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DISSERTATION

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF FOREIGN STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE  
AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN COLORADO

Submitted by  
Arthur Ray Crawford III  
School of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements  
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
Colorado State University  
Fort Collins, Colorado  
Spring 2001

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COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

December 5, 2000

WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE DISSERTATION PREPARED  
UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY ARTHUR RAY CRAWFORD III ENTITLED A  
PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF FOREIGN STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE AT  
COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN COLORADO BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN  
PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

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## ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

### A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF FOREIGN STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN COLORADO

In this study, the researcher investigated how foreign students experience life while studying at community colleges in Colorado. A phenomenological approach was used so as to understand the experience from the perspective of the foreign student. Eleven foreign students from ten countries participated in the study. The findings identify settings of the experience as the setting of the community college and the community. Some experiences were a mix of challenges and blessings. The mixed experiences include experience with the language, with the culture, and with technology and communication. Variations in the experience included the students' goals and purposes for studying at a community college in Colorado, their contact with family and significant others, financial concerns, and some unexpected findings.

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Spring 2001

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## CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND

### Introduction

In this study the researcher investigated how foreign students experience life while studying at community colleges in Colorado. A phenomenological approach was used so as to come as close as possible to understanding the experience from the perspective of the foreign student, rather than imposing upon the foreign student the perspective of western culture.

### Statement of the Question

The question for this study is, "How do foreign students with F-1 visas experience life while studying at community colleges in Colorado?" It is this researcher's belief that this may involve expectations being met or not met by the institution; proper or inappropriate treatment by school officials, faculty, or students; acceptance or non-acceptance in the local community; issues of relationships with others; regarding or disregarding regulations imposed by Immigration and Naturalization Services; financial concerns; and more as disclosed by the students.

Anticipating these areas was important to the researcher so as to satisfy certain requirements for the Human Research Committee at the university where the researcher is a student.

#### Importance of this Study

With the increase in the number of foreign students, and with the rise in foreign student enrollments in community colleges, it becomes important to better understand the experience of foreign students studying at community colleges. Foreign students continue to come to the United States to study in ever increasing numbers (Desruisseaux, 1998; Jump, 1998). There are nearly a half-million foreign students studying in the U.S. now (Foreign students, 1999). In Colorado, there were over 6,000 foreign students in 1999 (Foreign students, 1999). More and more of those foreign students are going to community colleges for a variety of useful reasons (Desruisseaux, 1998). Of the nearly half-million foreign students, 17% of them are studying at two-year institutions (Foreign students, 1999). The results of this study can be useful to foreign students who are considering studying at a community college in Colorado. The results of this study can be useful to college administrators and advisors who want to improve the

experience of foreign students studying at their colleges.

#### Definition of Terms

The term foreign student and international student essentially have the same meaning in this study. Some of the literature uses the words *international student* while some uses the words *foreign student*. In this study a foreign student is a student from a foreign country studying in the United States with an F-1 visa. The individual is in this country for the purpose of studying. The individual does not have permission to remain indefinitely in the United States. The individual has a home in his/her home country where he/she intends to return after completing his/her studies. The terminology used in Immigration and Naturalization Services regulations is *foreign student*, so this is the term that will be used in this study.

The foreign student advisor and international student advisor have the same meaning in this study. Some literature uses one term; other literature uses the other term. Foreign student advisors (FSAs) or international student advisors (ISAs) are employees of the community colleges in this study who have the responsibilities for advising the foreign students. The

responsibilities can include the responsibilities of initial admission to the college as well as on-going advising of the foreign students.

#### Personal Perspective

This researcher has been working as an international student advisor for six years. During this time observations have been made about how foreign students experience life while attending community colleges. However, these observations are from the perspective of the American culture that has surrounded this researcher throughout life. There is likely a different perspective, the perspective of the F-1 students themselves, which may be vastly different from the perspective associated with American culture. Discovering this new perspective is the emphasis of this study. As a researcher, interest in this topic has several facets. As an international student advisor and a designated school official at a Colorado community college for Immigration and Naturalization Services requirements, there is interaction with foreign students regularly. It seems that the burden to adapt to a new and different approach to education always lands on the shoulders of the foreign student. These adaptations seem to be easier for some students than for others. Common experiences

such as food, clothes, transportation, availability of educational resources, interaction with teachers, governmental directiveness, and many other aspects of daily life are different for these students, different from that to which they are accustomed. As a westerner, this researcher disregarded the tendency to evaluate the experiences of foreign students differently from the way that the foreign student is actually experiencing it. Great efforts were taken to view the experiences through the eyes of the foreign student. Foreign students may have experiences that they cannot openly discuss; consequently, these experiences may not appear in journal articles. Foreign students at community colleges in Colorado typically do not have a forum in which to disclose or discuss inappropriate treatment that they may encounter. After all, the foreign student advisor has power, and they do not want to upset the holder of the power, or so it may seem to the student. This study will provide an opportunity, a forum, a confidential setting in which the students can reveal to us westerners what it is really like, from their own perspective, to study in Colorado. This researcher's interaction with many foreign students leads to the belief that some students, indeed, view the foreign student advisor as a holder of

power. Students at the school where this researcher works might feel hesitant to disclose information that they believe would be culturally unacceptable or could get them in trouble. Therefore, participants were solicited from other community colleges in Colorado. Participants were assured that nothing they say will ever come back to haunt them, so to speak, with regard to their experiences as they shared them. They were assured that this researcher is not a spy for Immigration and Naturalization Services, nor for their own foreign student advisor. Information, stories, disclosures shared in the context of the study remain confidential and anonymous. It may be that many aspects of the foreign students' experiences are different from that which is assumed by western culture dwellers.

The results of this study have applications in training foreign student advisors in how to respectfully treat their students, and in the need to provide an open atmosphere in which students can safely talk about hurtful experiences. The results also have applications for community college administrators who can support services that may be helpful to foreign students. The results give incoming foreign students an idea as to what kind of experiences they might anticipate. The results

are also useful to anyone who wants to understand or appreciate the diversity of experience that foreign students have at a community college in Colorado.

#### Delimitations

For this study, the participants are foreign students with F-1 visas, studying in community colleges in Colorado, who have been studying in this setting for at least one semester successfully. There are other foreigners who are in the country with other kinds of visas who also study at colleges and universities while in the United States. This study considered only those with the F-1 student visa who already have attained a certain level of English proficiency. Therefore, students who are studying English as a second language are not included in this study. Colorado is selected as the locale for this study due to accessibility of participants. The researcher lives in Colorado.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Organization

The literature review is organized around the following themes: the importance of this study, the community college, the student, the foreign student advisor, the community on campus, the community off campus, communication skills, and challenges. This section will support, from the literature, the areas the researcher suggested for exploration with the foreign students in this study. There are some general areas that this researcher suggested for discussion with the foreign students during the interviews so as to stimulate the students' ideas. These findings are compared to the findings of other related research as reported in chapter five.

### Importance of the Study

The President of the United States, William J. Clinton, issued a memorandum on April 19, 2000, on the subject of international education policy. He declares the policies of the Federal Government that are intended

to strengthen and support international education.

President Clinton (2000) states,

We are committed to: encouraging students from other countries to study in the United States; promoting study abroad by U.S. students; supporting the exchange of teachers, scholars, and citizens at all levels of society; enhancing programs at U.S. institutions that build international partnerships and expertise; expanding high-quality foreign language learning and in-depth knowledge of other cultures by Americans; preparing and supporting teachers in their efforts to interpret other countries and cultures for their students; and advancing new technologies that aid the spread of knowledge throughout the world. (para. 4)

He goes on to proclaim how the Secretaries of State and Education shall support various efforts of local governments, educational institutions, exchange programs, agencies, community groups, etc., to help put these statements of commitment into practice. It is important to notice that the highest governmental official in the United States, the President, proclaims the importance of international education.

The highest-ranking government official in the area of education is Richard W. Riley, U.S. Secretary of Education. Riley (2000) delivered a speech on April 19, 2000, on the topic, "The Growing Importance of International Education." This speech was delivered the same day and prior to the Memorandum issued by President William J. Clinton on the subject of international

education. Riley presents education as being of world importance. He makes a brief comment about community colleges.

Many nations are facing an increased demand for higher education and are taking a new look at the diversity of America's system of higher education, including our unique community college system. As one expert wrote, the United states has a 'highly forgiving' system that allows more than one opportunity to gain a college degree. (sect. Higher Ed., para. 1)

Riley presents the idea that more American institutions can and should be involved in educating foreign students.

One hundred American institutions of higher learning, for example, educate half of all foreign exchange students. Surely, we can find new ways to encourage many other colleges and universities to become more active in the international arena. (sect. The United States Contribution to International Ed., para. 5)

It appears to this researcher that America's community colleges can take a more active role in the experience of international education.

The community colleges in Colorado in this study are all involved in various approaches to distance education. International distance education is also increasing. President Clinton praised the cooperation between Western Governors University and the China Internet Education Center. Clinton stated,

This agreement between Western Governors University and the China Internet Education Center offers us an excellent opportunity to use technology to expand access to information and increase cooperation between our two nations. (1998, p. 7)

This has applications for community colleges as well. All community colleges in Colorado are presently involved in distance learning. The opportunity to engage foreign students through distance education is an opportunity that community colleges in Colorado are barely beginning to tap. As foreign students interact with community colleges through distance education, it is possible that the foreign students will select a familiar college, a Colorado community college, when selecting a school to study in person.

When the President of the United States and the U.S. Secretary of Education issue statements showing their support toward the education of foreign students, then studies related to foreign students' experiences in American colleges become important. This study is important because it addresses the issue of foreign students' experiences at community colleges in Colorado.

The study is important because it will help us better understand ways to enhance internationalization and globalization in community colleges. Interaction with foreign students enhances the likelihood that

internationalization and globalization will grow. Afonso affirms the importance of globalization and internationalization when she identifies important concepts about the internationalization of higher education in America.

First, we accept that the extent to which our nation will prosper in the future will depend on our ability to live and perform in increasingly international context. Second, while we admit we do not fully understand concepts such as global competence and international awareness, we do agree that these types of characteristics are needed. And finally we agree that colleges and universities have a role in providing workers, scholars and leaders with these characteristics. (1998, para. 1)

The importance of this study is seen in the recent statements of the President of the United States, the Secretary of Education, the rise in international distance education, and the impact of internationalization and globalization on the community college.

