



**2017**

**ASSOCIATION OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION ADMINISTRATORS  
ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

# **Bridging Divides in the Intercultural Classroom**

Robin Matross Helms, CIGE/ACE

Mark W. Harris, ELS

Darla K. Deardorff, Duke University

**How does your campus  
community as a whole  
welcome  
internationals?**



# Speakers

## **Robin Matross Helms, Ph.D.**

Director, Center for Internationalization &  
Global Engagement  
American Council on Education

## **Mark W. Harris, L.H.D.**

President Emeritus  
ELS Educational Services, Inc.

## **Darla K. Deardorff, Ph.D.**

Executive Director, Association of International  
Education Administrators and Adjunct  
Research Scholar in the Program in Education  
Duke University



# Our Presentation and Discussion - Agenda

Discovery question

How does your campus welcome international students?

- 1) **The Intercultural Classroom: Institutional context & Perspectives** - [Ms. Robin Matross Helms](#)
- 2) **The International Student Experience- Feedback Survey**  
[Mr. Mark W. Harris](#)
- 3) **Action Steps for Addressing the Intercultural Classroom**  
[Ms. Darla Deardorff](#)
- 4) **Discussion of issues and solutions with audience and panelists**

# The Intercultural Classroom: Institutional Context and Perspectives

**Robin Matross Helms**

Director

Center for Internationalization & Global Engagement

American Council on Education

[www.acenet.edu](http://www.acenet.edu)

[rhelms@acenet.edu](mailto:rhelms@acenet.edu)



# American Council on Education (ACE)

## Mission and Goals

- Umbrella organization
- Leadership & advocacy
- National & international mission

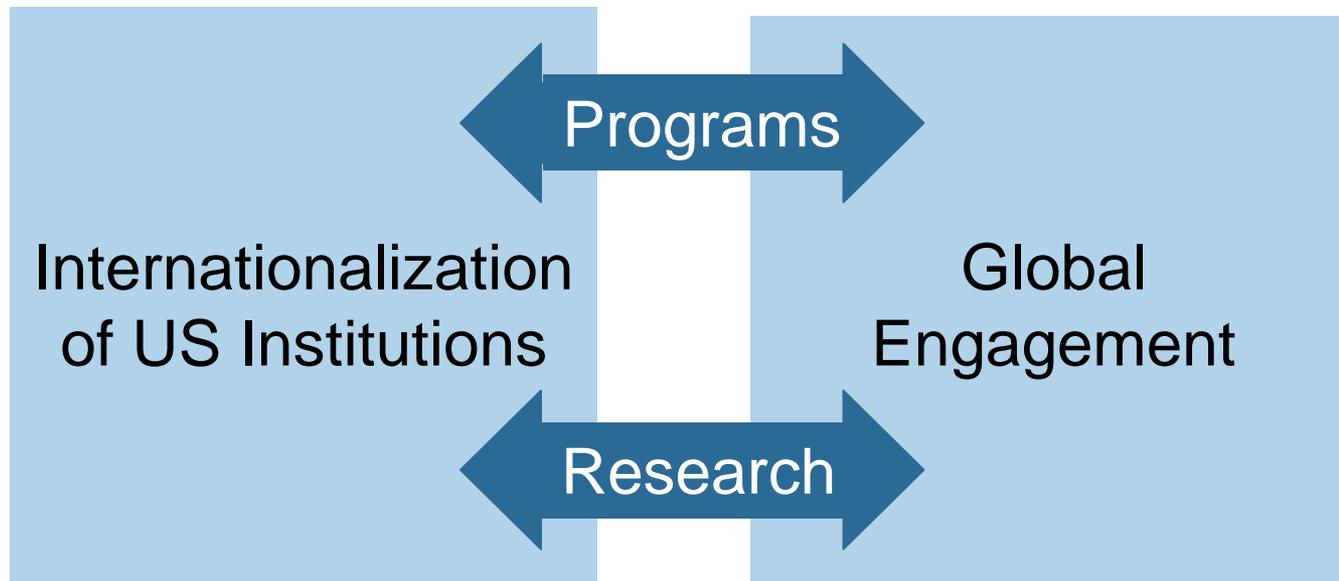
## Membership

- Approximately 1800 institutions
- All sectors of U.S. higher education



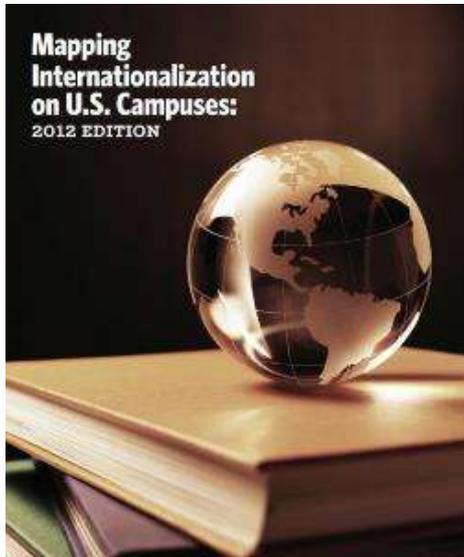
# ACE Center for Internationalization & Global Engagement (CIGE)

[www.acenet.edu/cige](http://www.acenet.edu/cige)



# Mapping Internationalization on U.S. Campuses

- Only **comprehensive** source of data and analysis on U.S. higher education internationalization.
- Survey conducted **every 5 years** (2001, 2006, 2011, 2016).
- Includes a range of **institution types**:
  - Associates (community colleges)
  - Baccalaureate (4-year liberal arts)
  - Master's
  - Doctoral
- New report scheduled for release in **Spring 2017**.



# Mapping 2016

## Top reasons for internationalization

#1

- Improve student preparedness for a global era

#2

- Diversify students, faculty, and staff at home campus

#3

- Become more attractive to prospective students at home and overseas

# Mapping 2016

## Top priorities for internationalization

#1

Recruiting **international students**

---

#2

Increasing **study abroad** for U.S. students

---

#3

**Partnerships** with institutions/organizations abroad

---



# Mapping 2016

## International student recruiting

- About half of institutions have an international student **recruiting plan**
  - Majority include enrollment & geographic targets
- More institutions provide **funding** for:
  - Scholarships or financial aid for international students
  - Travel for recruitment officers
  - Overseas recruiters



# Mapping 2016

## International student support

Percent of institutions that offer international students:

|                                                        | 2011       | 2016       |
|--------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| <b>Orientation</b> to the U.S. and local community     | <b>53%</b> | <b>59%</b> |
| <b>Orientation</b> to institution and/or US classroom  | <b>65%</b> | <b>64%</b> |
| Assistance in <b>finding housing</b>                   | <b>53%</b> | <b>53%</b> |
| <b>Host family</b> program                             | <b>18%</b> | <b>20%</b> |
| <b>Support services</b> for int'l students' dependents | <b>6%</b>  | <b>11%</b> |



# Mapping 2016

## International student integration

Percent of institutions that offer:

|                                                                      | 2011 | 2016 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|
| <b>International festivals</b> or events                             | 58%  | 71%  |
| <b>Meeting place</b> for students interested in int'l topics         | 35%  | 44%  |
| <b>Buddy program</b> to pair US & int'l students                     | 19%  | 34%  |
| <b>Language partner</b> program                                      | 18%  | 27%  |
| <b>Residence hall</b> with programs to integrate US & int'l students | 18%  | 25%  |



# Mapping 2016

## In the classroom

- Modest decrease in **individualized academic support services** for international students
- More structures for infusing **global content**
  - Student learning outcomes, general ed requirements
- Backtracking on **faculty support**
  - E.g. funding & professional development for course internationalization
  - About one-quarter of institutions offer workshops on integrating international students



# Mapping 2016

## English language & pathways programs

Intensive English  
program/institute/center

- Operated by institution: 29%
- With outside provider: 5%
- Developing or considering: 14%

Bridge or pathway  
program

- Operated by institution: 13%
- With outside provider: 2%
- Developing or considering: 16%



# The International Student Experience Feedback Survey at 23 Universities

**Mr. Mark Harris, L.H.D.**

President Emeritus

ELS Educational Services, Inc.



