Navigating Academic Transitions: Support and Challenges of African International Students in Community Colleges

Chinwe Ihuoma
Krishna Bista
Morgan State University, USA

_____

ABSTRACT

This study explores the academic transition experiences of African international students at a U.S. community college, with a focus on institutional support and associated challenges. Using a qualitative single case study approach, in-depth interviews with eight students revealed three central themes: supportive academic environments, academic and cultural challenges, and adaptation to U.S. higher education. While faculty support and peer networks facilitated smoother transitions, communication barriers, unfamiliar instructional methods, and financial difficulties hindered progress. The findings highlight the need for targeted institutional interventions, including multicultural resource centers, improved communication strategies, and expanded on-campus employment opportunities. Guided by Schlossberg's Theory of Transition, this study offers insights for educators and administrators aiming to foster a more inclusive and supportive campus climate for African international students in community colleges.

Keywords: African international students, community college, institutional support services, academic transition, qualitative case study, student adaptation, higher education system.

INTRODUCTION

The United States remains a leading destination for international students due to its high-quality academic programs, career-focused learning opportunities, and extensive resources (Zong & Batalova, 2018; Kim, 2015). Over a million international students are enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities, coming from diverse academic, social, and cultural backgrounds (IIE, 2020; Oyeniyi et al., 2021). Among these students, African international students are increasingly turning to two-year community colleges as a cost-effective entry point to American higher education. These institutions offer lower tuition fees, diverse geographic locations, and the potential for transfer to four-year universities, making them an attractive option for many students from the African continent (Raby & Valeau, 2016).

Africa, home to 54 nations and a population of 1.2 billion, has seen many students seek education abroad due to the need for globalization and the prestige associated with obtaining international academic credentials (Africa Facts, 2019; United Nations, 2019; Shields, 2013). Despite this trend, there is a scarcity of empirical literature exploring the experiences of African international students in U.S. community colleges. This gap in research is particularly concerning given the unique challenges these students face in adjusting to a new academic and sociocultural environment.

Historically, African students have been part of the American higher education system since the late 19th century. For instance, Davis et al. (1961) documented the presence of over 50 African students at Lincoln University in Missouri during the 1890s. Since then, the number of African students pursuing higher education in the United States has continued to grow. According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC, 2019), community colleges have played a vital role in this trend. During the 2017-2018 academic year, more than 94,000 international students were enrolled in community colleges, with a notable increase in students from Sub-Saharan Africa (Open Doors, 2019).

The Open Doors report (2021) highlighted that 39,061 students from Sub-Saharan Africa were enrolled in U.S. colleges during the 2020-21 academic year, accounting for 4.3% of the total international student population. Despite the challenges posed by travel and visa restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, the presence of African students in American higher education remains significant. International students contribute immensely to the academic reputation, cultural diversity, social benefits, and financial stability of U.S. higher education institutions (Chavoshi et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2015). According to the IIE (2019), international students contributed $44.7 billion to the U.S. economy, with

African students accounting for approximately $514 million. However, to ensure these students thrive, it is crucial for American colleges to prioritize their needs and provide the necessary support and guidance.

Several studies have shown that African international students often face unique academic and sociocultural challenges upon their arrival in the United States (Atuahene, 2015; Kigotho, 2014; Kumi-Yeboah, 2010). These challenges include navigating a different educational system, cultural adjustments, housing, public transportation, restricted on-campus employment opportunities, and financial constraints (Akanwa, 2015; Caldwell & Hyams-Ssekasi, 2016; Evivie, 2009; Flournoy, 2018). Community colleges, in particular, may struggle to meet these needs due to limited budgets and funding (Chege, 2015; Darboe, 2021; Metaferia, 2021).

Understanding African international students' experiences and support needs in community colleges is essential for developing effective strategies to support their academic success and personal well-being. This study aims to fill the literature gap by exploring African international students' experiences at a community college, focusing on the institutional support services available to them.

To achieve the aims of this study, the following research questions will be addressed:

1. How have African international students at the institution described their satisfaction with the student support services provided by the institution?
2. What challenges have African international students faced with support services, and how have these challenges impacted their transition to U.S. community colleges?
3. How have African international students perceived the institution's communication regarding student support services?