### The Community College

Community colleges are experiencing increased enrollments of foreign students (Desruisseaux, 1998). This dissertation is important because of the increasing enrollment trend that is occurring within community colleges. Students are attending for various reasons, one of which is to use the community college experience

as a stepping stone to a university. "For many more, community colleges are the gateway to educational advancement that leads to a four-year institution and a university degree" (Desruisseaux, 1998, p. 1). This trend of increased enrollment is also described this way: "Two-year colleges enroll twice as many foreign students as they did a decade ago, today accounting for 15 per cent of all foreign enrollments in the United States" (Desruisseaux, 1998, p. 1). There is now more global competition from other education-exporting countries, such as Great Britain and Australia. This competition from other countries for foreign students makes it important for U.S. educators to watch the trends in foreign student education and to keep the U.S. as a highly desirable source of education for foreign students.

Audree Chase, the Coordinator of International Services at the American Association of Community Colleges in Washington, D.C., identifies major reasons why community colleges recruit foreign students to their campuses and describes some of the ways that foreign students find out about community colleges. An obvious benefit is that colleges benefit financially from the additional enrollments. Another benefit is the diversity

that foreign students bring to a campus. "Most colleges try to attract foreign students to their campuses to foster a diversified student population" (Chase, 1998, para. 3).

Some colleges take a proactive approach to recruiting foreign students. Other colleges do not take a proactive approach and yet continue to enroll great numbers of foreign students. The physical location of community colleges seems to be important in attracting foreign students. The Mercer County Community College in New Jersey is located near areas with large numbers of immigrants. Thus, this college is conveniently located for the immigrants. The immigrants spread the news of their experiences to other family members who are then attracted to the college. So, without an active recruitment process, Mercer County Community College attracts many foreign students (Chase, 1998). Colleges without such a convenient location, such as in the middle of the United States, may need to have a more proactive approach to recruiting. Colorado is located near the middle of the United States; therefore, it may be appropriate for community colleges in Colorado to take a proactive recruiting approach.

Specialized curriculum offered by some colleges is

the attracting feature that draws foreign students to some colleges, even without active recruiting (Chase, 1998).

Enrollments in community colleges are increasing. Chase (1998) identifies the following reasons why enrollments are increasing. Community colleges offer specialized training in a short period of time. Community college tuition is lower than other educational institutions. ESL programs attract foreign students. The transferability to universities is an important attraction. Information about community colleges has become more readily available to foreign students through use of the internet.

The educational opportunities offered at community colleges are presented by Bus (2000) as university-transfer programs, specific technical programs, and basic skills for those who need them. Advantages are identified as the open-admission approach that most community colleges have, the tuition cost which is usually lower than a university's tuition cost, and the ease of transferability from accredited community colleges. Part of Bus' reason for this article seems to be to present community colleges as a good choice for foreign students in beginning their academic pilgrimages.

Blackwell (1994) found that students viewed the community college as a good place to begin one's education. Participants in Blackwell's study used phrases like "get my feet wet," "get a solid foundation," "providing a "stepping stone," "get acclimated," "get adjusted," "get a taste of college" (p. 173) as primary reasons for choosing to study at a community college. The size of the institution also influenced the students' decisions to study at a community college. There were "recurring references to the size of the community college in contrast to that of the university" (p. 180). Although Blackwell's participants were not specifically foreign students, the views of Blackwell's participants are not incongruent with the findings of this researcher's study.

In summary, community colleges are experiencing increased enrollments. Reasons for increased enrollments include the lower tuition at the community college, the transferability of courses to universities, specialized training, and English as a Second Language programs. Foreign students see the community college as a good place to begin their academic pursuits for many reasons. Community colleges enjoy the diversity that foreign students bring to the campus. Some community colleges

are taking a proactive approach to recruiting.

### The Foreign Student

It is important to describe the F-1 visa foreign student. O'Connell offers this definition of a foreign student, a term which is interchangeable with the term of international student: "Foreign student: A nonimmigrant student. One who has not been given permission by federal authorities to remain permanently in the United States" (1994, p. 8). Foreign students have convinced United States government authorities who issue student visas that they plan to return to their home country after completing their educations.

The students selected for this study have already reached a certain level of English proficiency, as evidenced by their admission to the community college. Additionally, the students will be students for whom English is not their native language. The students selected for this study have studied at least one semester at the community college. The reason for including the time criteria is to give the student time at the community college to experience whatever will be experienced. Kohls (1996) discussed culture shock as something that will be addressed by one experiencing it for months, even a year or more. Therefore, quantity of

time spent at a community college was an important feature for the participants in this study.

The needs of foreign students are important to consider when studying their experiences. Luzzo, Henao, and Wilson (1996) suggested an approach for finding out what needs foreign students had. The approach included a questionnaire and focus group. The themes that emerged from the responses were

1. International students expressed overall satisfaction regarding the way the university has met their academic needs. They reported adequate services (e.g., tutoring) available to ensure academic success.
2. All eight of the participants reported active involvement in campus activities and viewed such participation as an important part of their college experience.
3. The students reported a substantial number of friendships with persons of diverse ethnic backgrounds. This was also viewed as an enjoyable aspect of the college experience.
4. Participants were generally positive about their experiences living in the residence halls. They considered this an excellent opportunity to interact with students from other backgrounds and share cultural experiences. The only commonly voiced complaint associated with living in the residence halls was in reference to the selection of food available in the dining hall. Participants agreed that more variety in food selection should be available, with foods from other parts of the world (i.e., foods representing several different cultures) offered on a more regular basis.
5. Most of the international students also cited some degree of dissatisfaction with current intramural and intercollegiate sports offerings. They expressed a clear desire for the university to offer additional athletic activities, such as soccer and rugby.

6. Participants believed that their social lives would be noticeably improved if transportation was provided. Because many of the international students are not able to afford automobile expenses, they argued that such services should be provided by the university. (pp. 351,352)

In summary, the students in this study are F-1, non-immigrant students. By definition, F-1 students are returning to their home countries after studying in the United States. The participants in this study have been studying at least one semester so as to give them time to experience whatever it is that they will experience.

#### Foreign Student Advisor

This researcher anticipated that characteristics of the Foreign Student Advisor (FSA) would emerge as one of the themes in this study. One would hope that the FSA would be professional and competent and have skills to properly serve the foreign students. These skills could be similar to that which would be expected of a culturally competent counselor. Lee and Richardson (1991) describe the culturally competent counselor as follows:

A culturally skilled counseling professional is able to view each client as a unique individual while, at the same time, taking into consideration his or her common experiences as a human being (i.e., the developmental challenges that face all people, as well as the specific experiences that come from the client's particular cultural background). (p. 5)

The topic of the foreign student advisor was one of the topics discussed during the interviews with the participants. Althen (1995) identifies the following desirable personal characteristics of foreign student advisors: intelligence, patience, nonjudgementalness, interest in cultural differences, respect for others, tolerance for ambiguity, sociability, self-awareness, kindness, and decisiveness (pp. 31-42). Some of these characteristics are similar to the characteristics observed by the participants in this study which emerged from the interviews with the participants.

In summary, literature describing the foreign student advisor describes the advisor as culturally sensitive, respectful, kind, and more.

#### The Community On Campus

One experience of community for foreign students is the community on campus. Efforts have been made to identify and enhance this on-campus community experience. Abe, Talbot, and Greelhoe (1998) compared a group of students who participated in their International Peer Program (IPP) with students who did not participate in the IPP. Students who participated in the program showed higher social adjustment than those who did not participate. This program paired U.S. students with

foreign students. Social interactions included activities on a monthly basis hosted by their college's Office of Residence Life. These activities were primarily social events and had a beneficial impact on the students involved. "The peer program featured in this study, which focused on social interactions, accomplished its goal; the IPP had a significant impact on international students' social adjustment" (Abe et al., 1998, p. 546). An implication of the results of this experience and study is that such a program can be quite beneficial to foreign students. Done properly, such a peer pairing of foreign students with U.S. students could have beneficial effects on other areas of student development. In this study, Asian students emerged as a group with the greatest difficulty in adjustment. Another implication of this study is that those who plan and administer such programs should focus on specific goals and outcomes for their programs.

Shigaki and Smith (1997) report on "our implementation of a cultural sharing model incorporating the use of American buddies, an international student network, and faculty mentoring" (p. 8). This cultural sharing model was designed to have specific purposes. These purposes were "to provide international students

with an understanding of American culture and values, including its educational system, as well as to acclimatize them to day-to-day life as students at the university through a relationship with one or more American students" (p. 9). Most of the American students were participants in a multi-cultural class and participated in this program as a way to fulfill some of the requirements for the class. The program lasted at least one semester. The procedure of the program included weekly meetings with the foreign student and American student, and monthly large group activities. The program was considered a success by all involved. The essential success of the program was the relationships that developed. The ingredients that made the relationships successful were "regularity of contact and involvement in the normal course of each others' lives" (Shigaki and Smith, 1997, p. 12).

In summary, the community on campus is clearly an identifiable experience to be considered for foreign students. The experience can be enhanced by interaction with others on campus, such as peer pairing, or American buddies.

### The Community Away from Campus

It seems appropriate to consider the experience that foreign students have within the community in which they live. Barratt and Huba (1994) include this feature in their research with a group of graduate students. They make the observation that "students who felt able to communicate easily with Americans and develop relationships with them had a more positive evaluation of the people in the community" (p. 433). Although the participants in this study are students in community colleges rather than in graduate programs, this dimension is worth exploring.

The foreign students' experience within the community is one of the topics that emerged during the interviews with the participants of this study.

### Communication Skills

The ability to communicate is an important part of a foreign student's experience. Kagan and Cohn (1990) note the association of personal adjustment and English language skills. In the Barratt and Huba study (1994), this association is also supported; however, it is not clear as to which causes which. "The present study indicated a relationship between English language skills and interpersonal relationships with Americans, although

it is not clear whether good English language skills produced the communication ability necessary to form such relationships, or whether having the relationships fostered the acquisition of higher levels of proficiency in English" (p.431). This communication phenomenon was part of the experience of foreign students at community colleges as well.

