertiary education

The searches were limited to sources published after 2021 to ensure that the findings reflected the most recent impacts of COVID-19 on international students. Additionally, a mix of scholarly articles, government reports, and institutional analyses was reviewed to shape an understanding of the current landscape.

RESULTS

The research themes were derived from a preliminary review of the top article abstracts, which provided insight into recurring topics and significant concerns within the literature. From this initial review, four key themes emerged:

1. Challenges faced by international students
2. Technological adaptations
3. Institutional responses
4. Enrollment trends and impacts

These themes guided the selection of 25 scholarly articles, ensuring that each source contributed meaningfully to one or more aspects of the study. Sources were chosen from a broad range of peer-reviewed journals and diverse perspectives and topics.

By applying push-pull theory, this study applies the selected literature to develop strategies for higher education institutions (HEIs) to strengthen “pull” factors that attract and retain international students while mitigating the negative

impact of “push” factors that drive them away. The findings suggest that HEIs can enhance their appeal by reaffirming the value of international students—not just as contributors to institutional diversity and revenue but as integral members of academic and social communities. Additionally, HEIs can engage in new recruitment markets. Finally, institutions must develop better infrastructure to help international students overcome obstacles during global crises. By reinforcing these “pull” factors, American HEIs can proactively shape a more resilient and attractive environment for international students.

Challenges faced by international students

Many studies have documented the predicament of international students attending U.S. HEIs during the peak of the pandemic (Martirosyan et al., 2022; Olatunji, et al., 2023; Koo et al., 2023; Mbous et al., 2024). The challenges that international students have already faced (marginalization, financial concerns, mental health) have worsened and, in some cases, been ignored by their host institutions (Roshid & Iba Seraj, 2023). Through understanding the specific challenges many international students face, institutions may more effectively address, support, and instruct them.

Racism and xenophobia are prominent issues faced by international students (Koo et al., 2023). The pandemic has not only isolated international students physically but also caused fear and xenophobia as a result of the pandemic, leading domestic students to avoid them or harass them. Students from East Asian countries, or even other foreign countries, encounter new forms of bullying centered around fear of disease or foreign government espionage (Koo et al., 2023). In addition, international students are often unfamiliar with U.S.-specific racial concepts and politics, which can further exacerbate their experiences of racial prejudice or exclusion. For many, entering the U.S. was their first time feeling racialized, and during the pandemic, instances of negative racialization and experiences of white supremacy increased (Koo et al., 2023; Maleku et al., 2022). One recent study highlighted the difficulties international students faced as a result of presidential administrations and the racism they experienced from previous government rhetoric (Rodriguez et al., 2025). Overall, nonwhite students in the U.S. consistently face challenges concerning race and need support to navigate these unfamiliar challenges.

Other challenges included financial concerns and mental health challenges, a major focus of the extant literature focusing on the effects of COVID-19 on international students in the U.S. (Huang et al. 2022; Martirosyan et al., 2022; Maleku et al., 2022; Park & Shimada, 2022; Mbous et al., 2024). Olatunji et al. (2023), in their study of international student states at Texas A&M University, explained that “[o]verall, it appears that academic and financial challenges affected students’ mental states” and signaled an urgency for institutions to intervene and support these students more determinedly (p. 11). Research has shown that issues such as disrupted academic activities and financial challenges due to the inability to work as a result of campus closures often go hand-in-hand with mental health challenges. For example, 1 in 5 international students began experiencing depression and anxiety at higher rates during the pandemic (Lin et

al., 2022). Overall, the research demonstrated many challenges international students faced that were nuanced and often different from, or even more severe than, the challenges their domestic peers faced. Domestic students do not have to worry about attending in-person classes to maintain their visa status. They could visit home without fear of being unable to return to the U.S. due to border closures. They had larger support and safety networks with family and friends.

Beyond the pandemic, international students are generally more susceptible to global affairs and politics than their domestic peers are (Martirosyan et al., 2022). Policy and legal changes to immigration procedures, international relationships and conflicts, local epidemics, natural disasters, and other international emergencies can cast international students into precarity, jeopardizing their ability to be successful in their studies in the U.S. and even maintaining legal status. While not always simple, institutions that are myopic in how they support international students, without taking into account the often multifaceted and intersecting challenges these students face, are more likely to miss out on future enrollment potential because future international students grow warier in the U.S.