# Welcome

**Since 1961 ELS Educational Services has helped US higher education internationalize**

- ELS has brought more than 1.2 million students to the USA for intensive English training and university study
- Each year ELS recruits 25,000 students for intensive English and Pathway programs, 17% of all F-1 IEP students entering the USA each year
- Last year students from 143 nations studied at 60 ELS Language Centers in the USA. ELS supports a network of university counselors in more than 100 countries on the ground 365 days a year.
- ELS promotes US higher education at 425 student fairs in 30 countries each year



# Participating Institutions

To reach a diverse sampling of undergraduate and post graduate candidates and nationalities from a representative groups of institutions and including students for this survey, ELS partnered with various institutions across the US. These institutions were provided with a unique link and sent invitations to the students directly from the university.

In total, we received 662 completed surveys from students at 23 institutions.

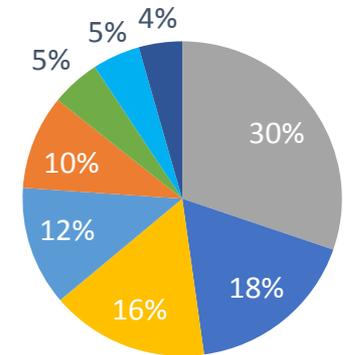
Augustana University  
Bellarmine University  
College of Mount Saint Vincent  
Dominican University  
Dominican University of California  
Eckerd College  
Florida Tech (FIT)  
Hawaii Pacific University  
Highpoint University  
Hofstra University  
Kapiolani Community College  
Lewis University  
Miami University  
New York University  
Regis University  
Saint Mary's College  
Santa Rosa Junior College  
SUNY Brockport  
University of Cincinnati  
University of Iowa  
University of New Haven  
University of North Dakota  
University of the Incarnate Word

# Demographic & Academic Profile

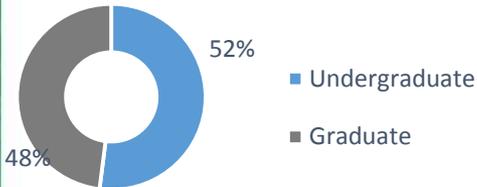
## English Ability



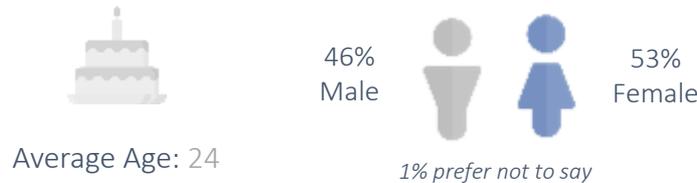
## Region Of Origin



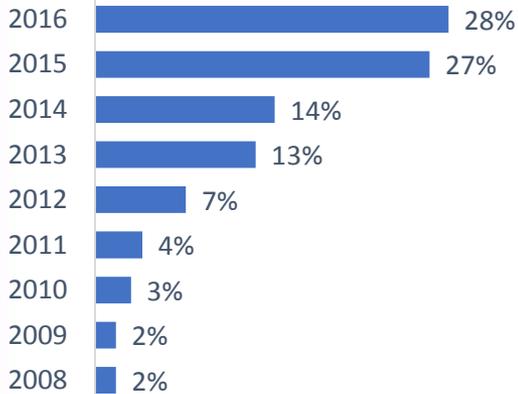
## Student Status



## Demographics

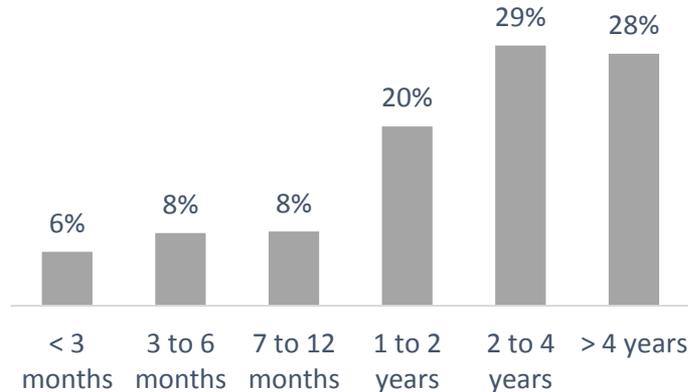


## Year Arrived In US



Base: 662  
All students

## Anticipated Study Time In The US



- China
- India
- APAC (excl. Middle East)
- Europe
- Middle East
- South America
- Africa
- North & Central America



# Key Findings – US Classrooms do not Accommodate the Needs of International Students

US Classroom Culture challenges internationals more than English language. In-class communication protocols, inclusiveness, non-US perspectives, and enhanced feedback are needed.

1. International students acknowledge that **English tests do not measure skills needed for student success in US classrooms. Only 13% attended IEPs in the USA.** The “gap” in performance is related to the “culture of the professors and the classroom”.
2. **International students struggle to understand professors’ expectations.** They need more clarity in assignments, examples of finished assignments for format and content and clear learning objectives. International students want **more FEEDBACK** from professors.
3. The amount of reading and **WRITING is overwhelming for internationals.** English learning, if not in English medium secondary studies, in the home country does not prepare students for demanding expository writing in either undergraduate or postgraduate programs. **ESL study in the USA in an IEP or a pathway programs can provide intensive advanced writing they need.**

## Key Findings – US Classrooms do not Accommodate the Needs of International Students cont'd

4. Classroom discussions and team presentations are reported as a major challenge. **Internationals are frustrated by professors showing “preferential treatment” of domestic students.** They also mention that **course content often only covers the USA** and professors do not welcome or respect perspectives or examples from other countries.
5. **US students do not welcome international students in study groups because they don't value of international perspectives. Internationals are reluctant to express opinions in class** that are contrary to those of their professor or US students. They feel frustrated and stifled.