Technology presents communication opportunities within the college setting and across the globe for foreign students. Grant (1999) identified technologies that have had an impact on colleges and universities, and particularly on foreign students. Some examples of technologies include new telephone technology such as voice mail, fax, inexpensive long-distance, and cellular. Personal computers allow communication through e-mail and the internet. Foreign students are often less accustomed to these technologies due to high costs for many foreign students, cultures that do not include the technologies to a great extent, and cultural approaches to personal communication. Grant suggests that foreign students should have a planned induction, an orientation to the technology. "There ought to be a planned induction for international students . . . into this electronic world" (1999, sect. Some Cautions and Recommendations, para. 2).

In summary, communication experiences include interpersonal communication and technology communication. Both have the potential to enhance the student's experience.

### Challenges

Foreign students face challenges while studying in the United States. Collingridge (1999) addresses communication issues and legal issues important for teachers of foreign students to know. One communications issue involves the use of sophisticated terminology. Collingridge suggests the use of simpler vocabulary. "These students would benefit if teachers also provided simpler terms or definitions whenever they use more difficult words" (p. 127). Use of American slang also contributes to confusion for foreign students. "Teachers should be aware that international students may find slang, colloquial expressions, and references to culturally specific events confusing" (p. 127). Another communication difficulty is the cultural differences in addressing those in positions of authority. "Different cultures often embrace varying methods for addressing instructors" (p. 127). The final communication obstacle addressed by Collingridge was the writing skills deficiency of some foreign students. "International

students occasionally lack adequate English writing skills" (p. 127). He suggests use of proofreaders for the foreign student.

The legal issues Collingridge (1999) addresses are the need for students to be full-time students, and the importance of having proper work authorization before the students begin working for pay.

As with all students, the needs of foreign students are quite diverse. Collingridge (1999) reminds the reader to remember that needs are varied. "Thus, instructors should give careful consideration to the varied needs of the diverse international student population" (p. 127).

In the article, "International Students in the U.S.: Trends, Cultural Adjustments, and Solutions for a Better Experience," Sarkodie-Mensah (1998) discusses enrollment trends by global region. Cultural differences encountered in the classroom are discussed, both from the perspective of students in a class and the perspective of a foreign graduate student teaching a class. Class participation, respect for teachers, and group work are identified as potential difficulties for foreign students. Language is identified as a problem for foreign students. "There is hardly any study about

international students in the U.S. that does not mention language as the major problem" (p. 218). Sarkodie-Mensah also identifies areas of difficulties that are outside the classroom.

Life outside the classroom is an important aspect of the international student's life. Culture shock, social isolation, conditions/situations in home countries, cross-cultural relationships, financial difficulties, immigration laws and accompanying anxiety, employment for self and spouse, stress, and depression are examples of problems international student have to deal with. (1998, p. 219)

Programs that can assist foreign students should be accessible to the students. Helpful approaches include orientations for new foreign students, library resources, training to reduce foreign accents when speaking English, and taking advantage of counseling services that are offered on campus. Sarkodie-Mensah (1998) makes the following suggestions to help foreign students:

The following activities can contribute immensely to international student adjustment and happiness in the United States, while at the same time integrating the presence of international students into the community at large:  
Get involved in weekend activities--night clubs and other social events; get involved in places of worship on campus and in the community; do community work; talk to young children about your culture; respond to invitations to be a guest in an American home on special occasions such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah, and Independence Day celebrations. (p. 222)

One of Sarkodie-Mensah's concluding statements summarizes the mutual benefit for the students and the communities.

True as it is to say that international students need to adjust to the American way of life, it is even more true to recognize that the American family and the American community have a lot to learn about other cultures. The international students by their presence provide the answers to cultural curiosities that many Americans wish to understand. (p. 222)

This mutual benefit is both a challenge and a blessing for the foreign student and the Americans with whom the foreign student interacts.

Dee and Henkin (1999) identified challenges to college life experienced by Korean students studying in the United States. The main barriers reported were language, financial difficulties, and cultural adaptation to American culture. While the Dee and Henkin study was focused on a specific group of students, Korean students, these barriers are useful to explore for the participants in this study.

Financial difficulties, insufficient funds in particular, were identified as an obstacle for foreign students pursuing higher education in the United States in Blackwell's study. The financial difficulties were influential in the foreign student's decision to begin higher education at a community college, and the

financial difficulties presented an obstacle to persisting in higher education. The decision to attend a community college rather than go directly to a university was influenced by financial concerns.

Financial considerations influenced subjects' decisions to enroll in the community college and transfer decisions. Financial constraints presented obstacles to persisting in the community college, transferring to four-year institutions and involvement in the collegiate experience. (Blackwell, 1994, p. 169)

In addition to financial challenges, there are challenges to the academic success for foreign students. Stoyhoff (1997) identifies factors that seem related to the academic success of foreign students. Some factors were related to standardized means of appraisal, specifically the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI). He also used a non-standardized approach to appraisal, specifically a timed interview with seventeen of the seventy-seven participants in the study. The interviews revealed more factors than the TOEFL or LASSI. "Neither the LASSI nor TOEFL measured the amount of effort students expend on their studies" (Stoyhoff, 1997, sect. Differences Between High and Low Achievers, para. 5). Two factors that seemed to improve academic success included using a support system such as help from peers

and faculty and spending more time studying to help compensate for language difficulties. Stoyloff states, "The determinants of international students' academic achievements are complex and not completely understood" (1997, sect. Discussion, para. 1). Although some factors can be identified and measured, there remains a bit of mystery and individuality about academic success.

Lin and Yi (1997) studied Asian students to identify traits and difficulties and to offer program suggestions for four stages of adjustment. The four stages of adjustment are pre-arrival, initial adjustment, on-going, and return home. One adjustment issue was the balance between "acculturation and maintaining their own culture" (p. 476). One of the stresses was the concern about finding employment when the student returns to his/her home country. Networking with students from their home countries plus networking with U.S. students are helpful processes for the foreign student.

In summary, challenges for foreign students are varied. They include experiences such as legal concerns with the Immigration and Naturalization Services, communication challenges with vocabulary and slang, communication challenges based on the student's culture

of origin, culture shock, financial difficulties, and personal psychological problems.

### Other Studies

Considerable searching in the databases of ERIC, Dissertation Abstracts, and Education Abstracts was done using search *terms foreign, international, student, college*, and appropriate other terms. No reports were found indicating that this study has been done previously. Also, no reports were found indicating that this type of study has been done in other levels of education, such as at a university level. While examining the literature related to foreign students, this researcher noticed the general trend that quantitative approaches were used to measure specific, pre-determined variables with a specific, narrowly defined group. Often, the hypotheses of those studies could not be supported because there was no significant difference in the findings where a significant difference was expected. The quantitative studies were often not generalizable in a meaningful way to a larger population due to a low return rate of questionnaires.

This dissertation is an original study. There is no reporting in the literature that this researcher examined to indicate that this study has been done previously.

## CHAPTER 3: DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

In this study the researcher attempted to ascertain how foreign students experience life while studying at community colleges in Colorado. The research question is, "How do foreign students with F-1 visas experience life while studying at community colleges in Colorado?" This question can be answered using a qualitative research approach. The researcher ascertained this from the perspective of the foreign students rather than from the perspective of what westerners believe those experiences should be. This study will use a qualitative approach. Kirk and Miller (1986) describe qualitative research this way: "Qualitative research is a particular tradition in social science that fundamentally depends on watching people in their own territory and interacting with them in their own language, on their own terms" (p. 9). A phenomenological approach is the approach used for this study. Phenomenology attempts to understand the experience of the participant from the perspective of the participant.

Patton's, (1990) view of phenomenology confirms the appropriateness for this type of study when describing phenomenological inquiry as "phenomenological inquiry, using qualitative and naturalistic approaches to inductively and holistically understand human experience in context-specific settings" (p. 37). Understanding the experience of the foreign student from the perspective of that student is the emphasis of this study. Thus, a phenomenological approach fits this kind of inquiry and can be used to answer the research question.

This researcher is trying to understand the experience of foreign students in the context-specific setting of their studying at community colleges. There is no attempt to manipulate any pre-determined variables; rather, an attempt is being made to discover what the variables really are as experienced by the research participants. This is consistent with a naturalistic approach as described by Patton (1990). "Qualitative designs are naturalistic in that the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the research setting" (p. 39). The researcher tries to understand the phenomenon from the perspective of the research participants. The relevant question according to Patton is, "What is the structure

and essence of experience of this phenomenon for these people?" (p. 69).

### Phases

There were four phases to this study. These phases are the ones that Kirk and Miller (1986) identify as four phases for qualitative research: invention, discovery, interpretation, and explanation. Invention is the research design phase. The result of this phase is a "plan of action" (p. 61). The dissertation proposal was the invention, the plan of action for this study. Discovery is the data collection phase. Observations, measurements, interviews, and so on lead to an accumulation of information. The result of this phase is information or data. For this study, the discovery phase included the interviews, taping sessions and transcriptions described later in this dissertation. The interpretation phase is the analyzing and evaluating of the data collected in the previous phase. The result of this phase is understanding. The processes identified by Moustakas (1994) which are described below were used in this phase. The final phase, explanation, is the phase of communicating the results, packaging that which has been learned in a way to communicate that information to others. The result of this phase is a message that is

shared with others. These four phases of Kirk and Miller (1986)--invention, discovery, interpretation, and explanation--are used as the structure of this study. The study was invented and planned in the proposal. The data was gathered and discovered. The data was then analyzed and interpreted. This dissertation is the writing of the report and explanation of the study.

The four phases described above are very consistent with the phases described by Tutty, Rothery, and Grinnell (1996): "Planning your study, gathering your data, analyzing your data, and writing your report" (p. 5). This four phase approach is not an unusual approach for this type of study.

### Processes

Moustakas (1994) has developed processes for phenomenological study which can be replicated by researchers. These processes for phenomenological study were used in this study. These processes include epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis of composite textural and composite structural descriptions. Moustakas' processes are described below.

#### Epoche

Epoche, a preparation stage, is the stage in which the researcher tries to remove any pre-conceived ideas,

prejudices, or pre-determined conclusions with regard to the phenomenon under investigation. It is coming to a mental neutrality with regard to the study. As a researcher, there is an openness to whatever may emerge, rather than an attempt to see how well subjects will fit into a mold that has been constructed ahead of time for them, constructed from the building materials found in literature. Rather, the researcher will look freshly at the data, allowing the data (the voices of the participants) to speak, hearing their voices as they speak. This is indeed a challenge to the researcher. Epoche preparation was deliberately and consciously implemented prior to each interview with each foreign student.