Growth of distance education

International programs worldwide have begun to rely more heavily on distance education (DE) technologies (video calls to conduct meetings and classes; working collaboratively online, etc.) to engage international students who are able to remain onsite, as well as international students grounded in their home countries wishing to study abroad (Xiao, 2021; Wotto, 2020). This broadened the definition of an international student, as students were able to engage with peers around the world from their home countries, and it also blurred the lines that differentiated international students from domestic students (Steyn & Gunter, 2023). Although virtual technologies that allowed students to connect with students or “visit” institutions in other countries existed long before 2020, members of higher education institutions at all levels were required to interact with these systems more deeply.

In some cases, increased virtualization in American universities and better access to the internet even exposed potential markets of international students who, for various reasons, wished to study at American universities from their home countries virtually (Huang et al., 2022; Li & Ai, 2022). Physical international student mobility is resource intensive and cost prohibitive but was especially difficult during the COVID-19 pandemic because of border closures. Even before the pandemic, international education was often inaccessible to many groups of students, especially students with low socioeconomic status. As geopolitical, global health, and other issues continue to impact international students, virtual programming provides an immediate Band-Aid solution and will continue to be relevant in the future of international education.

Evidently, dissatisfaction with the overuse of online technology is also a concern (de Wit & Altbach, 2023). First, immigration law requires international students to maintain a minimum number of in-person course hours; otherwise, their legal status in the U.S. is jeopardized (USCIS, 2020). Moreover, online

education could be problematic even for domestic students, and international students might struggle with connectivity problems, difficulty understanding English spoken via digital audio in online meetings, and feelings of loneliness or isolation when personal contact is replaced by screens, amplified by common feelings of homesickness and culture shock.

International offices (centers that support international students) also had to move online and deliver many of their services virtually or at a very limited capacity in person. As expected, some research suggests that these offices encountered difficulties and hiccups in offering critical services to international students at a distance, although they quickly adapted and found ways to continue delivering services via new modalities (Veerasingam & Ammigan, 2022). Like staff in other centers, ISS staff are generally trained to deliver services online, which involve many nonacademic services designed to help international students participate in campus and American society and culture. In addition to virtual orientation and visa and immigration advising video calls, building relationships online or fostering communities among recent arrivals could be challenging online without carefully drafted protocols and well-tested tools for service delivery. Indeed, distance education became a critical method for preserving continuity in international education at a time when physical mobility was severely limited.

Institutional Responses

As the negative effects of the pandemic began to surface and international borders remained compromised longer than expected, researchers have rushed to document the status of international students at their home HEIs (Martirosyan et al., 2022; Olatunji, et al., 2023; Koo et al., 2023). The issue of international students was incredibly salient during the global pandemic since, at this time, local problems suddenly felt global: trips were suddenly cancelled, students were stranded abroad, and concern about the spread of the virus from or to foreign countries dramatically increased. This multifaceted upheaval not only underscored the vulnerability of international students but also laid bare the interconnectedness of global academia, as HEIs found themselves on the international stage.

Some research suggests that higher education institutions in the U.S. have responded inadequately to the pandemic, as they are concerned with the welfare of international students (Roshid & Ibna Seraj, 2023) and in comparison to other countries, such as Canada (Buckner et al., 2023) and Japan (Sato et al., 2022). This could result from the fact that international students are seen as “cash cows” in many U.S. institutions, and the concept of funneling resources toward foreign students during times of scarcity is counterintuitive to newer neoliberal models of higher education that turn to profit as a metric of success (Cantwell, 2015). International students make up approximately 5% of the total US student population (IIE, 2022), and many domestic students also faced difficulties during the pandemic. As a result of their minority status, international students often go unnoticed or unaddressed in policy-making and procedures during campus emergencies. However, a consequence of this philosophy is that an increasing

number of international students turn away from Western institutions, knowing that they will be neglected during times of crisis.

Other institutions chose to use the time to focus on international students who were able to stay (or perhaps were stuck) at their host institutions since they were suddenly fewer in number and more manageable (Huang et al., 2022). Given the important opportunity to retain students and mitigate the risk of their failure in their degree programs, some universities were more innovative in terms of how technology could be used to support international students who were grounded in their home countries (but still wished to attend their host institutions) through video conferencing and better-developed learning management systems (LMSs). This allowed universities to focus more on “comprehensive internationalization”, in which all parts of a university become globally orientated rather than globalization being limited to a study abroad or an international student and scholar unit, as defined by the American Council on Education. Other institutions, depending on their dependence on international students for revenue, may have reopened face-to-face instruction sooner to keep these students in the U.S. (and in the required number of in-person courses to maintain visa status) (Whatley & Castiello Gutierrez 2021). Institutions struggled with the reluctance to lose international students due to safety concerns and the inability to maintain visa status or enter the U.S.