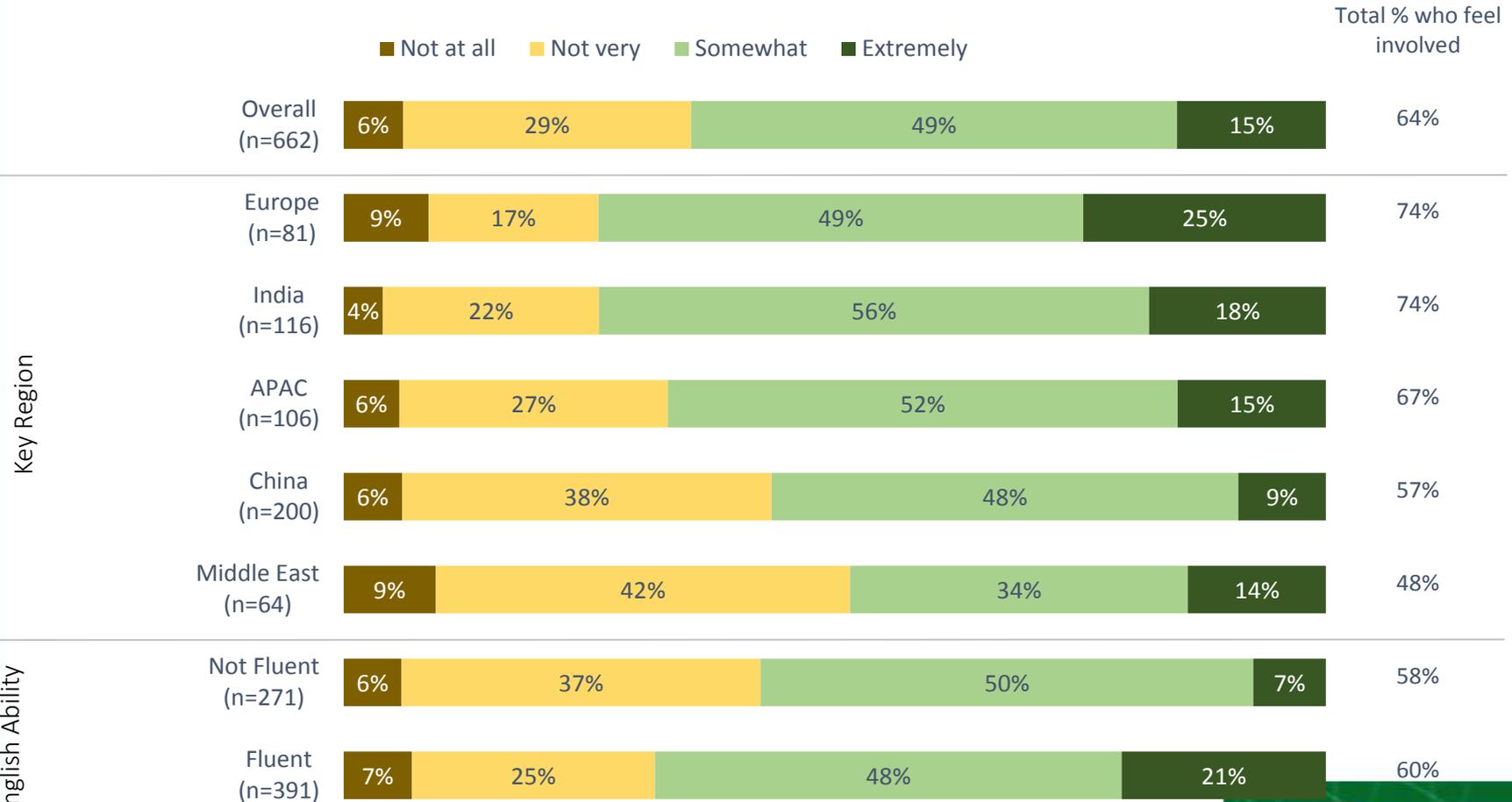
---

## How Involved do International Students Feel?

Most international students are challenged in making US friends

# Level Of Inclusion At Their University

Overall, 64% of students feel involved with other students. Students from India and those with a higher English language ability are more likely to feel involved. Those who say that their level of English has made social interactions difficult are also less likely to feel involved with peers. 19% of female students feel extremely involved and included compared to 11% of male students.



Base: 662  
All students

Q11. Thinking about the social aspects of university, how involved/included do you feel with other students?



# How Their Social Circle Breaks Down

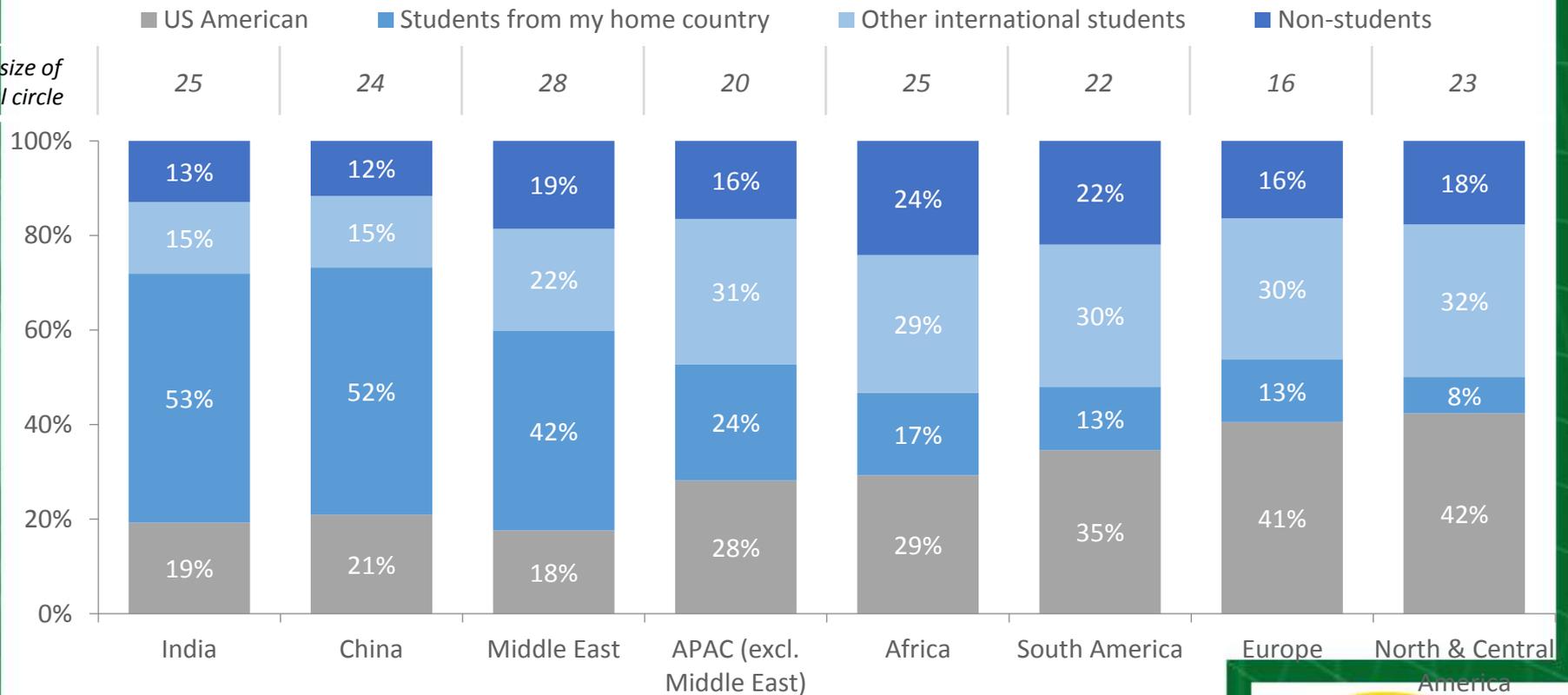
## The Regional Picture

Tend to build social circle around students of the **same nationality**: India, China, Middle East

Tend to build social circle around US Americans: **Europe, Americas**

Tend to have a **diverse social circle**: APAC, Africa

Avg. size of social circle



Base: 662  
All students

Q15. In the US, how many friends do you have who are...a) US American students, b) students from my home country, c) other international students (not my nationality), d) non students?



# Poor English Proficiency Impacts Social Integration More Than Academic Performance – Students Say

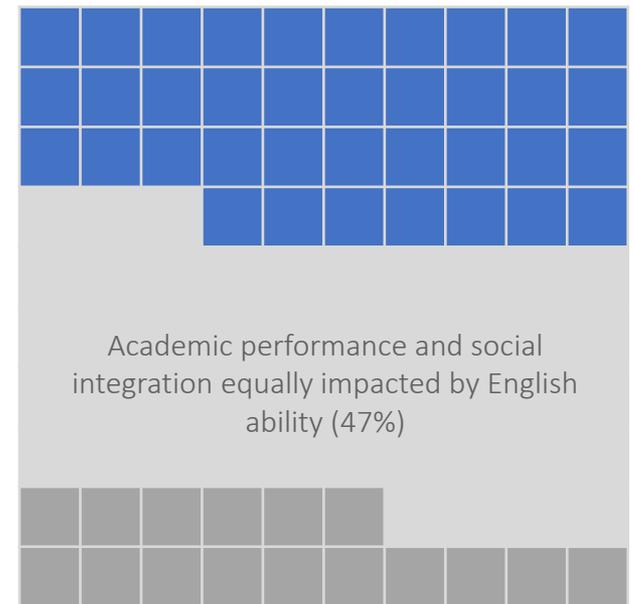
Among students who are not fluent in English (self-reported), their English ability appears to have a more negative impact on social integration than it does on academic performance.

Impact of English ability on US study

- Positive impact
- No impact
- Negative impact



Social integration more negatively impacted by English ability (37%)



Academic performance more negatively impacted by English ability (16%)

Base: 271  
Non-fluent

Q10. How do you feel your English ability has impacted your academic performance?  
Q16. How do you feel your English ability has influenced your social interactions at your university?