This preparation stage can create a tension inside the researcher. On one hand, there was the need to anticipate as much as possible all the variables that may possibly be encountered. On the other hand, there is the need to lay aside all pre-conceived hypotheses and look afresh at the data as it emerges. This researcher attempted to maintain this frame of mind prior to collecting the data, during reducing and evaluating the data, and while synthesizing conclusions.

### Phenomenological Reduction

After the data has been collected, phenomenological reduction is an approach to reducing or condensing the data in such a way as to make it most useful (Moustakas, 1994). The computer software HyperResearch was used to help with some of the technical aspects of reducing the data in an appropriate manner. HyperResearch was readily available to this researcher; therefore, access was the reason for selecting this particular software to assist in reducing the data appropriately. It is important to remember that software, whether it is HyperResearch or any of the other fine software available to assist in qualitative research, does not do the researcher's thinking for him or her. Software does not think; the researcher thinks. The software merely assists by sorting and organizing the qualitative data which can then facilitate the thinking on the part of the researcher. Phenomenological reduction took place during the coding of the data.

### Imaginative Variation

After the data is coded with the help of HyperResearch, imaginative variation (Moustakas, 1994) was the next step in this process. The purpose of this step is for the researcher to use his/her imagination to

try to ascertain truths from as many perspectives as possible from the existing data. This is a time-consuming and very active mental process. Simply, this is thinking about the data. Imaginative variation took place during the coding and the grouping of the codes into higher levels of abstraction.

### Synthesis

Finally, a synthesis of all that has been ascertained was done. This is the Moustakas (1994) step that puts all the information together. This will "develop a synthesis of the meanings and essences of the phenomenon or experience" (p. 181). The synthesis that occurred in this study is described later in this dissertation.

These processes described by Moustakas (1994) blend with the phases described by Kirk and Miller (1986). These phases and processes are the guides that were used for this study.

### Data Source

The source of data was foreign students in Colorado with F-1 visas who have been studying for at least one academic semester. Students whose first language is English were not included in the study. The reason for selecting these kinds of students is a practical one--

this researcher was able to obtain access to this kind of student because of the personal networking with other Foreign Student Advisors in the state.

The research participants were selected with the help of Foreign Student Advisors (FSAs) at community colleges in Colorado. These FSAs were able to identify typical case participants for this study. Foreign Student Advisors were contacted and asked for their voluntary cooperation. The FSAs were not given any definition from the researcher as to what a typical foreign student might be; rather, the FSA identified the typical foreign students by their own perception of typical. There was no financial award for the FSAs in return for their cooperation. There are thirteen community colleges in Colorado, nearly all of which have foreign students in attendance, so there was no lack of potential sources for finding foreign students to participate in this study. The location of the community colleges is not a variable in this study. All community colleges were located in Colorado. The FSAs were given the same preparatory information that the foreign students received. The FSAs contacted appropriate typical foreign students, inviting them to participate. This researcher then contacted the identified foreign

students, inviting them to participate. Disclosure forms were given to each foreign student who participated in the study prior to his or her interview with the researcher.

The source of the data used in any study is an important part of that study. Sample size and sample selection are important parts of a study's credibility and trustworthiness. Desirable sample sizes in qualitative studies is very different from the desirable sizes for quantitative studies. Patton (1990) gives the following perspective: "There are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry. Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with the available time and resources" (p. 184).

The purpose of this study is to discover and reveal how life is experienced by foreign students from the perspective of the foreign student. An appropriate data source (foreign students with an F-1 visa) and an appropriate sample size were used in this study.

#### Sampling

The sampling was purposeful sampling rather than random sampling. Patton (1990) states, "qualitative

inquiry typically focuses in-depth on relatively small samples, even single cases (n=1), selected purposefully" (p. 169). The approach to purposeful sampling used for this study is known as typical case sampling. Those selected for the sample are typical of what is experienced, rather than obvious aberrations to what seems to be typically experienced. Typical cases were selected with the help of key informants, consistent with Patton's (1990) approach. "These cases are selected with the cooperation of key informants, such as program staff or knowledgeable participants, who can help identify what is typical" (p. 173). The key informants for this study were the foreign student advisors or international student advisors at community colleges in Colorado. These key informants helped identify and recruit foreign students for this study. These students are the nominated sample (Patton, 1990) for this study.

According to Ertmer (1997) typically the number of participants in a phenomenological study is usually five to ten. This researcher anticipated a sample size of ten to twelve participants. This anticipation of sample size was necessary to receive permission from the Human Subjects Committee at the university where the researcher is studying. However, in any qualitative,

phenomenological study, there is no way to know ahead of time how many participants will be interviewed before saturation occurs. It may be that by the time ten or twelve students are interviewed, there may be no new ideas emerging. A point of saturation may have occurred by then. Or, it may be that new information continues to emerge. When no new information is emerging, when this saturation occurs, then there is no need to continue obtaining redundant information. Saturation occurred in this study after the eleventh interview.

The sampling approach used for this study was appropriate for the phenomenological approach and a sufficient size for saturation to occur.

### Interviews and Questions

In qualitative research, interviews are an important source for gathering information. The good qualitative interview will reveal what the interviewee experiences, rather than merely having the interviewer's concepts imposed upon the interviewee. Patton (1990) describes the purpose of interviewing as follows: "The purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in and on someone else's mind" (p. 278). Therefore, care was taken in the selection of questions to be used in the interview. The questions must be open-ended as often as possible. "The

purpose of open-ended interviewing is not to put things in someone's mind (for example, the interviewer's preconceived categories for organizing the world) but to access the perspective of the person being interviewed" (p. 278). This open-ended approach to interviewing is a great contrast to the pre-set, unvarying questioning used in non-qualitative approaches.

This is what distinguishes qualitative interviewing from the closed interview, questionnaire, or test typically used in quantitative evaluations. Such closed instruments force program participants to fit their knowledge, experiences, and feelings into the evaluator's categories. The fundamental principle of qualitative interviewing is to provide a framework within which respondents can express their own understandings in their own terms (Patton, 1990, p. 290).

Good interviewing techniques help the interviewer to enter the private world of the interviewee and thereby understand his/her perspective. "If participant observation means 'walk a mile in my shoes,' then in-depth interviewing means 'walk a mile in my head'" (Patton, 1990, p. 257). Also, the interviewee can take whatever direction he/she desires in answering the question. "The truly open-ended question permits persons being interviewed to take whatever direction and use whatever words they want in order to represent what they have to say" (Patton, 1990, p. 297).

Students were interviewed until redundancy occurred. Redundancy and saturation occurred after the eleventh interview. New interviews were not scheduled after a point of redundancy or saturation occurred.

The participants were interviewed in a setting that was comfortable to each participant. This researcher recommended that the interviews be held on campus at the participant's community college. This was the case with all the interviewees. The location on campus varied from interview to interview. The on-campus locations included a dormitory room, library study room, cafeteria, hallway, and an FSA office. The interviews were typically one to one and a half hours in length. Each interview was tape-recorded to maintain the accuracy of the data, with the interviewee's permission, and then transcribed. The taped and transcribed interviews provided a stable data source. This researcher transcribed the tapes which provided yet more opportunities for the researcher to be exposed to and thoroughly familiar with the data. Participants were informed prior to the interview that the interview would be taped and transcribed, and how the tape and transcription would be disposed of after the completion of the study.

An important tool that the researcher used in these interviews was the use of questions. The questions were worded in such a way as to draw out information from the broadest perspectives, rather than from specific, pre-conceived perspectives. Open-ended questions were the initial kinds of questions, followed by more specific questions as appropriate. As Patton (1990) writes, "The truly open-ended question permits persons being interviewed to take whatever direction and use whatever words they want in order to represent what they have to say" (p. 297). These open-ended questions helped extract data from the perspective embraced and experienced by the foreign student, rather than leading the student to a conclusion that has been pre-determined that the researcher wants to reach. The questions used in this study were open-ended in most cases. Some direct questions were used appropriately to clarify the students' perspectives. The first question was designed to obtain information from the students' perspectives without directing them first in a particular direction. The opening question after establishing rapport and trust with the student was, "What is life like for you as a foreign student while studying at your community college?" After receiving as much information as

possible without tainting the responses, the interviewer then asked questions to explore some pre-determined areas that the researcher wanted to investigate. These areas were suggested by the literature review and were necessary to identify as part of the requirements for satisfying the Human Subjects Committee at the university where the researcher is studying. These pre-determined questions were introduced after the student presented responses to the undirected opening inquiry. These questions included, "What has your experience been generally with the college?" "What has been your experience with the foreign student advisor?" "What has been your experience with your teachers?" "What has been your experience with the community in which you live?" "What has been your experience with the Immigration and Naturalization Services?" "In what ways has your ability to communicate in English affected your experiences?" Other questions were included as appropriate.

The areas investigated were as broad as the participants wished them to be. Initially, no specific direction was given to the participants as to what kind of information to disclose. Later in the interview, the researcher suggested areas of discussion which included (but were not limited to, as new data emerged from the

research participants) their experiences with the local community, Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS), finances and materialism, language proficiency, the college (which may have included experiences with the foreign student advisor, the administration, faculty, coursework) and whatever else they wanted to disclose. These experiences were from the perspective of the foreign student, which may be vastly different from the perspectives of the school officials, community members, or INS officials.

The kind of data collected was the elaborated, descriptive accounts of the foreign students' personal experiences. Due to the professional interviewing techniques used, it was hoped that research participants would feel free to disclose such personal information. Written assurances of confidentiality were given when each participant was given an informed consent. The interviewer gave additional verbal assurance of confidentiality at the time of the interview.

After conducting the interviews, the researcher transcribed the interviews. The researcher then contacted the participants to review the transcriptions and make any corrections that the participants deemed appropriate. This is called member checking. The

purpose of member checking is to ensure the accuracy of the data collected. All the participants in the study except one had e-mail addresses, so e-mail was the method used to communicate in all but one case. Only two interviewees replied with comments. The corrections were not extensive.

The researcher is aware that some cultures have differing approaches to disclosing truthful information to someone who might seem to be an authority figure. Precautions were taken to assure the students that their anonymity was maintained, and that nothing disclosed would have any repercussions on them. Pseudonyms were assigned to the participants in the reporting of the findings. The pseudonym is a different letter for each participant. The letter for the researcher is "R".