Other HEIs partnered with foreign peer institutions to provide campus resources and in-person support to international students who were not able to re-enter the US (Huang et al., 2022). International students often fall into an exchange model, where students from two institutions in two different countries often switch places with one another, degree articulation agreements are established, and both institutions benefit from internationalization.

Enrollment Trends and Impacts

According to the Institute of International Education (IIE), the number of international students studying in the U.S. during the 2020/21 school year decreased by 15%, with the largest percentage drop in international students ever seen since the IIE started collecting data in 1948. Before the pandemic, the number of enrolled international students peaked in 2016–17 at 903,127 students. The numbers have continued to remain stable, especially when accounting for students remaining in the U.S. for work on the optional practical training (OPT) program. The OPT program allows international students to stay and work in the U.S. after graduating for up to one year, with a two-year extension possible for students with degrees in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields (USCIS, 2023). While students on OPTs normally have ended their studies in the U.S., this program allows them to bolster the American workforce with advanced skills obtained from their studies (U.S. for Success Coalition, 2023).

However, it is also interesting to note that the numbers were trending slightly downward even before the eruption of the pandemic, with some theorizing that the main factor in dropping numbers was the increasing cost of U.S. higher education (Redden, 2019). International students are often unable to access federal financial aid (which is, itself, often insufficient to offset the cost of higher

education in the United States). Without the ability to complete the free application for federal student aid (FAFSA), international students are also rendered ineligible for many institutional, public, or private scholarship opportunities (although they may have access to scholarships in their home countries). In addition, sometimes, full-time international students are required to pay out-of-state tuition, which means that they pay the highest price for an American education with the least opportunities for scholarships and federal student aid compared to their domestic peers. Many international students must provide evidence of substantial savings accounts to even obtain a visa to enter the U.S. to study. As we continue to come out of the pandemic, it is also important to note that the U.S. dollar has been incredibly strong since it emerged from the pandemic (Dulaney, 2023), which further impacts a student's ability to afford tuition, room, and board in the U.S. with a weakened local currency.

When the pandemic hit 2020/21, unsurprisingly, numbers plummeted at record rates, and the total number of international students in the US has dipped below one million for the first time since 2015. However, the data suggest that numbers have significantly rebounded, with international student numbers back to prepandemic levels (858,395 students) and surpassing a record total of 1,126,690 international students and graduated students on OPT (247,782) (IIE, 2024). Moreover, it is important to note that as total US enrollment still slumps (the lowest it has been since 2007), this relatively prompt return to the prepandemic international student presence has led to a record-breaking percentage of international students at American institutions (5.6%). This is the highest percentage ever, and these numbers hint at potential future growth. Furthermore, while still a relatively small percentage of the American college student population, international students have doubled in the last 20 years, whereas overall, U.S. enrollment has grown much more gradually. Clearly, the students are not to be ignored by their host universities, and if trends continue at the current rate, they will continue filling classroom seats in larger numbers.

Thus, the pandemic has sent shockwaves through the domain of international education and student mobility, halting international travel and putting pressure on international students already abroad. Host institutions, in a scramble manner to mitigate the negative effects on domestic students, face limited resources to support their international students. However, as international student mobility gradually resumes and even shows signs of surpassing prepandemic levels, alongside new ways of engaging and enrolling students from abroad via educational technological advances, American higher education faces new potential waiting to be explored.

Much of the research found in this study that focuses on the COVID-19 pandemic examines the experiences of international students, the various difficulties they face, and how institutions respond to these difficulties. What appears to be lacking, however, is a substantive conversation about the opposite swing of the pendulum toward more international student mobility in the postpandemic era, how American HEIs can make sense of this inbound international student market, and what they can do not only to attract these students but also to successfully shepherd them toward success and graduation.