LITERATURE REVIEW

African International Student Mobility

African international students increasingly seek education abroad due to foreign education's prestige and potential for economic and social stability (Shields, 2013; Woldegiorgis & Doevenspeck, 2013). The number of Sub-Saharan African students in U.S. higher education institutions has been steadily increasing, with a notable rise in both undergraduate and graduate enrollments (Open Doors, 2019). Countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, and Kenya send significant numbers of students

to the U.S., driven by factors including the declining political and economic conditions in their home countries and the high value placed on American education (IIE, 2022; Education USA, 2019).

Push factors, such as inadequate educational facilities, insufficient programs of study, and the poor value of home-country education, drive many African students to seek better opportunities abroad (Garcia & Villarreal, 2014; Magbondé, 2021). Conversely, pull factors, including the high quality of education, better living standards, and employment opportunities in the host country, attract these students to U.S. institutions (Altbach, 2004; Belyavina et al., 2013). The U.S. education system's ability to provide diverse institutions and specialized programs also plays a significant role in this decision-making process (Goodman & Gutierrez, 2011).

Changing Demographics in U.S. Higher Institutions

The demographic landscape of U.S. higher education is evolving, with an increasing number of international students contributing to the diversity of college campuses (AACC, 2019; U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). Community colleges, particularly, have become crucial entry points for international students, offering affordable education and pathways to four-year universities (Raby & Valeau, 2016). The enrollment of international students in community colleges has seen significant growth, contributing to job creation and economic benefits (NAFSA, 2018; 2019).

International students bring financial benefits to U.S. institutions, contributing significantly to the economy through tuition and living expenses (Becker & Kolster, 2012; Beine et al., 2014). Additionally, their presence enriches the educational experience for domestic students, promoting cultural exchange and global awareness (Tian & Liu, 2020). The drive for increased diversity and financial stability has made international student recruitment a strategic priority for many institutions (Anayah & Kuk, 2015).

Support Services and Challenges for African International Students

African international students face unique challenges that impact their academic and social experiences in U.S. institutions. These include stereotypes and discrimination, financial difficulties, and a lack of adequate support services (Constantine et al., 2005; Fries-Britt et al., 2014). Stereotypes about Africa and the historical context of racial

discrimination in the U.S. often result in African students feeling unwelcome and isolated (George-Mwangi et al., 2019; Lee & Opio, 2011).

Financial struggles are a significant barrier for many African students, exacerbated by limited employment opportunities and ineligibility for most financial aid programs (Bista & Dagley, 2015; Chege, 2016). The COVID-19 pandemic has further strained these students, disrupting their academic and personal lives and limiting access to essential resources (Retta, 2020; Hernandez, 2022).

Support services, such as academic advising, counseling, and tutoring, are vital for helping international students transition to U.S. higher education. Effective advising helps students plan their educational goals and integrate into the college culture (Bahr, 2008; Zhang, 2016). Counseling services address mental health and financial issues, providing crucial support for students adapting to a new environment (Humphrey & Forbes-Mewett, 2021; McKinney & Roberts, 2012). Tutoring services enhance academic engagement, helping students adjust to new learning styles and achieve their educational objectives (Neal, 2020; Thomas, 2017).

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative single case study approach to investigate the experiences of African international students at a community college. A case study allows for an in-depth analysis of contemporary issues within a real-life context, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are blurred (Yin, 2018). This approach was chosen to provide insights into the specific challenges and support systems experienced by these students. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), case studies are useful for examining educational problems and processes, making them appropriate for this study.

Participant Selection

Eight African international students were selected for this study, including three males and five females, aged 21 to 35 (see Table 1). Participants were chosen based on specific criteria: (a) currently enrolled in a two-year degree-granting institution in a Mid-Atlantic region, (b) holding an F-1 visa, and (c) having completed secondary education in

Africa. Purposeful and snowball sampling methods were used to recruit participants, ensuring that those selected could provide rich, detailed information about their experiences (Creswell, 2018; Merriam, 2009).

Data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews conducted via the Zoom teleconference platform. Interviews ranged from 45 to 60 minutes and consisted of 11 open-ended questions designed to explore participants' experiences with institutional support services. Field notes were taken during each interview to supplement the audio recordings, and pseudonyms were assigned to protect participants' identities.

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

Interviews were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify common themes and patterns. The transcripts were coded, and emerging themes were categorized to provide a detailed understanding of the participants' experiences. Both inductive and deductive reasoning were employed during data analysis, with emerging themes compared to Schlossberg's Transition Theory (Schlossberg, 2008) to ensure theoretical relevance.