#### Interviewer Expertise

In a phenomenological qualitative study, the researcher is an important instrument and tool in the data gathering process. The researcher/interviewer becomes a kind of compass, knowing the direction of the interview and being able to give guidance as appropriate. Ertman (1997) describes the researcher's approach as follows:

The researchers must learn to take their cues from the participants' expressions, questions, and occasional sidetracks. Such an interview should look like a dialogue or conversation, with the participants doing most of the talking and the researcher doing most of the listening. (p. 162)

As an experienced Licensed Professional Counselor in Colorado, this researcher brought to the data collection process a considerable amount of expertise. The skills of taking cues from interviewees and being able to use those cues to guide the conversation and extract additional information are sharp. The use of appropriate questions is important in this approach to gathering data. According to Patton (1990), "The validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information-richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than sample size" (p. 185). This researcher's counseling background includes appropriate and useful skills in this area.

While interviewing a participant in a study, it is important for the researcher to maintain an air of neutrality while listening to the interviewee's comments. This creates an atmosphere of trust in which the interviewee can feel free to disclose whatever he/she may wish to disclose without fear of any kind of retribution.

The researcher's demeanor is to be, "I cannot be shocked, I cannot be angered, I cannot be embarrassed, I cannot be saddened--indeed, nothing the person tells me will make me think more or less of them" (Patton, 1990, p.217). This researcher gave careful attention to maintaining an air of neutrality during the interviews with participants.

### Data Analysis

The tape-recorded interviews were transcribed word-for-word. Copies of the transcribed interviews were sent to each interviewee. Ten were sent by e-mail. One was sent by U.S. Postal Service. Only two responses from the interviewees were received back to the researcher. One of the replies indicated that everything was fine. The other reply indicated four changes to be made. These changes were then made in that transcription. This member checking (Tutty, Rothery, Grinnell, 1996) contributes to the trustworthiness, consistency and dependability of the study.

The researcher listened to all the tape-recorded interviews repeatedly. With repeated listening, some of the sections of the interview that were not clear previously became clear. The transcripts were updated with this clearer information. Copies of the updated

transcripts were e-mailed to ten of the interviewees. Four of the e-mails were returned as undeliverable. The eleventh updated transcription was sent to the student by U.S. mail. There were no responses from students indicating any needed changes on the new transcriptions. The researcher consulted with his advisor and proceeded with the new transcriptions.

These narratives were broken down into meaning units. As Ertmer (1997) describes, "phenomenologists focus on 'meaning unit'--that is, the smallest segments of text that are meaningful by themselves" (p. 162). These meaning units were mentally rehearsed and digested by the researcher until themes and patterns emerged. The meaning units were not placed into pre-determined categories selected by the researcher, rather the categories, themes, patterns emerged from the data itself. The data created the categories.

Computer software was used to assist in the metaphorical chewing and crunching aspects of the data analysis. The program readily available to this researcher is called HyperResearch. This program was used to facilitate the sorting, tracking, and coding of the information obtained in the data. This kind of software did not replace the contemplating, thinking,

rehearsing, and synthesizing of the data done by the researcher. The software merely helped organize the information. The software does not do the thinking for the researcher.

After the data was coded, the researcher identified the themes that emerged, and indexed the themes from the data, as described in the earlier section of this study on the qualitative approach. This approach to identifying codes and themes, and comparing new codes and themes to those already identified is consistent with the constant comparative method by Glaser and Strauss (1967). This approach is associated with grounded theory.

#### Summary

The methodology described in this chapter will lead to the answer of the research question, "How do foreign students with F-1 visas experience life while studying at community colleges in Colorado?" By using a phenomenological approach, going through the phases of invention, discovery, interpretation, and explanation, plus implementing the processes of epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis, the research question can be properly addressed. The data source and data analysis used in this study is appropriate for the research question. The

approach to the interviews with the participants and the interviewer expertise is appropriate for the research question. Using the methodology described in this chapter will result in finding the answers to the research question.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to ascertain how foreign students with F-1 student visas experience life while studying at community colleges in Colorado. The research question is, "How do foreign students with F-1 visas experience life while studying at community colleges in Colorado?" The research participants are described, and the findings as a result of this study are presented herein.

### Research Participants

There were eleven participants in this study. Letters were assigned as pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants. The letters A, AD, C, G, J, L, N, P, Q, S, and Y are the pseudonyms that will be used to distinguish one participant from another. The letter R is used to identify the researcher.

The participants in this study are foreign students studying at five community colleges in Colorado. Four of the community colleges are part of the Colorado Community College and Occupational Education System (CCCOES). The colleges were Northeastern Junior College in Sterling,

the Community College of Aurora in Aurora, Pikes Peak Community College in Colorado Springs, and Red Rocks Community College in Littleton. One community college is not part of CCCOES, Colorado Mountain College in Glenwood Springs. This researcher contacted four additional community colleges in the state requesting their participation in the study. For various reasons the additional four colleges did not participate.

The participants were from Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Holland, Hungary, Indonesia, Japan, Liberia, Nepal, and Peru. The participants' country of origin is not a variable in this study. It is not the purpose of this study to compare participants from different countries. These countries are listed to show that there was variety in the national origin of the participants.

There were five female participants and six male participants. Gender is not a variable in this study. Gender is identified to show that there was variety in the gender of the participants.

Nine of the eleven participants planned to transfer to a university after completing their studies at a community college. Transfer plans was not a criteria for selection of the participants.

Ten of the eleven participants were foreign students with F-1 visas. This visa status was a criteria for selection for the study. The eleventh participant recently changed Immigration and Naturalization status from F-1 to Temporary Protective Status. This was done for the purpose of obtaining resident tuition rates, rather than the non-resident tuition rates that F-1 students are required to pay. The data from the student with Temporary Protective Status is included in the findings because he had previously been an F-1 visa student until very recently prior to the interview with the researcher. The experiences reported by this student were experienced as an F-1 visa student.

As a result of this study, findings emerged that are important to notice. The transcribed interviews led to 638 codes. The 638 codes were condensed and re-condensed into nine major themes dealing with the experiences of foreign students at community colleges. Those nine themes were the experience at the community college, experience with the community, experience with the language, experience with the culture, experience with technology and communications, goals and purposes for studying, contact with family and significant others, financial concerns, and unexpected findings. These nine

themes were condensed and organized into three categories: major settings for the experiences, challenges and blessings in the experiences, and variations in the experiences.

In the category of major settings for the experiences, two themes were present: the community college, and the general community. In the category of experiences that were both challenges and blessings, there were three themes: experience with the language, experience with the culture, and experience with technology and communication. In the category of the variations in the experience, there were four themes: goals and purposes for studying, contact with family and significant others, financial concerns, and some unexpected findings. The categories emerged from the themes. The themes emerged from the codes. These three categories with their themes are described below.

#### Major Settings for the Experiences

The major settings for the experiences of the foreign students was the community college itself and the setting of the community. The findings for each of these settings are described below:

### The Community College

In the setting of the community college, there were some significant aspects of the foreign students' experiences. These aspects included contact with administrators, contact with advisors, orientation to the college, community on campus, and working on campus.

In this study, the size of the school also emerged as a consideration of the participants. Community colleges are smaller than universities. The exceptions to this view were held by Q, who wanted to go directly to a university but did not due to financial concerns, and N and A who attended the community college in Colorado for recreational rather than academic reasons.

#### Contact with Administrators

Contact with administrators is one of the themes that emerged from the data. Seven of the participants had comments related to the administration. Based on the participants' comments, the administrators were seen generally as helpful. Some participants had never met administrators. Others knew administrators due to their student employment on campus. Some participants had suggestions for the administrators. The important suggestions to the administration related to providing financially for foreign students and providing a proper

orientation for new foreign students. Some had no message to share with the administration.

In the sections that follow, the participants' contact with administrators is described, and the suggestions to the administrators are identified.

Contact with administrators described.

Participants in the study had varying kinds of interaction with administrators. Contact with administrators is described in this section.

One participant viewed his interaction with college administrators as a friendship.

R: What has been your experience with the administration at the college here or the faculty or the foreign student advisor? How has that been?

J: Good. It's a good relationship. I basically am like a friend, friend relationship with everyone.

It is interesting to note that this student was recruited to the college and offered a basketball scholarship. He has a great amount of contact with various school officials. This same student viewed the administration as being helpful in any way that it can help.

J: And whatever, whatever, in any legal way they can, they help me.

Another participant had not met any of the administrators. This student was not new to her college.

She had been there several semesters. Q: "I haven't met them yet. I have just talked to my counselor here."

C had a very positive experience with one of the administrators. The context of this situation is that the student did not have enough money to pay all her tuition at one time. After an unpleasant interaction with the cashier's office, the student was distressed and went to an administrator's office to try to find some help. The administrator was able to help her with her dilemma. It is interesting to note that the student remembers the administrator's reaction when she thanked him at a later time.

C: You can talk to the vice president or something and I went to talk to him. And I told him the situation, and he helped me. So, he told me, how much am I going to be able to pay right now. I said, I can pay four hundred dollars, that's ok. He said, ok you pay four hundred dollars by tomorrow and you can pay your tuition by the end of April, is that ok for you? Yeah that's great.

C: And I told my dad, and I went to pay like one week ago. I met him on the cafeteria, and I said Oh thank you very much, you helped me a lot. He just said "yeah, I don't usually say thanks from the students, I mean, nobody ever thanks me for what I do, and I try to help them." But he was really nice to me. I don't remember his name though. But he's a nice person. He helped me.

Another student did not have much contact with administrators at the college. His contact was mainly with the dean of communication, and it was favorable.

S: I don't have to talk much with the president and those people. The dean of communication . . . she is very nice. She has helped a lot. She is very helpful and she is very nice. My advisor . . . she is very nice.

G claimed she had no contact with the administrators. She would see them on campus because she worked on campus. She perceived them as nice, but had not had opportunity to talk to them.

G: Well, I haven't had the opportunity to talk with them about our international program. I do know them because I work here so they are constantly going into my office and I know they are really nice people but as a student and they as vice-president and president and me as an international student, no I haven't had the opportunity to talk about the program and anything.

Later during the interview with G, the President of the college walked by where we were having our interview. The president talked with us a few minutes. He recognized the student. It is interesting to note that the president recognized the student when the student had previously claimed to not have opportunity to talk to the administration.