---

# Challenges International Students Report in Their US Classrooms

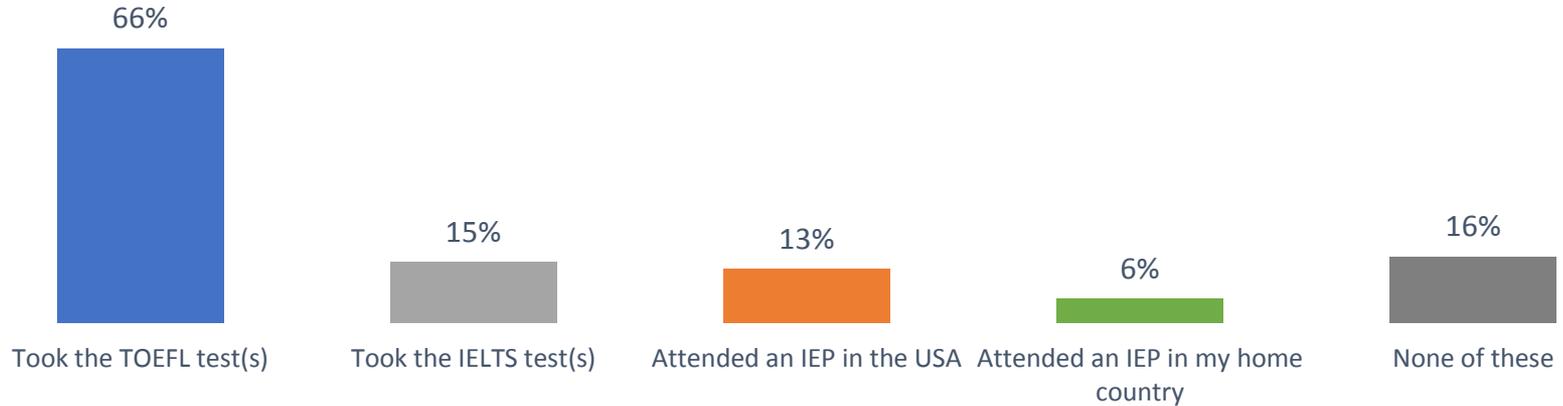
Beyond Knowledge



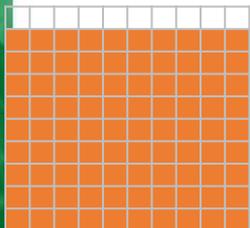
# Satisfying English Requirements

Two thirds of the international students took the TOEFL to satisfy their university's English requirements, whereas only 15% took the IELTS, and fewer attended an IEP either in their home country or at their university of choice.

## Satisfying University English Requirements

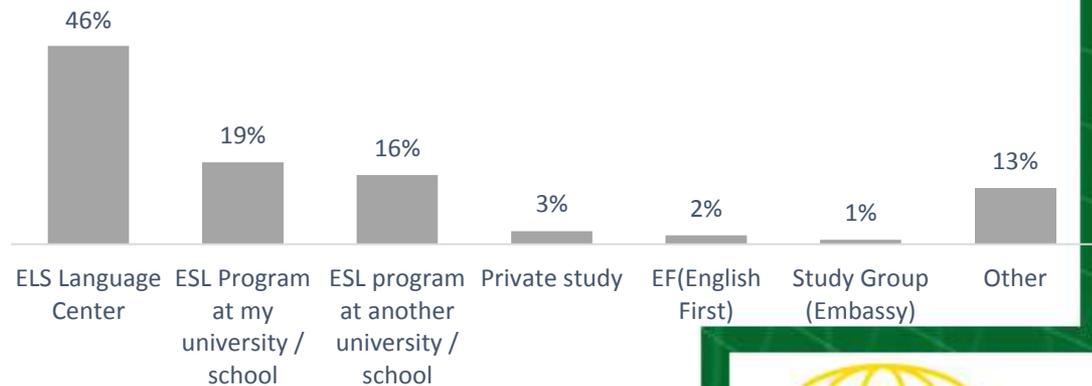


## Of those who participated in an IEP... (n=110)



90% completed the program

## IEP Program Providers:



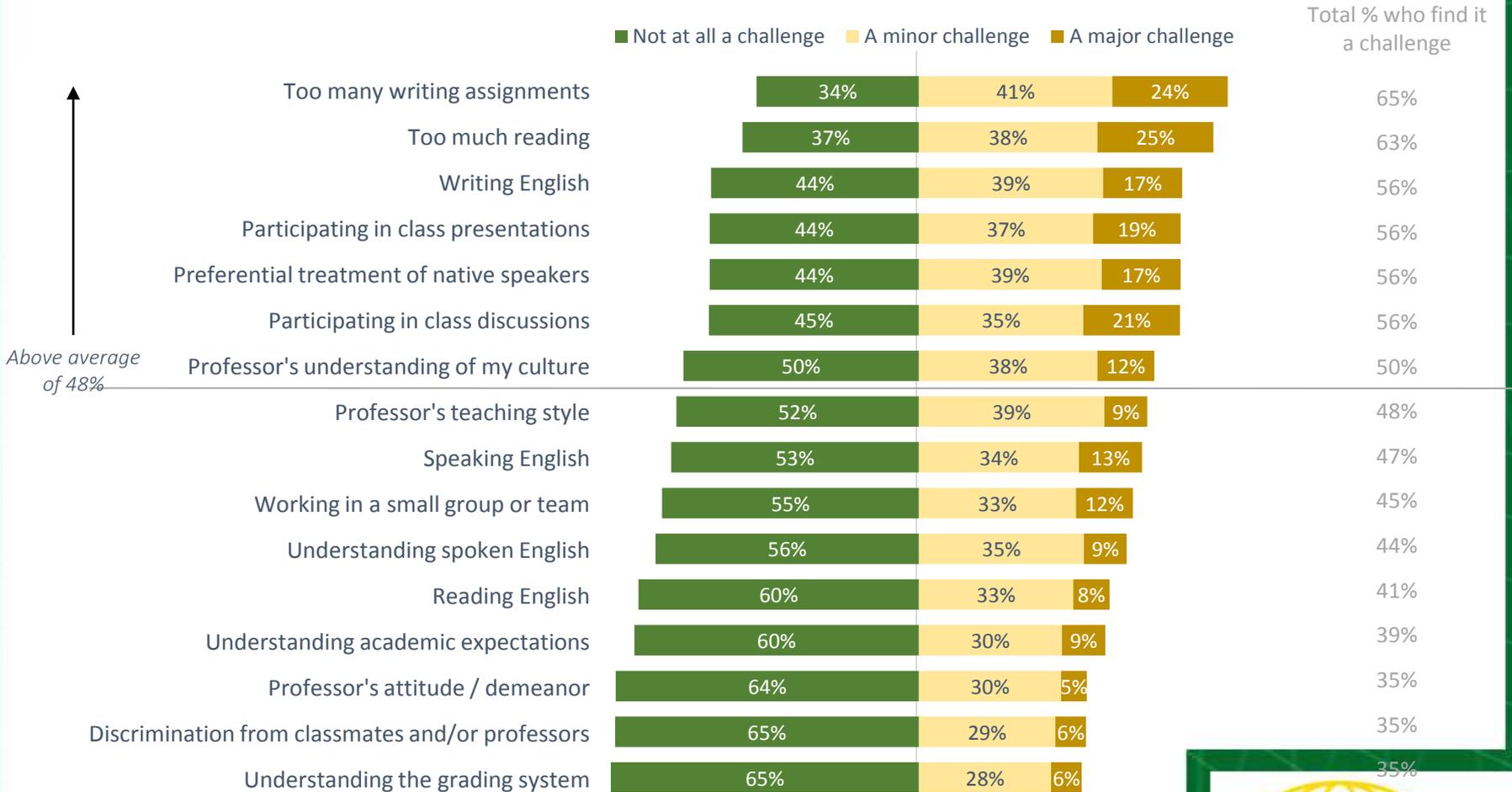
Base: 662  
All students

Q3. How did you satisfy your current university's English requirement for admission?  
Q4. Which of the following best describes your participation in the Intensive English Program?  
Q5. Which Intensive English Program were you involved in?



# Challenges Faced In A US Classroom

The top 3 areas which students find challenging are: The workload (too many written assignments, too much reading and writing in English), Participating in the classroom (in class discussion and presentations) and Feeling like they are understood (preferential treatment of native students, professors understanding of their culture).



Base: 662  
All students

Q6. Using the drag and drop feature, please indicate how challenging you have found each of the following aspects of the US classroom?



# Comfort Levels In The Classroom

There are various factors which make international students feel out of their comfort zones. These include: questioning the opinions of questions and fellow students, speaking in open discussion and interacting with US students. These seem to be more spontaneous actions which the student cannot prepare for in advance and therefore require a higher level of fluency. Those who have a beginner or intermediate level of English and undergraduates feel less comfortable in the classroom.