To ensure trustworthiness and validity, member checking and peer debriefing were utilized. Participants were given the opportunity to review and confirm the accuracy of their transcribed interviews, ensuring that their experiences were accurately represented (Harper & Cole, 2012). Peer debriefing involved discussing the data collection and analysis process with colleagues to validate the findings and ensure methodological rigor (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Table 1

Demographics Information of Research Participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Country	Program	Year of study
Jonathan	Male	27	Cameroun	Engineering	2
Alice	Female	25	Nigeria	Journalism	2
Monica	Female	26	Ghana	Health Science	1
Pricilla	Female	23	Liberia	Business Management	2
Jennifer	Female	24	Nigeria	Finance	2
Daniel	Male	26	Uganda	Accounting	1
Ruby	Female	23	Nigeria	Nursing	1
Moses	Male	28	Ghana	Engineering	2

Results and Findings

The study's findings resulted in three main themes, each further categorized into sub-themes, centered around the experiences of African international students and their use of support services at a community college. These themes encapsulate both the supportive and challenging aspects of their experiences. The analysis revealed four major themes: (1) a supportive academic environment, (2) challenging academic experiences, (3) institutional support challenges, and (4) adapting to the U.S. higher education system. The following sections discuss these themes in detail, providing insights into the students' unique experiences.

Supportive Academic Environment

Despite the academic challenges faced, most participants expressed positive first impressions of their institutions. They described how overcoming initial fears of studying in a foreign country allowed them to settle and adapt to their new academic environment. For instance, Alice noted, "Putting my fears behind me towards studying in a foreign country has helped shape me to make better decisions toward my academics." Similarly, Daniel mentioned, "Initially, I had my fears and concerns, but

the welcoming environment has given me a chance to explore more educational experiences." These experiences highlight the importance of a supportive academic environment in facilitating the transition of international students.

Resourceful Faculty and Peers

A key aspect of the supportive environment was the presence of helpful faculty and peers. Participants such as Monica, Jonathan, and Jennifer shared positive experiences with supportive staff and students. Monica described her initial experience as "very good because I got help when I came in initially from Africa through students I met and also my professors, so the experience was good as I did not find it difficult to navigate the campus." Jonathan echoed this sentiment, stating, "My initial experience was very interesting. It was different in terms of organization because the school had various support programs to help new students settle and adapt to the environment. Luckily, one of my professors was helpful in directing me to services that I needed. Also, the very first friend I made when I arrived was from my country, so that helped me a lot to settle in my new environment." Jennifer also expressed gratitude, saying, "As a first-time African student in the United States, when I came, I really liked the environment. I was comfortable with the environment and the support I received. I am grateful to God for this opportunity to meet new people in this institution."

Collaborative Learning Environment

The collaborative learning environment in U.S. colleges was a significant positive factor for many participants. They appreciated the interactive and team-oriented classroom settings, which contrasted with the more instructor-centered approaches in their home countries. Stella from Liberia noted, "In Liberia, the class environment and structure revolve around the instructor. The teacher represents knowledge. So, they come and teach, and you take notes. But, when I came here, I realized that this is a different way to learn. It's more interactive and more like a collaborative and team-building class than a one-way class where the teacher gives the students information, and they repeat it. This is a different method of education." Moses added, "My interactions with teachers and classmates have been much more relaxed here than in my home country. Whereas I felt like there was a wall between me and my teachers back home, I have been able to learn and grow academically thanks to the collaborative nature of classes here. In addition to having easy access to my professor outside of class, I also have access to a wealth of additional materials."