President: We've talked before.

G: Yes, I work in special services.

Q has not met administrators at her college. Q: "I haven't met them yet. I have just talked to my counselor here."

G's only comment about the administration is that he is nice. "G: Yes, he's really nice."

P worked on campus and consequently had opportunity to interact with the administration. He perceived the administration as being very helpful.

P: Oh, so far the administration been real good at the college. They've been real good because I work in the administration building and I know how things work around here. There are a lot of changes. There have been a lot of changes, they've been building, the administration building. Like the advising center where I am working right now. Okay. They have had a lot of changes. Though I am not part of the staff but when they go for me they share information with us too. And we know what it's like, what the changes they go through, and it's been real great. They have help a lot of student. So, help a lot of student real good. They've helped me too as international student.

In summary, administrators were viewed generally as being helpful. Some participants knew administrators; others did not. One viewed his relationship with administrators as a friendship. Participants who worked on campus had more opportunity to interact with administrators. Administrators were viewed as helping in any legal way that they can.

#### Suggestions for administrators.

Some suggestions were offered by participants for the administrators. The suggestions included that administrators should be clearer about how everything

works; better testing of foreign students would help with course selections; the administrators should have greater familiarity about foreign education systems; the college should provide transportation; and the college should offer a comprehensive orientation which explains common practices such as registration, payment for classes, student identification process, and public transportation. These suggestions are derived from the data, the interviews with the participants. The comments cited below are typical of the participants' comments rather than an exhaustive listing of their comments.

N mentioned the issue of assessment testing for foreign students. He also suggested that administrators should be very clear about how everything works and come up with better testing, and that they should know more about foreign education systems. The researcher summarized this participant's comments and received verification from the participant that this was an accurate summary.

R: To be very clear about how everything works; maybe come up with a better testing; they should know more about foreign education systems.

N: Yeah.

Transportation was a difficulty for some students. Suggestions for administrators included suggestions to

improve the transportation.

S: Maybe they can put a bus system here you know for the students like . . . and transportation is one of the problems for international students, I guess.

Other suggestions included suggestions for orienting the foreign students to various details of the campus.

Y: I just want to say for international advisors for new people, they come here two days ago or three days ago, they don't know anything about that, so they should give them good advice, advise them. For example, here's, they don't even know their campus, what the campus is, where's the bathroom, or where's the bus stop, or how much do they pay or how do they register for classes or what student ID is, do they have to take IDs or what . . . Especially for newer people, international advisor should give expanded information. They should help them!

A's suggestion for administrators is related to the college providing a proper orientation for new foreign students. A and N also thought there could be an improvement on the assessment testing.

A: Good. [laughing] First I want to say something about the administration. I think they should be a little bit more clear about how everything works.

N: Yeah. I understand that they can't do really big research. A little bit, you have to know a little bit more about it. It would make it really easy. Cause then they would probably understand that we definitely don't need the pre-testing.

In summary, suggestions for administrators included being clear about how everything works, assessing foreign students better, learning more about foreign education systems, improving transportation for foreign students,

and providing orientation programs to students to help them with the details of the campus.

### Contact with Advisors

Contact with advisors emerged as a theme from the participants. The participants revealed varying and diverse amounts of contacts with advisors.

Several of the participants did not know if they had an academic advisor. These participants believed that it was not necessary to have a foreign student advisor because they can talk to somebody else if they have questions.

A: I've never met an international student advisor. We have an advisor, too, if you want to take classes. But it's not like one for international students

N: But that's not really big deal if you really want to talk to somebody you can talk to anybody. You can go to your professor or

A: Yeah, It's like anybody. I think that's better, too. Cause what if you don't like the person. I think it's okay. I don't miss like an international student advisor. It's not like for the five students that are here. It's not necessary.

Y is another participant who did not know whether or not he had an academic advisor.

Y: That is kind of strange. I don't know, should I have advisor or not? I don't know about that.

Y: So, OK, seems like many people had advisor, so I think I should have . . .

R: Is there somebody that helps you to select your courses?

Y: no. That register person, in the office.

R: but there's not somebody in Darlene's office, or in  
Y: no.

Some participants were given minimal help and left to figure out on their own what classes they would take.

C: This advisor gave me the book and I was mention which class I was able to take in here that are going to be able to transfer and then I did by myself. But I'm sure if like some other people wants to go there he can help you.

C: Then you can make your own schedule and work on what you are suppose to do.

A: I mean like the classes. But other classes like English it's like I've done that my whole life. I'm not very interested in it any more. My advisor just told me to take one English class and mix it up with whatever I want to.

Other participants knew that they had an advisor other than the Foreign Student Advisor who would help the students with academic advising.

R: Do you have an advisor that works with just international students or do all of the international students just have lots of different people to work with?

S: For international students, Darlene, she's the one like international student advisor that if you need some difficulties with visas something anyway advises we can come and ask her. But for my studies you know choosing classes and for my course selection I have a different advisor. But that helps a lot cause the courses I can take here that have lots of choices classes. She helps me to which classes would be better for me to take. I think I can talk with Darlene about also the courses but I don't do that cause we just meet at and talk about different kind of things you know. Like how very important things we need to learn to be here in the United States, about taxes and important things

R: Filling out the tax return, right?

S: Yeah, that kind of stuff.

Foreign students want an advisor. The students wanted good academic advising. The experience for new foreign students is like darkness, and they need light.

Y: Sometimes, or I have that expression to . . . are better if it's just one direction, you know, so that's why international student, newer people, cannot choose the other direction, just one.

R: In terms of your academic direction?

Y: Yeah. Especially academic. . . . I want to say, newer people cannot see that right direction like dark everywhere so advisor can give them a light or advise . . . This is hard to explain.

R: You are explaining it very well. That makes sense when international students come here, a new student, there is darkness everywhere

Y: Yeah.

R: and they need somebody to show them the light.

Y: Yeah.

R: To be a light for them and to help them find their own light.

Y: Yeah.

P describes his desire for guidance as follows:

R: So, it's better having the direction and guidance.

P: Yes, yes. Like when I came first, Mr. Dino put me on track. I didn't know what to do.

Many of the participants in this study were planning to transfer to a university after attending a community college. Only one of the participants who planned to transfer to a university had contact with an advisor from the university. This participant expressed concern that the community college courses transfer appropriately to the university, so as not to be wasting money.

C: And I have to go talk to the advisor from CU and then he gave me a book which class you can take at Red Rocks Community College that can transfer to CU. Because there are some classes in here that even if I take, I'm not going to be able to transfer. I'm just wasting my money. So I have to make sure that all my class and Randy doesn't know that because he can give me the telephone number from the advisor from CU Boulder and I went to Boulder to talk to him.

One participant had little to say about the advisor, other than that she was very nice. "S: My advisor . . . She is very nice."

In all cases in which there was contact with advisors, the foreign student always viewed the contact as helpful. There were some cases where there was minimal contact, but whatever the amount of contact, it was perceived positively.

C for example, describes her helpful advisor this way:

C: Sometimes I want to get some information and they treat me very, very nice and the advisors are always there for me, for us, for international students in here. So I do my schedule by myself, and then I go to the advisor and they put it in a computer which . . . But my first semester here, Randy Russell, he helped me because I had no idea how to even use the books. So he explained me everything, here's the time, here's the building, here's the teacher. I was asking him which teacher do you think is good?

G had an experience with her helpful advisor whereby she avoided taking an English proficiency test because

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the advisor thought her English was good enough.

G: I came here and I did not take the ESL course because I interview with the international counselor and he said that my English was pretty good, so I started to go into regular classes, attending regular classes.

Some of the participants perceived that the foreign student advisor at the college was not available, not accessible. Even though unavailable, the participant excused the unavailability because there are so many foreign students.

C: But I mean here there's only one advisor for international students. So sometimes it takes forever. Thursday I wanted to talk to him and the lady said "Can you come Tuesday?" and I said "No, I have to talk to him like right now." And there's just one for international students and sometimes like my appointments which will be at 5 like 5:30 or 5:40 or something like that cause he's always really busy. Because of so many international student.

The foreign student advisor was helpful with advising for transfer purposes.

C: And I met Randy Russell my advisor and he's a real nice person and he gave my some advice because after that I want to go to CU Boulder.

The foreign student advisor helped with Immigration and Naturalization issues when needed. One foreign student advisor was especially helpful to students with Immigration and Naturalization Services issues. His helpfulness seems to arise out of his own experiences with INS and with his own wife.

C: If I want to, Randy is helping me to work on my papers because his wife is from Costa Rica. So he knows everything about what I'm suppose to do so he got me he call IRS because if I called the IRS I'm not going to be well treated because they discriminate on there, because everybody wants to get their American citizen and I have to prove that I get married because I love my husband, not because of the green card. So they want to make sure that they're getting married because of love. Randy is one of the persons who's helping me a lot. I was talking to him because I got different advice from advisors at CU Boulder.

The foreign student advisor was helpful to the participants with generally finding their ways around, how to find books, which teachers are good, and more. The participants appreciate the foreign student advisor.

P describes his experience and generalizes for all foreign students as follows.

P: Oh, I've appreciated a whole lot from the international student advisor here, which is Mr. Dino. He has been a great help to EVERY international student. He has been a great help to us. He's still a great help. He help us go through right path, to know what we're doing. Even when we're getting off track he call your attention to you, what you're doing is not right at this time. You have to stay in this track to move on. If I'm studying Computer Information Systems he tells me that I should move from one to five, I shouldn't move from one to ten. I move 1,2,3,4,5, like that. And that goes for every one of us. All international students can attest to that. If there is an opportunity, Mr. Dino would let us know. If you're into this field, he'll let you know, "Oh, you're into this field, I have this opportunity for anyone going into this, going into that, just somebody that's looking for this person to help them out with something, computers, or . . . (unclear)

. . . We appreciate it. So, we have no problem with the international student.

G describes her experience with a helpful advisor as follows:

G: Oh yeah. Randy's really, really helpful, and well basically he's all the department, the international department. But everything I need, I ask him and he's really willing to help me with anything that I need, either personal or like as a student.

In J's case, the foreign student advisor was viewed as a friend. "It's a good relationship. I basically am like a friend, friend relationship with everyone."