■ % who are uncomfortable

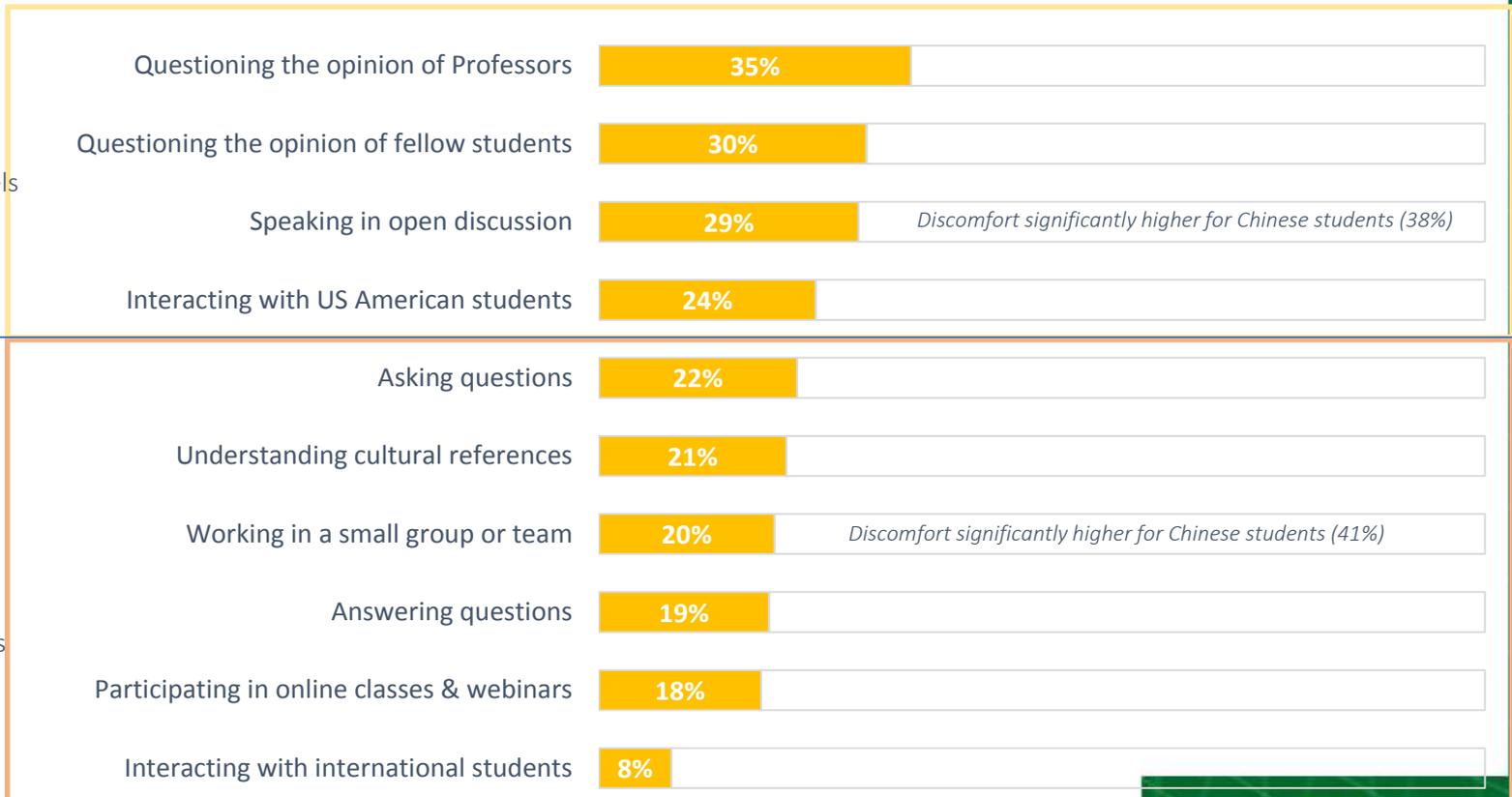


Above average levels of discomfort

Avg. discomfort 23%



Below average levels of discomfort



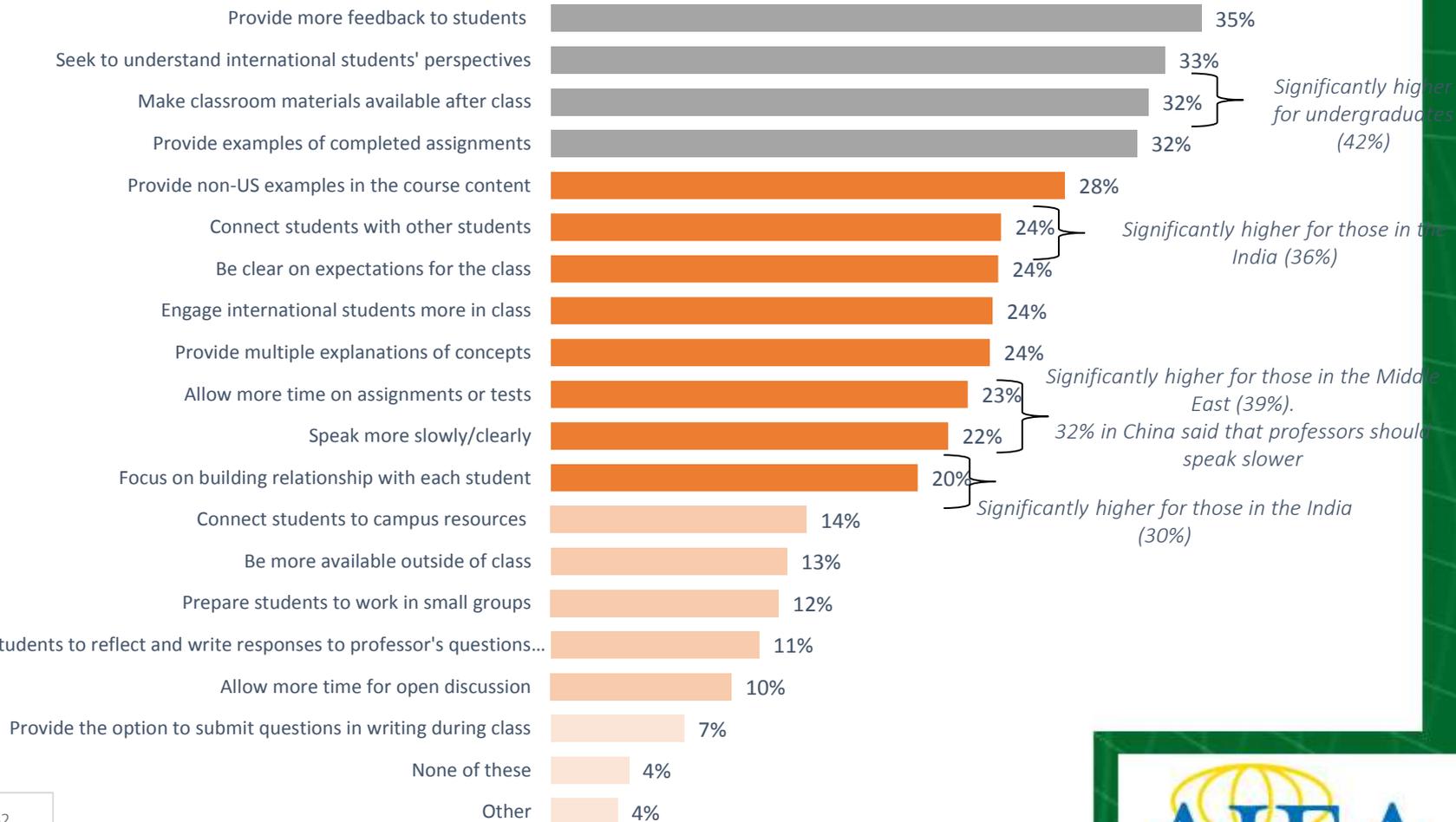
Base: 662  
All students

Q9. How comfortable do you currently feel doing the following in the US classroom?