DISCUSSION

Push-pull theory, as applied to international student mobility by Maringe and Foskett (2010), explains how students are driven abroad by push factors such as economic instability and visa restrictions while being attracted by pull factors such as institutional reputation and career prospects. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted this balance, weakening traditional pull factors while amplifying push factors. As international student mobility rebounds, HEIs can strengthen recruitment by reaffirming the value of international students, expanding into new markets, and improving institutional support during global crises. By enhancing these pull factors, HEIs can better attract and retain students in a shifting global landscape.

Reaffirming the Value of International Students

International students bring numerous, well-researched benefits to their host universities, and one example of this benefit is student fees, which amounted to \$32 billion across the globe in 2015--2016 and could soon reach \$1 trillion (Rochid and Ibna Seraj, 2023). However, it is important to note that more international students, especially at the undergraduate level, do not always translate to pure profit. International students can cost more resources to recruit and retain than they pay in student fees, depending on the kinds of institutions in which they are enrolled, and institutions are more likely to see a direct financial benefit to their enrollment if there is a significant number of international students attending (Cantwell, 2015).

Moreover, interest in bringing more international students to American HEIs and fostering more international educational partnerships is not niche. The U.S. Department of Education revised and republished a strategic plan in 2023 to revamp international education and engagement, stating that American students enjoy benefits such as comfort with diversity, the ability to tackle global challenges, job skills that increase competitiveness in the global market, and improved national security and diplomacy. The argument, then, is that for American students to be successful in an increasingly connected global society, they must study alongside international peers to develop skills such as language ability, multicultural awareness, and the ability to use foreign indicators to benchmark success (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). Indeed, it is often through the ability to look at oneself (or one's society) from an outside perspective that strengths and weaknesses can be identified. Interacting with international peers is often the best way to develop this important perspective. This concept of "internationalization at home or IaH" highlights the value of international students in remote places where domestic students may not be able to study abroad but can enjoy international experiences at their home institutions in partnership with their global peers (Raby & Zhang, 2021; Li & Eryong, 2021).

As efforts expand to bolster international student mobility (both physical and digital), HEIs need to continue to echo these sermons on the value of internationalization to higher education at large. The US is not alone in this campaign toward internationalization and will continue to face new competitors

as newer parts of the world develop marketing campaigns to attempt to cash in on the aforementioned benefits of international students (Sin et al., 2021). If HEIs fail to convince themselves, each other, and decision-makers about the need to direct energy toward internationalization in the coming years, the US may miss out and lose its rank as the most visited country for foreign students—the U.S. is ranked number one according to the U.S. News and World Report (2024).

Entering the new recruiting market

HEIs in the U.S. must think creatively about how to continue to stand out in this postpandemic market, just as institutions from other peripheral countries consider how to leverage political, geographical, and cultural strengths when unable to compete academically (Sin et al., 2021). This is especially true for rural US institutions that do not carry the name recognition of more prestigious institutions or peer universities in better-known states. As Sin et al. (2021) noted, emerging host countries such as Norway market low tuition costs, Portugal utilizes its network of former colonies through the shared Portuguese language, and Poland offers improved and simplified immigration procedures to allow students to more easily (and access the EU to boot). They are employing what makes them unique to stand out in a difficult market, and the US (and its many states) should keep this in mind.

Universities in the US are relatively expensive but offer instruction in English (the *lingua franca* of global society) and, oftentimes, prestigious degrees that carry more weight than their foreign counterparts do. However, the U.S. competes with other anglophone countries, and new competitor nations such as those in East Asia are also developing internal English-language programs (Falcone 2017). The U.S. can no longer rely on inherent English-speaking programs to attract foreign students, and HEIs at all levels must try harder to host a share of the international student market. Rural universities that lack the name recognition of Ivy League institutions can also showcase other aspects to attract students, such as affordability or financial aid options, local and regional culture, and recreational opportunities.

Finally, it is important to rebuild, maintain, and forge partnerships with foreign universities, especially in China and India, whose populations include large numbers of youth of college age (Falcone, 2017). It could also partner with placement agencies to identify students in foreign countries and aid in the application process (Falcone, 2017). Ultimately, why an international student applies to study in the U.S. is a complex mix of internal and external factors (Wu et al., 2024). Ultimately, the US draws significant numbers of students from across the globe, but if a university wishes to drive enrollment, careful attention must be given to South Asia, East Asia, and West Africa, which are the largest growing sources of international students moving to the US, according to a recent snapshot of international student enrollment (Martel, 2024). Looking at Open Doors 2024, India has actually surpassed China as the country supplying the largest number of international students to US institutions at 331,602 students. The US will need to continue to broaden its outreach swiftly and distinguish itself as a premium higher education experience to compete with other superpower

countries such as China and Russia (de Wit & Altbach, 2023). In the age of information, now more than ever, HEIs cannot rely on passive reputation alone to make themselves known to potential students within the din of other attractive options and opportunities around the globe.