In summary, the participants viewed the guidance from the foreign student advisor as being helpful. In no cases was the foreign student advisor viewed as being a nuisance. In some cases a participant did not know whether or not he/she had a particular advisor. The foreign students want advisors. Advisors were helpful with transfer issues, I.N.S. issues, and general questions about the college.

### Orientation

Students believed that some kind of orientation for new foreign students would be helpful. There were concerns about the American grading system, options within the grading system, how to find classes, bathrooms, bus stops, and more. Y's description of his

experience is representative of other participants' comments.

Y: For example, the grading system. I could choose or I could take the classes this campus or downtown campus or Lambert campus. I could take but one at Lambert. I didn't know that. I just want to say for international advisors for new people, they come here two days ago or three days ago, they don't know anything about that, so they should give them good advise, advise them. For example, here's, they don't even know their campus, what the campus is, where's the bathroom, or where's the bus stop, or how much do they pay or how do they register for classes or what student ID is, do they have to take IDs or what . . . Especially for newer people, international advisor should give expanded information.

Participants in this study considered an orientation program for new foreign students to be helpful and important. Improvements in the orientation of new foreign students is one of the areas of suggestions for administrators, discussed previously in this study.

#### Community on-Campus

On-campus community was an aspect of community that was important. Ideas such as mentoring, having a special location for foreign students to meet, gaining understanding of the secret culture on campus were presented by the participants. In the transcription below, the researcher is summarizing the information shared by a participant so as to confirm that the

researcher understood what the participant was meaning.

This understanding was confirmed by the participant.

R: I want to make sure that I understand what you were saying. We should have the orientation for new international students and the new international students need something more. Whether it's a mentor or whether it's

Y: uh huh

R: a clubhouse

Y: uh huh

R: or something just to help them understand

Y: yes

R: some of this, we just made up the word this "secret culture" that exist on campus. Things like you can take it pass or fail

Y: uh huh

R: or you can take it for grades

Y: Yes, for example.

R: For example, yeah. These secret things that, it's not that anybody is trying to keep them a secret but we just don't know what to tell you.

Y: Uh huh. Yeah.

R: That would be something that the international student advisors should really be aware of.

Camaraderie among foreign students is perceived as stronger at universities, less strong at community colleges. On one hand, more camaraderie is desired. On the other hand, sometimes too many opportunities for socialization can be a kind of overload.

Y: In the club . . . so 4-year colleges very different from international student in community college. So, international student in PPCC works as an opportunity to have fun. Not so helpful. The only one thing is we can have some activity for free. Bowling. Can have pizzas. PPCC pays. That is good chance to meet other people. How are you doing? Nice going. But community college international student, that is good enough. I think. Because we have ISI. Too many opportunity

are sometime not good.

In summary, the friendship, camaraderie, and community on-campus is important to the participants. The camaraderie and on-campus community is important with other foreign students and with American students. This camaraderie is one way to help foreign students gain more understanding of the secret culture on campus.

#### Working on Campus

Many of the participants in the study worked on campus. This on-campus work became a meaningful part of their experience on campus. None worked off-campus. The fact that none worked off-campus is meaningful because this researcher is familiar with the additional INS regulations that are involved in working off-campus. The on-campus employment provided a variety of benefits to the students, including language improvement, socialization opportunities, opportunities to know what is happening on campus, and financial benefits.

The comments and interaction between the researcher and C illustrates the benefits of working on campus. In this interaction, the researcher is summarizing C's comments to check to see that his perception and understanding is accurate.

R: So, working in the cafeteria you were able to meet a lot of other people  
C: Yes  
R: and so that helped you to improve your language  
C: That's right.  
R: and it helped you feel not so lonely.  
C: Uh huh. And to pay my bills.  
R: And to pay your bills?  
C: That's right.

### The Community

Another major setting for the foreign students' experiences which emerged from the data was the community in which they lived. This community is the away-from-campus community. These experiences in the community were mostly favorable. Host families in the communities were particularly helpful.

### Community Experiences Were Favorable

There was diversity of experiences reported by the participants in their relationships with the community. Most experiences were good or favorable. There were very few bad experiences. One viewed the community experience as both good and bad. "Q: Okay. I have experienced a good way and bad way both."

Interaction with the community provided a venue for cultural interaction and an opportunity to experience other cultures.

L: I think one of the great things about junior college for the social people that are around here are people from the towns around so it's a little

more college people so it's kind of really farmers so it's kind of like a big difference culturally between me and them.

Even school events provide opportunity to interact with members of the community.

L: Like last Saturday there was like something in the school, chili's thing for make some money for the community school so we were invited there so we were there and we see people from the community and we kind of interact with them.

L seemed to have considerable opportunities to be involved in the community. It was not clear if this involvement was due to his membership on the basketball team or his being a foreign student. This involvement created something of a family atmosphere for him. L is one of the participants in the study who greatly missed his family back home. This community involvement seems to be one of the ways that his family needs were met.

L: So that makes the opportunity for us to get involve in the community more because, that is kind of like because we are part of one family and every activity they do in the community we're there. It's not like we stay in school and we don't move from there. They just see us on the court and they don't see us again. So we kind of a lot of interact with the community.

As an example of community involvement, L's college created opportunities for him to interact with the community by visiting a kindergarten. He was aware that this kind of interaction was accomplishing more than one

objective. The basketball players became known by the community and that would influence more people to attend basketball games. It was an indirect way of marketing the basketball games.

L: That's the reason why I went to the kindergarten because they try to make the players be known by the community. Have a good impression on the community so they can bring more people to the games, you know, two things going on.

Involvement in the community is something that was desired by the participants in this study. None of the participants indicated that they did not want any community involvement. Rather, the concerns were for ways to have involvement. Y stated it this way: "So, for your international student wants to have some community, friend."

Community involvement had a mutually beneficial effect.

L: It's great for us and great for them too. So in the community we are like really, really interact with them. I mean it's great. It makes us feel more like home too.

Community involvement is desired. One form of community involvement was interaction with other foreign individuals of one's own nationality. The community provided a venue for other needs to be met such as acquiring a driver's license.

Y: The international student, many people have loneliness. Community is very important. In my case I found some Japanese friend. Luckily there are some Japanese international student in PPCC so they help me how to get a driver's license and also they taught me how to drive the car.

Concern was expressed about a social phenomenon in the American community, the phenomenon of children with only one parent. This was not viewed favorably.

Q: I mean the single parents kids that are around me like in the community. They know sometimes they are not going to school and they are sometimes polluting the environment. Because then they are getting proper care from their parents. That might influence a young international student. Because they also parentless in the United States.

Perception of the community was limited for some participants because their current location was their first location in the United States. Some of the participants had experiences in other locations in the United States. The lack of experience in other places limited the frame of reference for some participants for evaluating the community.

R: What would be some other thoughts about the community, about Colorado Springs? Anything else you want to say about

Y: Compared to Japan, or . . .

Y: I don't know the other parts of the U.S. I directly came here, so I haven't lived any other city in the US. I cannot say.

One of the community colleges was physically distant from the neighboring community. There was not much

community involvement for the foreign students in this setting. The context in which foreign students would go off-campus was related to the students' involvement in recreation. In this particular vicinity, outdoor recreation was a dominant phenomenon. The community involvement was related to recreation.

R: What about the community, like Glenwood Springs or the mountain community or whatever the community is for you. Do you feel like, what has been your experience with the community?

N: Not much. I mean we go skiing or climbing and that's kind of where we meet all the people from outside the college and sometimes they'll call you and ask if you want to go climbing with them or you'll see them at the ski resort or the climbing area. That's as far as it goes.

A: Yeah. At the ski resort I met a lot of people from outside the college. But the first semester I hardly met anybody.

The researcher summarized the comments of N and A, including the ideas of isolation and interaction with the community this way:

R: We talked some about transportation and the isolation of the campus here. Mingling with the community and that seems to happen more in the recreation format or context. But you've been able to find ways to get around to get wherever you need to be as far as transportation. And your classes are easy.

Transportation availability played a part in socializing with the community, in that there was not much opportunity to interact with the community when the foreign student had to rely on others for transportation.

N: It's more like everybody is in their car and they go inside to buy their stuff and get in their car again.

N: Stop by McDonald's at the drive-through

A: We cannot really go out or anything so we don't really meet anybody.

The age of the foreign student influenced the opportunities to interact with the community. Some participants in the study were not able to socialize in a way that they would in their home country due to their age. They were not old enough to legally drink alcohol in their community.

A: We cannot really go out or anything so we don't really meet anybody.

R: Why can you not go out?

N: Because we are not 21.

R: Oh, really? So, now when you say go out, what do you mean? I mean you can go wondering around Glenwood Springs or are you talking about going to bars?

A & N: Go to a bar

N: Go dance and stuff.

R: You have to be 21?

A & N: Yeah

A: You don't meet many people from the community. No not really. I know the guy down at the gas station because I always buy cigarettes there. That's kind of like how you get to know people but not like really.

The two students who had a somewhat isolated experience from the community, except for the outdoor recreation contacts, still enjoyed their experience. They were glad they did it, and one was considering returning.

R: Well, what else would you all like to say about your experience at a community college in Colorado?  
N: I don't know. We already kinda said everything. I really had a good time here.  
A: Yeah  
N: and I'm glad I did it.  
A: I was actually thinking about coming back.

Another participant coined a term, "whatever Americans," describing an atmosphere of apathy. The "whatever Americans" seemed to be threatening at times, and at other times these apathetic Americans seemed no threat at all.

R: Do you like it here? Does it seem like you are welcome as a foreign student, or, do you feel like people in the community don't like foreign students, or what is that like.  
Y: Um, I fear one thing called "whatever Americans."

In one community, Colorado Springs, there was a thriving community organization that focused on interacting with foreign students. This was perceived as a positive opportunity for the foreign students to meet and interact with others. It was helpful.

Y: That is Friday afternoon since 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 or 9:30 p.m. If you have time and that is first Fridays and third Fridays of every month.  
R: So they have a weekly Friday meeting? That's really helpful?  
Y: That's helpful and have fun and very different experience just please come and please experience it. There are a bunch of international students and they are talking at church or ISI share some food, dinner. It is not formal. That is very good point. We can go anywhere and talking with food, drink, not alcohol. That is very helpful.

Two participants expressed a view that being a foreign student gives them an advantage in how they are perceived by the community. One was in the area of athletics, the other in the area of scholarship. For L, he thought the community would think a foreign student on the basketball team must be good, simply because he's foreign. Q thought the community would perceive foreign students as scholarly.