# Improvements To The Classroom Experience

Those who class themselves as being fluent in English would like professors to try to understand international students' perspectives and to provide non US examples in the course content. Whereas, those who say their English ability is intermediate want more time on assignments and for professors to speak slowly. Those with a higher English ability are concerned about the content of learning, while those with a lower level of English are mostly concerned with understanding.



Base: 662  
All students

Q8. What recommendations or suggestions can you give to professors to improve your classroom experience?



# Most Desired Improvements

## By Region Of Origin

Students from China and Middle East both feel it is important for the professor to speak more slowly, while those from APAC and Europe feel it would be helpful to provide non-US examples in the course content. All regions feel the professor should seek to understand their perspective, as well as provide more feedback, and examples of completed assignments.

| China                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | India                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | APAC<br><i>excl. Middle East</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Europe                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Middle East                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Make classroom materials available after class</p> <p>Provide examples of completed assignments</p> <p>Provide more feedback to students</p> <p>Speak more slowly/clearly</p> <p>Seek to understand international students' perspectives</p> | <p>Connect students with other students</p> <p>Provide more feedback to students</p> <p>Focus on building relationship with each student</p> <p>Seek to understand international students' perspectives</p> <p>Provide examples of completed assignments</p> | <p>Make classroom materials available after class</p> <p>Provide more feedback to students</p> <p>Seek to understand international students' perspectives</p> <p>Provide examples of completed assignments</p> <p>Provide non-US examples in the course content</p> | <p>Provide more feedback to students</p> <p>Make classroom materials available after class</p> <p>Provide examples of completed assignments</p> <p>Seek to understand international students' perspectives</p> <p>Provide non-US examples in the course content</p> | <p>Seek to understand international students' perspectives</p> <p>Allow more time on assignments or tests</p> <p>Speak more slowly/clearly</p> <p>Provide more feedback to students</p> <p>Provide examples of completed assignments</p> |

Base: 662  
All students

Q8. What recommendations or suggestions can you give to professors to improve your classroom experience?



# 2 Pre-semester Programs Delivered by ELS

## Help Arriving International Students Land on Their Feet

### ELS Soft Landing™ – An new student orientation program for int'l. students

Help students cope with culture shock

**Program Length:** 40 classroom hours suggested

#### Course Topics

- Professors, homework and grades
- Email communication with professors
- Office hours with faculty
- Class participation: questions and answers
- Class discussions
- Plagiarism
- Racism and prejudice
- Religious beliefs
- Student services
- Student activities and organizations
- Roommate relations
- Safety: partying, transportation, alcohol and drugs
- Goals for the semester

### ELS Orientation for International Teaching Assistants – Improve Their Teaching Skill

Workshop to help ITAs understand US classroom culture, etiquette and best practices in communicating with and supporting the undergraduates they teach

**Program Length:** 45 hrs.(24 pre-semester; 21 during)

#### Training Topics

- Facilitating class discussions
- Giving clear and concise definitions
- Using nonverbal communication techniques
- Repairing communication breakdowns
- Role-play counseling sessions
- Practice teaching and peer observation
- Use of accent-reduction software throughout course
- 24 hours pre-semester; 21 hours during first 7 weeks of semester

# SIO Action Steps for Addressing the Intercultural Classroom

**Dr. Darla K. Deardorff, Ph.D.**

Executive Director, the Association of International Education Administrators Adjunct Research Scholar in the Program in Education, Duke University



# Focus on Faculty

- 1) Start with the faculty champions/allies



# Focus on Faculty

- 1) Start with the faculty champions/allies
- 2) Listen to the students – focus groups



# Student Perspectives: Recommendations to Faculty

- 1) Focus on professor-student relationship
- 2) Understand what students are used to (don't assume!)
- 3) Be very clear on expectations – provide examples
- 4) Pay attention to underperforming students
- 5) Be intentional about connecting domestic and international students in the classroom
- 6) Don't single out international students
- 7) Connect students with campus resources (study skills, writing center, etc.)
- 8) Use examples from students' home countries



# Focus on Faculty

- 1) Start with the faculty champions/allies
- 2) Listen to the students – focus groups
- 3) Prioritize and support faculty development

# Faculty Development for the Intercultural Classroom

- **Possible Formats:** Faculty retreat, discussion working group, invited speaker, faculty panel presentations
- **Topics:** Classroom Challenges for International Students, Moving Beyond Stereotypes and Assumptions, Integrating non-Western Perspectives into What is Taught, Communicating with International Students, Creating a Supportive Classroom Environment, Learning Styles in Different Cultures, Understanding Classroom Behavior, Interculturally Competent Teaching
- **Lessons Learned:** Keep It Short, Practical, Relevant and Include Food
- **Examples:** UIUC, La Verne, Duke



# Focus on Faculty

- 1) Start with the faculty champions/allies
- 2) Listen to the students – focus groups
- 3) Prioritize and support faculty development

# Beyond Faculty – Ways to Support International Students

- 1) **Intentionally develop mechanisms for intercultural dialogue on campus**
- 2) **Create opportunities** for international students to *connect regularly with the local community* (library, schools, service projects, invite community to campus, etc.) – ensure adequate preparation
- 3) **Communicate clearly** the resources/services/support available to international students on campus and beyond



**Based on what you've heard in the presentations, what strategies can you as an SIO implement to welcome internationals and ensure successful intercultural classroom**

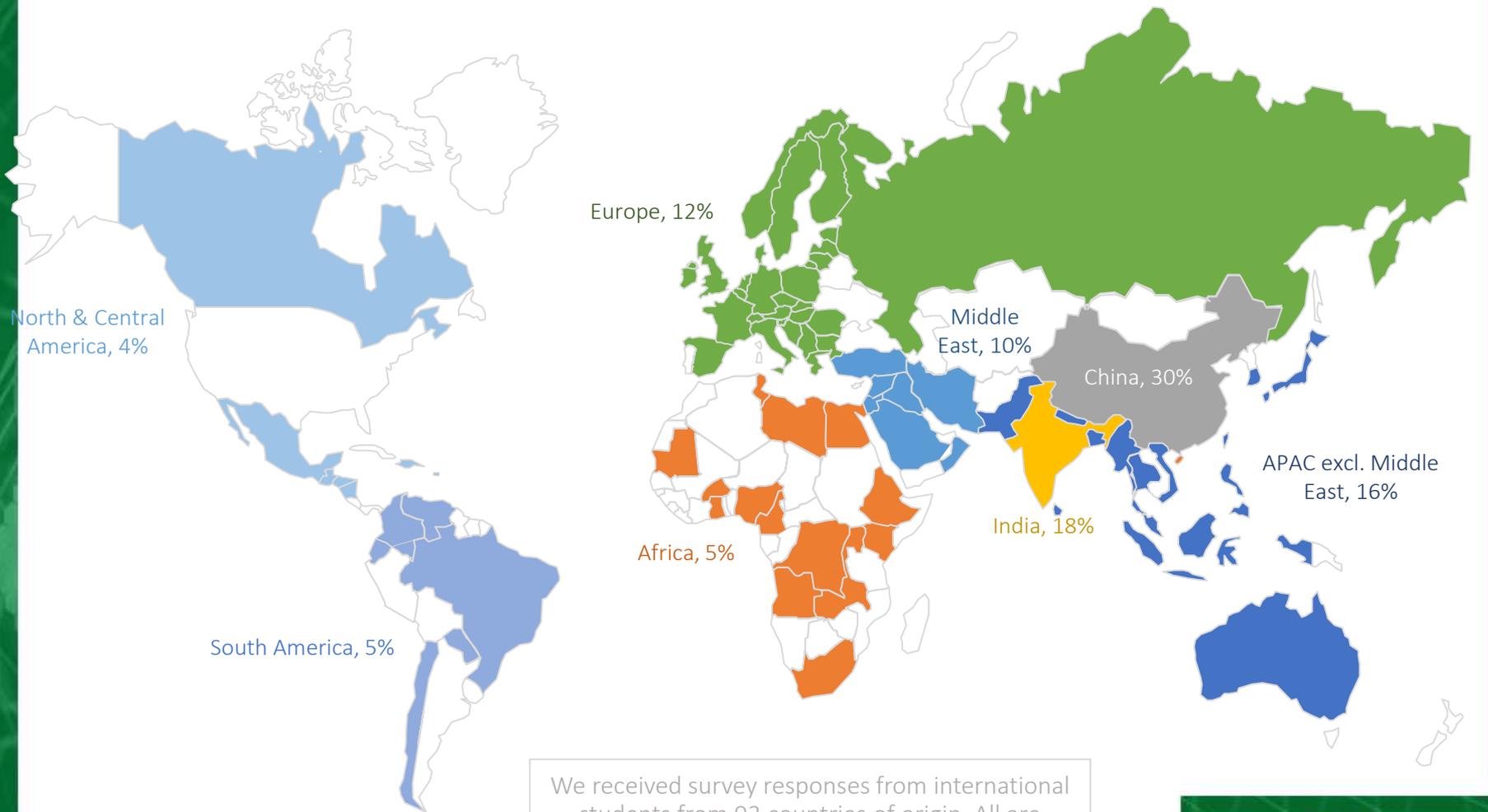


# Thank You

We would like to thank our distinguished guest speakers and especially, you, our attendees, for joining us today.