In comparison to his home country, especially for an engineering major like Moses, working alone can be challenging, so he was grateful for the collaborative nature of his college environment. Ruby reiterated the learning and teaching style in her home country Nigeria: "In my country, students have more of a do-it-on-your-own learning environment. Students get a handout with study materials for the whole semester, and at the end of the semester, they must take an exam based on those materials." Ruby shared the participants' perception that the teacher-student dynamic was more positive in American classrooms. Some of the study's participants expressed appreciation for their professors at their institutions, citing their perceived qualities of increased supportiveness and open-mindedness. Despite encountering initial conflicts due to their prior exposure to teacher-centered learning in their home country, some participants in the study gradually adapted to the student-centered approach prevalent in the U.S. education system. This transition was facilitated by the democratic nature of the U.S. education system, which encouraged them to approach professors for assistance. The participants recounted instances of professors exhibiting support, hospitality, and resourcefulness, thereby enhancing their educational journey. Additionally, these experiences help students develop their teamwork skills and provide them with a more practical understanding of the concept they are studying. In accordance with these experiences, Daniel stated, "My professor grouped us for projects, and this has given me an understanding of what life outside college feels like. It is demanding, but it provides hands-on experience working as a team in the real world." Another participant, Jennifer, added, "My professor is very approachable, and he has helped me understand areas of my initial struggles. I speak to him a lot, and we work as a team to help me get better." Considering these experiences shared by participants, a collaborative learning environment can be a determining factor in helping students progress in their academics through support and ongoing effort from professors, faculty, and the college community.

Challenging Academic Experiences

While the supportive aspects were significant, participants also faced various academic challenges. These included a lack of awareness of available support services, financial difficulties, and adapting to different academic styles.

Unawareness of Support Services

Many participants were initially unaware of the support services available at their institution, which impeded their transition. Alice mentioned, "Initially, I was not aware of any student support services available in my institution. As far as I know, the school did not inform us or send out any emails informing students about the international student support services that are available." Daniel also noted, "Most of the students were not aware of the counseling services because they have not used the service and others did not know about it. I was going through a lot and needed help, so I had to speak to my professor which is not something I was used to back home." This lack of awareness highlights the need for better communication and promotion of support services to international students.

In addition to Priscilla, Jonathan also shared his opinion on the college's promotion of support services: "I think the college can do better in advertising the support services they provide. We as foreign students are not aware of these services because we do not have that back home so a better awareness like distribution of flyers of the services and their locations will help students better." Ruby, on the other hand, states that her friend made her aware of the services provided by the institution. In her interview, Ruby explains that although she knew about the service of the international office through a friend, she had never had any interactions with the office or used any of their services. She explains further: "I know the international offices are actually there, but I don't see much activity or interaction from them because we are not familiar with the services they provide, and they need to give us more information. They need to at least get student participation and communicate more to students, send e-mail, and try to do something at least to help us because we are unfamiliar with the environment, so we need more interactions from the international office."

Another participant, Stella, corroborated the same issues as Ruby: "As far as I know, the school did not provide us with any information on support services. Most of us are not internet proficient, so we struggle to navigate through the institution website." The participants admitted that they had not explored any of the services offered by their institution that could assist them in the process of transitioning because there was insufficient awareness about these services. This is primarily because the support services were not being effectively publicized, nor were they being made easily accessible to these students.

Jonathan claimed that he had not used any support services except the international office, which he became aware of through his classmate. He expressed frustration at the lack of support from the international office

regarding issues with job opportunities and student funding. He expressed further: "I think the international office is there to provide advice on financial support and on-campus job opportunities for international students because we need guidance. Sometimes I get emails from the international office, we need not only financial advice, but we need a means to work and provide for our needs. The office should be utilized more in their responsibility, guiding us and giving us information on financial aid and other available services and resources provided by the institution."

Financial Support

Financial challenges were a significant issue for many participants. They struggled to pay tuition and other expenses due to limited job opportunities and scholarships. Ruby stated, "One of the challenges we constantly faced was finding on-campus jobs; as international students, we are ineligible for certain job opportunities. There are some jobs where you are fully qualified, but as an international student, your options are limited." Daniel added, "I faced financial challenges as a new student because I was unemployed and was still trying to find my way around my new environment. Because I didn't have a job at the time and I did not have the funds to afford the courses I needed to take, it was a challenging experience as there was limited job opportunity."

Jonathan iterated how the financial situation affected him due to multiple tuition payments. He explained in his words, "As an international student, the tuition is quite high and that was challenging because my siblings were all in college as well, so all the tuition was high and that was a huge burden on my parents." He further stated how he struggled financially to the extent of falling out of status due to non-payment of tuition: "…. It was a very challenging period, and my academics were affected. I had to go to various offices on campus in search of a job or financial aid, I was desperate. There was a program that I was invited to and to participate in a meeting and then I learned that they were giving scholarships to students, and I applied."