Develop Infrastructure and Reduce Roadblocks

In addition to recruiting international students, HEIs must consider the increased need for targeted support for these students. In many cases, the solution could be as simple as optimizing a process. For example, international mobility is not accessible to all students inside and outside of the U.S. Travel expenses can be extremely prohibitive to students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds; after all, colleges are already extremely expensive, which can sharpen the blow of additional airfare and travel costs. One response to this would be to complement onsite domestic learning with online international learning (although it certainly does not offer online learning as a replacement) (de Wit and Altbach, 2023). Exclusively online programs are not comparable substitutes for the experiences of attending college and being on campus, but collaboratively, online international learning (COIL) is an important frontier to bear in mind, as HEIs offer students international experiences that are more affordable and even eco-friendly (de Wit and Altbach). They allow American and international students more opportunities to interact and may play a role in creating pipelines for attracting students.

It would also be effective in bolstering preexisting infrastructure designed to support international students attending American universities, such as international centers (Koo et al., 2023). These centers can conduct programming that puts international students in contact with their host community, which can more effectively connect them to friends, resources, and support. International centers also support immigration procedures, integration into the U.S. higher education system, and peer mentorship programs and are enormous partners in ensuring that students from abroad are successful. Moreover, if future pandemics or international crises occur, international centers can use extra resources to pivot toward new methods of helping students (Veerasingam & Ammigan, 2022). This investment ultimately results in the retention of international students, which results in more completers and better stats for the institution.

Finally, forward-thinking policies to support international students do not lie solely in the hands of HEIs. Scholars and practitioners should continue to cooperate with government agencies, such as the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS). As requested by the U.S. for Success Coalition (2023), it would behoove the U.S. to devote resources toward improving USCIS processing and allowing for better intra- and interagency data sharing and management. Missing potential students—and employees in the OPT program—because of slow bureaucracy is a loose situation for all those involved. However, the fact that the U.S. has an OPT program allowing foreign students to work in the U.S. market and plan a path to permanent residency is attractive to students from abroad. It remains to be seen how these systems will fare under new geopolitical contexts, and HEIs should feel the charge of protecting and supporting them.

CONCLUSION

The postpandemic era presents both challenges and opportunities for international student engagement in U.S. higher education. As institutions recover from the disruption caused by the global crisis, lessons learned about the vulnerabilities and strengths of international students must inform future strategies. The literature review underscores the nuanced challenges faced by these students, from mental health issues to the exacerbation of financial concerns. The growth of distance technology and varying institutional responses during the pandemic highlight the evolving landscape of global education. The impact on enrollment, with a drop followed by a potential rebound, underscores the need for strategic planning and support mechanisms. The proposed strategies, including reaffirming the value of international students, facing new recruitment markets, and designing better organizational infrastructure, provide a roadmap for institutions seeking to harness the full potential of global education. As the U.S. Department of Education leads initiatives for internationalization, higher education institutions must plan carefully for how they plan to internationalize.

While this study provides an overview of the effects of COVID-19 on international students and discusses how the US can respond to these data and lessons, it has inherent limitations. The study relies solely on secondary sources and does not incorporate primary data collection, such as interviews or surveys with international students. Consequently, the discussion remains somewhat superficial, as it does not capture lived experiences or emerging concerns in real time. Additionally, the study is U.S. centric, meaning that the findings may not be fully generalizable to international students in other regions where government policies, economic factors, and institutional responses differ. Ultimately, whether the US *should* welcome increasingly large populations of international students is another question to consider in 2025. Postcolonial theories can and should inform future discussions around internationalism in American universities.

Future research on postpandemic international student mobility will also need to consider the political climate of the United States, which adds volatility to discussions around international student mobility and success in the United States during global crises. Additionally, longitudinal and comparative studies tracking enrollment and student experiences over the next several years across different key countries would provide deeper insights into ongoing trends. Overall, there are gains in international student recruitment, enrollment, and success in the United States if American HEIs will thoughtfully seize the opportunity.

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