# Region Of Origin



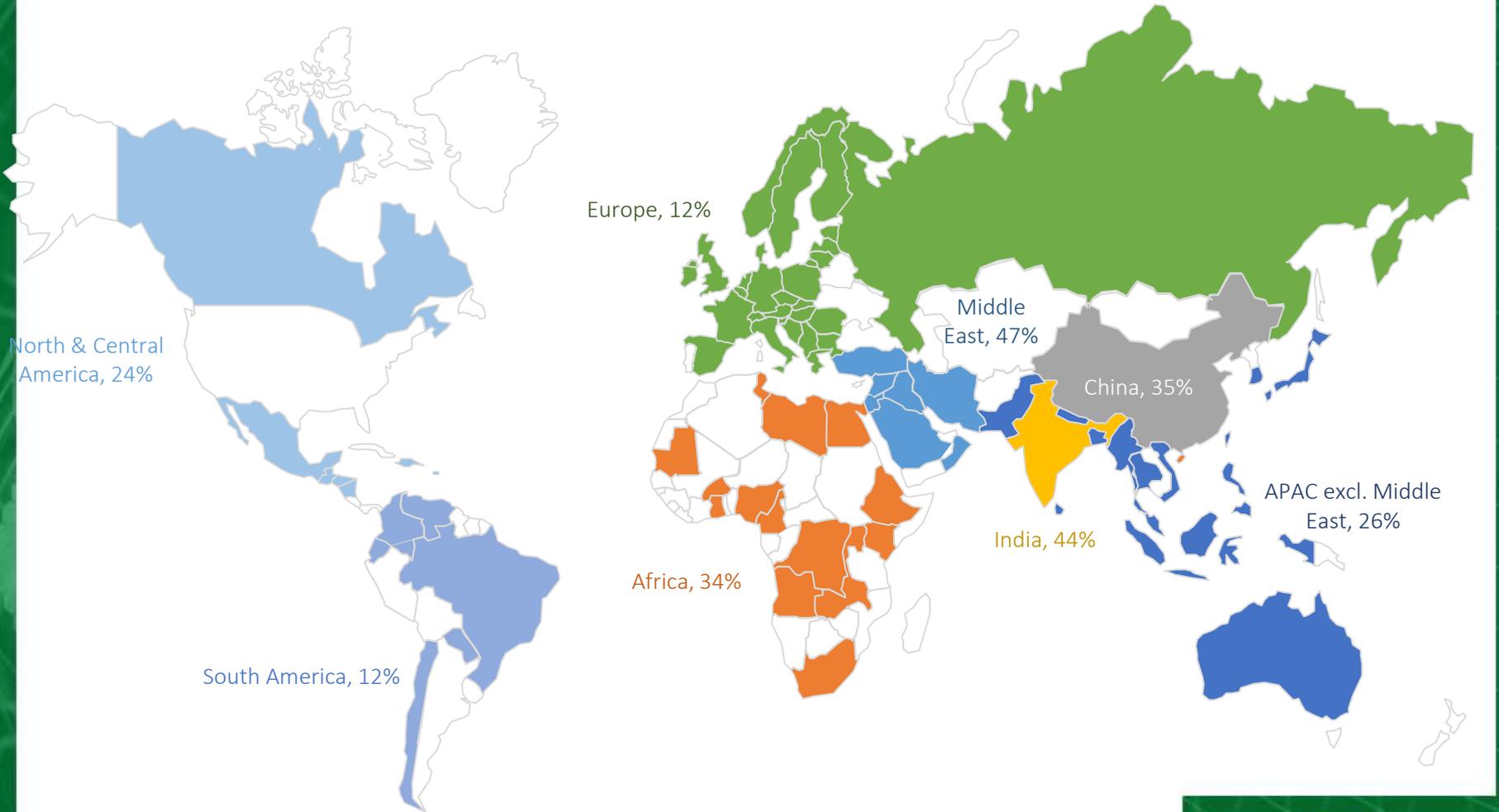
We received survey responses from international students from 93 countries of origin. All are currently based in the US.

Base: 662  
All students



# Difficulties Integrating With US Students

## % Of Students With 2 Or Fewer US Friends



Base: 662  
All students

Q15. In the US, how many friends do you have who are...a) US American students, b) students from my home country, c) other international students (not my nationality), d) non students?



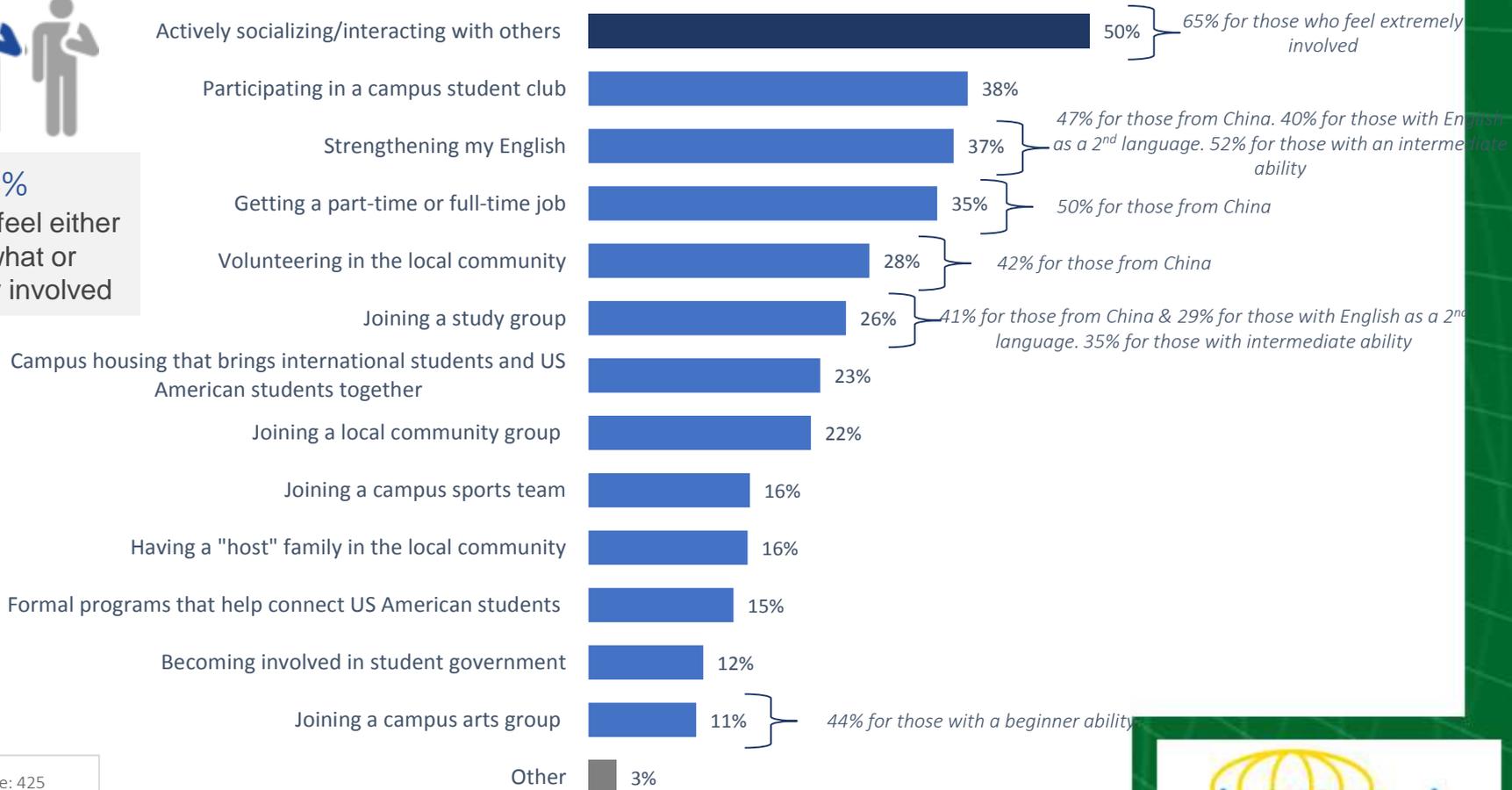
# Activities That Can Help Students Feel More Involved