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Supportive Academic Environments

Findings on RQ1 revealed that most African international students experienced a supportive academic environment. The support of faculty and peers plays a critical role in aiding the transition of international

students. According to Wu et al. (2015), the availability of a trustworthy support system, in the form of faculty and peers, significantly assists international students in navigating difficult situations. Participants mentioned that peer assistance was extremely helpful in integrating into the system in the United States. Jonathan mentioned how a student from his country played a significant part in his transition due to the similar language, which helped in better communication. Having a familiar identity is a support that numerous African international students have utilized, particularly upon arrival at college (Lindstrom, 2019; Ploner & Nada, 2020). Other participants described how their friends from other community colleges, who had been in the United States before them, greatly supported them when they needed aid and directions. These students, in turn, wish to make it a point to assist new African students in any way possible. Helping students is consistent with the existing literature by Shu et al. (2020), which states that the perceived support of peers and friends significantly and positively predates all areas of transition for African international students, implying that these students rely heavily on faculty, friends, and peers in their college integration.

Despite encountering difficult circumstances during their transition period, the participants expressed satisfaction with an academic environment that fostered cooperation and open-mindedness through their professors and peers. Professors were found to be accommodating and knowledgeable, readily engaging in discussions with students and providing valuable resources. This setting fosters a democratic approach to education, promoting collaborative and hands-on learning experiences for students (Banks, 2020). The results demonstrate that participants preferred the U.S. educational approach to that of their home country, aligning with research from Aurah (2014). According to Becker and Kolster (2012) and Beine et al. (2014), these are factors that correlate with the pull factors influencing the mobility of international students. The preference of African students for educational opportunities in the United States can be attributed to pull factors such as their usage of computers and other technological platforms. Community colleges are inclusive and cooperative environments for international students because they provide a quality learning environment, academic freedom, high-quality instruction, and faculty receptive to classroom engagement (Han et al., 2015; Lambert et al., 2019; Magbondé, 2021).

The presence of faculty members is crucial in facilitating support services for international students. According to Glass et al. (2015), during critical periods such as college transition, faculty members who exhibit empathy and attentiveness can significantly impact the academic growth of these students. Faculty members must approach these situations with sensitivity, support, and genuine concern. Jonathan recounted how his

instructor was attentive and empathized with his academic struggles. He stated the importance of faculty willingness to listen to international students because they are the closest point of contact with students. This approach can foster a continuous process of academic development for international students. Several participants in the study reported receiving sufficient assistance from faculty members regarding access to educational resources and guidance. Alice recounted how her professor encouraged her to participate in class discussions irrespective of her accent. She recalled how her language barrier made her nervous during presentations because other students never understood what she said. Daniel explained that his professor helped him improve his writing skills and directed him to the writing center for more professional guidance. Lindstrom (2019) indicated that the provision of engagement and support services by faculty and staff could hold greater significance for international students than the support they receive from their families. Therefore, it is imperative for community college faculty to show support continually and to understand that they serve as ambassadors for the institution within the classroom setting and may frequently serve as the initial resource for international students who encounter academic challenges.

Challenging Academic Experiences

African international students faced both positive and negative experiences during their transition. RQ2 discussed the challenges African international students encountered while using institutional support services. The initial experience of studying abroad and being separated from one's home environment presents a considerable challenge for many international students, resulting in notable struggles. With the change in culture, weather, food, and social values, the presence of negative emotions has a detrimental impact on students' academic performance and ability to adapt to their academic and social environment. These students struggled with differences in academic style, unawareness of support services, and financial aid. This study also supports previous research that identified academic styles, academic adjustment, and financial difficulties as challenges for African international students (Akanwa, 2015; Alsahafi & Shin, 2017; Gautam et al., 2016; IseOlurunkanmi, 2021; Mesidor & Sly, 2016; Mwangi et al., 2019).

First, the findings revealed that participants encountered communication difficulties due to accent conflicts. Wu et al. (2015) confirmed that language and communication barriers are significant challenges for international students studying in the US. While most Sub-Saharan African students are fluent in English, some are not, making it easy for others to make remarks that doubt their language skills.

Additionally, they had difficulties comprehending Americans and people of other nationalities and the problem of making themselves understood by others. This relates to the present study's findings. Ruby shared her experience in classroom communication due to her accent. As a Ghanaian, she found contributing to class discussions and presentations challenging due to her accent and pronunciation of words. She received support from her professor and the writing center, which enabled her to overcome this challenge.

In addition, Alsahafi and Shin (2017) identified several other challenges faced by African international students studying in the United States. These challenges include written assignments, note-taking, language proficiency, participation in class discussions, tests, and oral presentations. Monica stated she was unfamiliar with the teaching and learning techniques. This typically made her assimilation into the educational system more complex. Daniel explained that he fell behind on assignments because the learning approaches were unfamiliar. He explained further that being unaware of several support services contributed to his struggles until a friend introduced him to the writing center, which helped improve his academics. Daniel stated that he had to be connected to resources other than his class to develop a sense of belonging. This finding is supported by the literature on the importance of utilizing institutional resources to facilitate a successful transition (Gaulee, 2016; Gopalan, 2019; Luo, 2013).

The diverse academic styles prevalent in U.S. education often overwhelms and frustrates African international students. This is due to their unfamiliarity with various instructional methods and the incorporation of technology (Okpala, 2018). According to Wu et al. (2015), conflict in accent is a major challenge for students, characterized by the difference in accent between participants and domestic students, the difference in pronunciations, and the pace of speech, as noted in previous studies. The findings, however, indicate that this challenge did not prevent students from obtaining assistance to enable them to fulfill academic duties.

Moreover, African international students face a challenging transition to the United States due to financial constraints arising from limited on-campus job opportunities. This finding aligns with past research that demonstrated that the main financial difficulties experienced by African international students are related to their ability to meet their own needs as well as the needs of their families back home (Constantine et al., 2005; George-Mwangi et al., 2019; Okari, 2016; Schulte & Choudaha, 2014). Several studies have observed that students who engage in on-campus employment demonstrate a more efficient and effective adaptation to campus and college life (Ashley et al., 2021). This opportunity could assist

students in meeting their financial obligations and alleviate their economic strain. Participants expressed that having an on-campus job is an advantage for students, as it not only alleviates the burden of relying on family support from their home countries, given the current high currency exchange rate between the United States and other nations, but it also provides them with exposure to other aspects of their academic environment.

Having a job on campus has been shown to help students make a smoother transition to U.S. colleges (Ashley et al., 2021). According to Luo (2013), establishing such a service aids international students in adjusting to their new environment and participating in the academic and social system. Furthermore, it helps African international students acclimate to the outside world. If they can meet their financial responsibilities, they can concentrate fully on their studies and achieve successful outcomes. This finding aligns with previous research and adds to the current body of research on the necessary support for African international students in community colleges. Based on the literature, it was discovered that participants sought better communication from their institution (Adenuga, 2022). It was discovered that African international students sought to enhance their transition process by effectively utilizing available services specifically designed to support their needs. For example, support can be achieved through improved communication and awareness of resources, such as using the career center to explore job and internship opportunities and participating in orientation programs to familiarize themselves with the range of services catered toward African international students. In hindsight, many opportunities are disseminated through informal networks rather than solely relying on formal programs and announcements. African international students who are isolated due to unfamiliarity with their environment are at risk of potentially missing out on important resources.

CONCLUSION

This study provides new insight into the transitional experiences of African international students using support services at a community college. One of the significant implications for administrators involves fostering awareness of the availability of support services and other relevant resources. Community college administrators must restructure institutional support systems and services essential for African international students. One of the findings during the interviews was the lack of awareness among most participants regarding the support services provided by their institution, suggesting a potential area for improvement.

A solution to better serve the needs of international students is to establish a multicultural resource center within the international students' office. American higher education institutions can assist international students through various means, including support groups, mandatory cross-cultural programs, and activities that provide guidance and support, both in-person and virtually.

Furthermore, it would be beneficial for community college administrators to apply Schlossberg's (2008) Theory of Transition to gain a deeper understanding of the transitional experiences of African international students. Community colleges can adopt best practices to support African international students, create and implement campus-wide intervention strategies, and enhance the capacity of their faculty and staff through training. For instance, many African students have never used an online student portal before, so steps should be taken to ensure their smooth transition into the system. Training materials and mandatory information sessions hosted on a learning management system can show students how the process works. This initiative will facilitate a smooth transition for African international students to successfully adjust to their new environment, meet expectations, and deal with unanticipated challenges as college students.