According to Those Reporting Amongst Those Who Feel Involved

Undergraduate students were more likely to get involved in campus activities such as: campus housing, sports teams, clubs and study groups. Female respondents were more likely to actively socialize, while male respondents were more likely to join a campus sports team.



64%  
Said they feel either  
somewhat or  
extremely involved



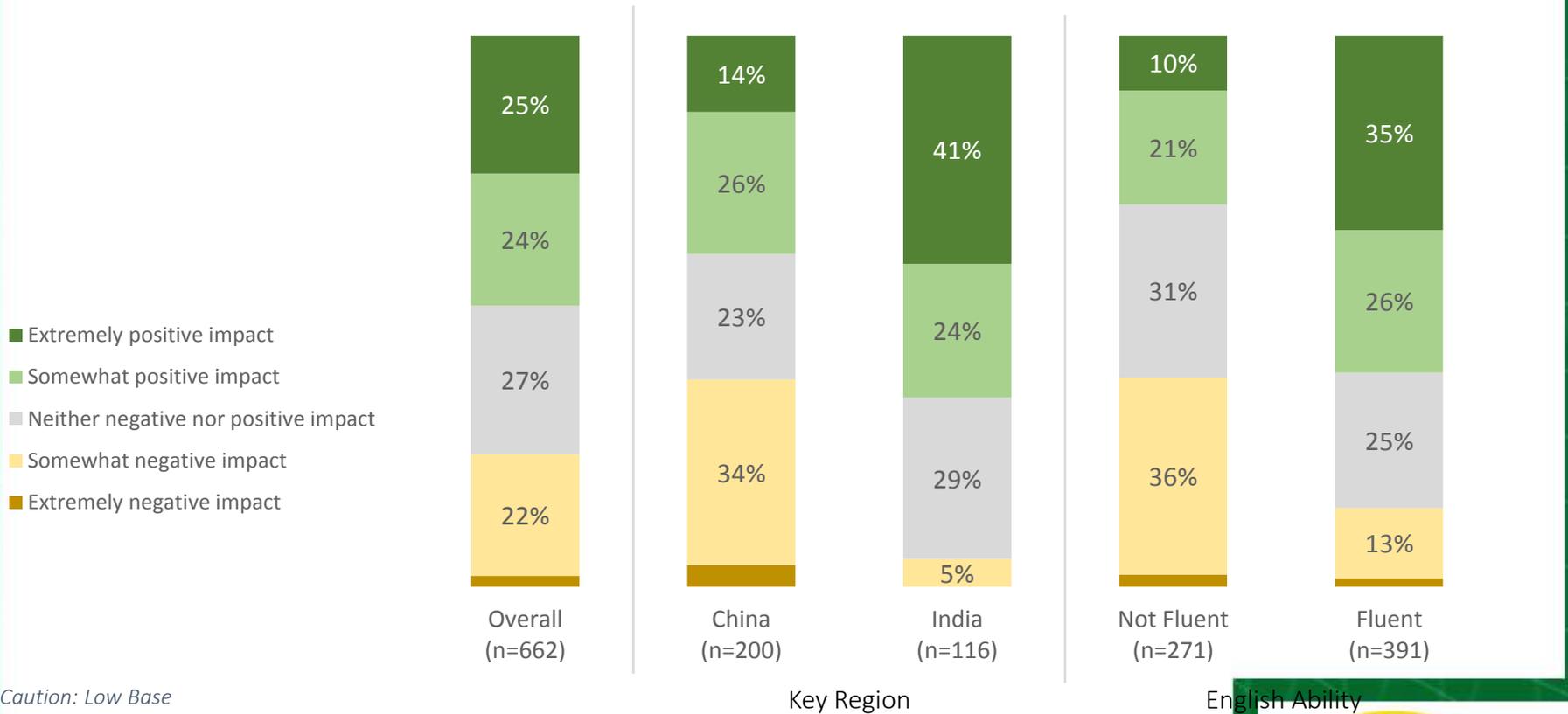
Base: 425  
Those who feel involved

Q13. Which of the following factors helped you to become involved/included at university?



# Impact Of English Proficiency On Academic Performance

Overall, respondents are more likely to say that their English ability has positively impacted their academic performance (49%). Over a third in China said that it has had a negative impact compared to India where only 5% said it had a negative impact. This also seems to be linked to English proficiency – beginners are more likely to say their English has had a negative impact on their academic performance (note that there are more Chinese students who are not fluent, but even among beginners and intermediates alone, Chinese students report a more negative impact than Indian students).



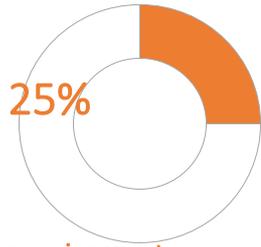
\*Caution: Low Base

Base: 662  
All students

Q10. How do you feel your English has impacted your academic performance (grades)?

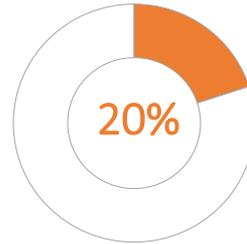


# English Proficiency Tests Poor Predictor For Classwork Competencies Among Those Rating 6 or Below On English Preparedness For University



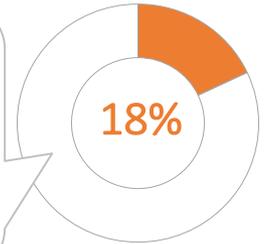
Just a requirement  
(i.e. already prepared / fluent)

“TOEFL is very academic, I don't really interact with people like that.”



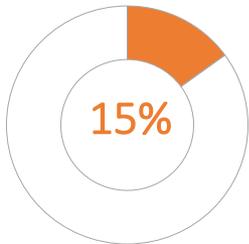
Lack cultural or social aspects

“The test focuses on test taking ability because we have to sit in front a computer and say what was memorized instead of dealing with real life situations.”



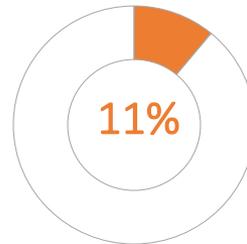
Teaches to the test, not real life skills

“I took the TOEFL but my English was already on a fluent level. It is a second language, but I started learning when I was very young and have spoken and read English almost all of my life. The TOEFL did not test English the way it is used in everyday life, and it certainly does not test reading comprehension or essay writing in a way that would reflect the reading and writing that is required in college classes.”

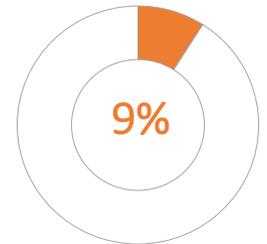


Not helpful / did not improve skills

“It helped me a lot to read the material and understand the lecture, but the level of speaking and writing required in college is somewhat beyond the scope of the TOEFL test.”



Tests basic skills / too easy



Not applicable to classroom learning

Mentions less than 5%: scoring is inaccurate, student did not study enough, test was too difficult, and geared towards undergraduate study.

Base: 179

Q20. Why do you say that? OPEN ENDED