The findings from this study indicate that African international students face a challenging transition to the United States due to financial constraints arising from inadequate scholarship and financial aid opportunities and limited on-campus job opportunities. Community colleges must increase the availability of on-campus jobs and augment the remuneration for existing positions. This measure will assist students in meeting their financial obligations and alleviate their economic strain.

Another implication for practice is that institutional leaders, staff, and faculty should use internationalized techniques when engaging with international students. Practitioners can create programs and services that prioritize the needs of African international students at a community college by incorporating coping mechanisms for students attending colleges. Additionally, community colleges should establish initiatives and resources to instruct faculty and staff on implementing culturally responsive teaching and learning practices to support African international students. This suggests a need for enhanced cultural responsiveness in advising and mentorship programs that facilitate closer relationships between faculty and students. Effective communication strategies extending beyond campus-wide announcements are also essential to ensure comprehensive understanding. Institutions of higher education should consider the assessment methods they will employ to evaluate the transition of African international students attending a community college. Through campus programming evaluations, community colleges can

assess international students based on the skills, knowledge, and resources they acquired in college. This effort should be aligned with the institution's strategic plan, objectives, and learning outcomes. Community colleges need to establish support networks that encourage the development of true relationships between African international students and domestic students so that all students can learn from one another, share their experiences, and progress together.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study explored the institutional support services and resources for African international students, highlighting their importance in academic achievement and smooth transition to higher education in the United States. Future research should focus on comparative studies to examine the perspectives of African international students from colleges in various states to identify differences and similarities in their experiences, aiding in the provision of tailored support. Additionally, investigating the coping mechanisms of African international students in managing mental health, especially with the support of college health insurance, is crucial. It is also essential to study the services that significantly contribute to the academic success of African international students and track changes over time to adapt to emerging needs and technologies. These research endeavors will enhance the understanding of African international students, making their voices heard and informing the development of effective support services and policies.

REFERENCES

Adenuga, T. (2022). *Exploring adjustment challenges of Nigerian international students in U.S. higher education* (No. 29062269) [Doctoral dissertation, Morgan State University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Africa Facts. (2019). *English speaking countries in Africa*. https://africa-facts.org/English-speaking-countries-in-Africa/

Ajayi, T. M. (2022). *Exploring the academic support and resources for the success of international graduate students in an historically black college and university* (No. 29399445) [Doctoral dissertation, Morgan State University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Akanwa, E. E. (2015). International students in western developed countries: History, challenges, and prospects. *Journal of International Students, 5*(3), 271–284. https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v5i3.421

Alsahafi, N., & Shin, S. (2017). Factors affecting the academic and cultural adjustment of Saudi international students in Australian universities. *Journal of International Students, 7*(1), 53–72. https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v7i1.245

Altbach, P. G. (2004). Higher education crosses borders: Can the United States remain the top destination for foreign students? *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning, 36*(2), 18–24. https://doi.org/10.1080/00091380409604964

American Association of Community Colleges. (2021). *Fast facts*. https://www.aacc.nche.edu/research-trends/fast-facts/

Anayah, B., & Kuk, L. (2015). The growth of international student enrollment at community colleges and implications. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 39*(12), 1099–1110. https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2014.934409

Atuahene, F. (2015). Higher education finance in Ghana. *International Higher Education*. https://doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2008.50.7996

Bahr, P. R. (2008). Cooling out in the community college: What is the effect of academic advising on students' chances of success? *Research in Higher Education, 49*, 704–732. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-008-9100-0

Banks, J. A. (2020). Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives. In J. A. Banks & C. A. M. Banks (Eds.), *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives* (10th ed., pp. 3–24). Wiley.

Becker, R., & Kolster, R. (2012). *International student recruitment: Policies and developments in selected countries*. Netherlands Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education.

Beine, M., Noel, R., & Ragot, L. (2014). Determinants of the international mobility of students. *Economics of Education Review, 41*, 40–54. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2014.03.003

Belyavina, R., Li, J., & Bhandari, R. (2013). *New frontiers: U.S. students pursuing degrees abroad, a 2-year analysis of key destinations and fields of study*. Institute of International Education. http://www.iie.org

Bennani, Q. W. C. (2018). *Contributors to the successful transfer of international community college students* (No. 10825118) [Doctoral dissertation, San Francisco State University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Bista, K. (2016). (Re)Examining the research on international students: Where are we today? *Journal of International Students, 6*(2), I–X. https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v6i2.360

Bista, K., & Dagley, A. (2015). Higher education preparation and decision-making trends among international students. *College & University, 90*(3), 2–11.

Bohman, E. (2009). Headed for the heartland: Decision-making process of community college-bound international students. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 34*(1–2), 64–77. https://doi.org/10.1080/10668920903385848

Caldwell, E. F., & Hyams-Ssekasi, D. (2016). Leaving home: The challenges of black-African international students prior to studying overseas. *Journal of International Students, 6*(2), 588–613. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1094889.pdf

Chavoshi, S., Wintre, M. G., Dentakos, S., & Wright, L. (2017). A developmental sequence model to university adjustment of international undergraduate students. *Journal of International Students, 7*(3), 703–727.

Chege, G. (2016). *A qualitative study on lived experiences of Kenyan adult immigrants in community colleges in Georgia* (Publication No. 10105328) [Doctoral dissertation, Capella University]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database.

Constantine, M. G., Anderson, G. M., Berkel, L. A., Caldwell, L. D., & Utsey, S. O. (2005). Examining the cultural adjustment experiences of African international college students: A qualitative analysis. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52*, 57–66. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.52.1.57

Creswell, J. W. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. SAGE.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Darboe, A. (2021). *A qualitative study of the motivations and experiences of African students in community colleges in the United States* (Publication No. 28770241) [Doctoral dissertation, Illinois State University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Davis, J. M., Hanson, R. G., & Burnor, D. R. (1961). *Survey of the African student: His achievements and his problem*. eBook.

Evivie, L. G. (2009). *Challenges faced by African international students at a Metropolitan Research University: A phenomenological case study* (No. 3388961) [Doctoral dissertation, University of North Carolina]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database.

Flournoy, K. (2018). *An investigation of the challenges faced by Ghanaian international students in the American higher education system: A phenomenological multicase study* (Publication No. 10975416) [Doctoral dissertation, Roosevelt University]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database.

Fries-Britt, S., George Mwangi, C. A., & Peralta, A. M. (2014). Learning race in a U.S. context: An emergent framework on the perceptions

of race among foreign-born students of color. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 7*(1), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035636

García, H. A., & Villarreal, M. de L. (2014). The "redirecting" of international students: American higher education policy hindrances and implications. *Journal of International Students, 4*(2), 126–136. https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v4i2.473

Gaulee, U. (2016). *American students' experiences with their international peers on campus: Understanding roadblocks, enhancing pathways of global engagement* (Publication No. 10408887) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Florida]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

George Mwangi, C. A. (2016). Exploring a sense of belonging among Black international students at HBCUs. *Journal of International Students, 6*(4), 1015–1037. https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v6i4.33

Glass, C. R., Kociolek, E., Lynch, R. J., & Cong, S. (2015). Uneven experiences: The impact of student–faculty interactions on international students' sense of belonging. *Journal of International Students, 5*(4), 353–367. https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v5i4.400

Goodman, A. E., & Gutierrez, R. (2011). The international dimension of U.S. higher education: Trends and new perspectives. In R. Bhandari & P. Blumenthal (Eds.), *International students and global mobility in higher education* (pp. xx–xx). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230117143_5

Gopalan, N., Beutell, N. J., & Middlemiss, W. (2019). International students' academic satisfaction and turnover intentions: Testing a model of arrival, adjustment, and adaptation variables. *Quality Assurance in Education, 27*(4), 533–546.

Gunawardena, H., & Wilson, R. (2012). *International students at university: Understanding the student experiences*. Peter Lang.

Han, X., Stocking, G., Gebbie, M. A., & Appelbaum, R. P. (2015). Will they stay or will they go? International graduate students and their decisions to stay or leave the U.S. upon graduation. *PloS One, 10*(3), e0118183. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0118183

Harper, M., & Cole, P. (2012). Member checking: Can benefits be gained similar to group therapy? *The Qualitative Report, 17*(2), 510–517. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2012.2139

Harper, T. J., Anderson, G., Carmichael, K., & Huang, T. (2008). International students at four-year institutions: Developmental needs, issues, and strategies. In S. R. Harper & S. J. Quaye (Eds.), *Student engagement in higher education: Theoretical perspectives and practical approaches for diverse populations* (pp. 17–37). Routledge.