Q: Good things are, the community accepts international student because they think they came for studies so they must be smart. The community accepts them in a good way.

A pro-active approach to community involvement was expressed by J. He took initiative to interact with members of the community.

J: I try to some how put back as much as I can to the community. To put in as much as I take out. This meaning by people come to my games and I try to remember faces and say hi, at Wal-Mart I walk by them and say thanks for coming to the game last night or saying hi to the kids or just going to events that involve community. And then you realize that everybody knows everyone. More in Sterling, I mean, there's so much people in Sterling.

R: Everybody knows everybody in Sterling.

J: Yeah. I think everything you do it's gossip topic. Everybody shsssss. It's for the birds. Talking. So the next day everybody knows. Everybody. It's very interesting.

One student clearly felt like she did not fit into the community. Her present community, Colorado Springs,

was not her first experience in the United States. She had lived in Los Angeles previously and had considerable contact with other Asians in Los Angeles. She felt a negative experience in her present community.

AD: I was like when I got here I was really surprised because when I came here to U.S. for the first time I went to San Francisco for a month and then go to L.A. for a week and in San Francisco and LA there are so many different cultures and lot of Asians so I felt that I'm in the community. And then when I got here after a year like when finished high school I got here and it was different. I didn't like it in Colorado Springs as much. Not as many Asian as in California. So I felt I was different and it's just different. I feel I don't fit in the community. Maybe because most of the people are white and then they see me differently. I don't know, just different. I don't know how to explain it. My English is not really good and maybe sometimes they don't really want to talk to me, because they don't want to spend time just listening to me, like concentrate on me, I think. I don't know it's just like Colorado Springs is more like lot of whites rather than the other cultures. In my opinion.

Basketball made a difference in J's experience in the community. He was from a big city in his home country. He was now studying in a small town. He would not have been in that community if it were not for his basketball playing.

J: Sterling. I live in a size of a town of two million people back home. So I come to Sterling, 15,000 people. I like small towns because my grandparents are from small towns and I like the peaceful and quiet stuff but if there would be no basketball, I know I would not be here.

In this small town, his basketball playing made him quite recognized in the community. He was a local hero.

J: Clearly basketball players they really know us. Little kids come up to us, hey J how you doing? Okay, how you doing. People ask for our autographs sometimes. They recognize you and say "hey good game, great job." They give you compliments.

In a community in which he had recognition as an athlete, he perceived the people in the community to be helpful in any way they could.

J: In the community, it's always, how would I say, nicely helpful. I'd say, supportive, any way they can. First of all, they help you with anything they can. That I can be there just represent NJC basketball team and to show that I'm part of this and it's a positive input that I think really.

The other participant who was a basketball player at the same college also had positive interaction with the community.

L: It's not like we stay in school and we don't move from there. They just see us on the court and they don't see us again. So we kind of a lot of interact with the community. See when we are in hometown everybody knows us because we grew up there. So we need to interact with the community. We come here and everybody knows us too it's kind of nice for us too. But we've been invited everywhere. So it's nice.

C perceived her town, Denver, as a nice place, a quiet place, a beautiful city with nice people.

C: Well, actually, um, I like living here, it's a nice place. It's a quiet place. But, I don't have any problems living in U.S. It's a nice place people are nice. The building that I live in,

people are so friendly. My, I don't have any troubles. But I don't have any problem. I never have problems working. In Denver, and I really like the city. I mean this state, it's pretty nice and very beautiful, very beautiful state. In Denver, and I really like the city. I mean this state, it's pretty nice and very beautiful, very beautiful state.

Colorado Springs was viewed as very nice by a participant who had traveled to other locations. He perceived that everyone is nice. He did not expect people to be so nice.

R: What do you think about the community here? Colorado Springs. How do you like that or not like it.

S: You mean the city?

R: Yes, the city of Colorado Spring.

S: I think it is very nice compared to like I've been to. I traveled. I went to other cities in the Spring Break and after Christmas. I think it is less crowded than other big cities, Dallas, San Antonio, like Texas is pretty crowded. People here are very generous you know. The ones I have met. Everyone is nice and I think and I didn't expect like some people.

Another participant perceived people everywhere as being friendly. She did not feel uncomfortable at all in her community.

G: Well, I have had the privilege of meeting very nice people, and I have very nice and good friends here. So, I don't feel comfortable at all. And, everywhere that I go, people's friendly and polite. Yeah, and very helpful

R: When you say you don't feel comfortable, you mean you don't feel uncomfortable?

G: I don't feel uncomfortable.

In summary, all but one participant had a very favorable experience in the off-campus community. Some felt that being a foreign student gave one an advantage in how he/she was perceived by the community. Community involvement is something that the participants wanted in their experience.

#### Host Families

Contact with American families, typically called host families, was identified as a positive experience by four of the participants.

AD used the term "helpful" to describe her involvement with the American family with which she interacted:

AD: I involved with clubs, like international student clubs or ISI clubs and then the ISI member they introduce me to American family. So I can like get involved with them. They usually ask me like do you want to go lunch or they ask me to go to the Easter dinner, that kind of thing.

R: Has that been helpful?

AD: Yeah. It's been helpful.

L had positive interaction with American families in the community. The community where he studied is predominantly non-foreigners. He felt like part of a family because of his community involvement.

L: So that makes the opportunity for us to get involve in the community more because, that is kind of like because we are part of one family and every activity they do in the community we're there.

Host families provided a place and a form of interaction available to J's fellow teammates. Whether this was a form of preferential treatment (discussed elsewhere in this study) or whether this was typical treatment for foreign students at this college, it was still considered great from J's perspective.

J: It's only my Argentinean roommate and me. Some of the teammates are going to their host families. . . . can't afford to go home cause we have a lot of guys out of state. So they stay with the host family. So it's great.

Host families were given to the basketball players, particularly out-of-state players, at one college. Foreign students were very far out-of-state. This host family interaction seemed to meet a need for the foreign students as well as other out-of-town basketball players.

L: Another thing is that our coach are making progress, they give us host families, you know, so you have host family from the community, especially out of state players because we stay here most of the weekends. We don't have place to go. So we got a host family that kind of take care of us during the weekends, you know, take us out or take us to dinner, bring us to their place on Sundays.

S was living with a host family. He was able to experience American family life in a way that the other participants did not. This close interaction provided an opportunity for the foreign student to see that American

life was very different than what he had thought it was like. He was favorably surprised by what he experienced.

S: Like I'm living with a host family here and the host mother is very nice and I didn't expect, when I was in Nepal, I thought American life was very fast and there were like very . . . and very social, you know, not social but in a different way. I found them very very nice

R: That's a pleasant surprise then.

S: Yes.

In summary, interaction with American families, whether formally assigned host families or community involvement with American families, had a positive impact on the participants.

#### Summary of the Settings for the Experience

There were two major settings for the experiences of the foreign students in this study. Those settings were the community college that each participant attended and the local community in which the community college was located. The setting of the community college involved contact with administrators and advisors, orientation to the college, interaction with others on campus, and work on campus. The experiences in the community were generally favorable and the involvement with host families enhanced that favorable experience.

## Challenges and Blessings in the Experience

The participants in this study experienced a simultaneous mix of challenges and blessings in their lives at community colleges in Colorado. This category, challenges and blessings in the experience, emerged from the themes of their experiences with the language, with the culture, and with technology. These themes emerged from the data and were experienced in such a way that it was at the same time a challenge and a blessing.

### Experience with the Language

A theme that was present in the experience of all participants and emerged from the data was language. The participants in the study expressed some difficulties with language. The participants had varying backgrounds in language and varying experiences. They learned English from various sources. Some studied English in a foreign high school; others learned English in America; others found the entertainment industry as a helpful source for learning English. They still have some difficulties with certain aspects of English, but generally they feel like they are doing fine now. They recognize the difference between American English and English from other parts of the world. Their English has improved with time.

## English Learned From Various Sources

Participants gained knowledge of English from various sources. Sources included MTV, books in English, study in home country. Some improved their English by speaking only English and being required to speak English in their on-campus jobs.

J expanded his vocabulary by reading books in English.

J: I got read some books. I got do something about this. So I tried to articulate the words as much as I can and a expand my vocabulary as much as I can. So I can use different words in conversations in my everyday talk. But English has been, it's good to know, it's good to know it. I read English poetry, too. I have English books. I read The Great Gatsby. I thought that was a great book. Pride and Prejudice. It was pretty good, too.

J is the same participant who improved his English by watching MTV. His source of MTV was from England, so the English was different from what he was accustomed to in America.

J: I was watching MTV in Europe. The MTV comes from England so everybody in MTV is from England. After the first year I realized that the lady was talking on TV and I only understood every third or fourth word because it was a English England and I was, I had to concentrate on what she was saying cause it was so different from what I had talked, spoken before here in the States.

J perceived that the ability to speak English would be a great help to him throughout his life.

J: Well, learning English has been great and it's good to learn it because I think I going to use it a lot in life.

N and A studied English regularly in school since age twelve. They also found radio, music, and television helpful in learning English. N chose to study in America for the purpose of improving his English.

N: I have, in Holland we're really, everybody really has a, we really have a lot of languages there. They learn you a lot of stuff about languages and I had since I'm 12 they started to teach me English, so, that's kind of why I speak English that well. And, television and radio and music and stuff usually everything is English. And it's sub-titled or something so, yeah, that's where you learn the most stuff from, from television and radio. And, I thought well, since my English is not that good, let's go to America, to upgrade my English a little bit, and . . . so that's why I wanted to go to America. And, so, it's gonna affect my study or my future like that. And of course I learned a lot of stuff here, but not really from my classes.

For N the main purpose for being in America, other than the recreation, was to improve his language.

R: I'm really curious now. So, did you take the TOEFL, the Test of English as a Foreign Language?

N: Yeah.

R: How did you do?

N: I didn't do really well, cause, my English is not really good. 'Cause you know speaking it is whole different than writing, reading, and I had kind of a problem with languages because I'm, how do you say that, dyslexic or something. Well, but that's over now, or it's almost over, it doesn't really bother me anymore. But, I kinda had that so I never was very good and then I was not really interested in other languages 'cause I always had a lot of math and all kinds of science classes and I

really liked those classes so, yeah, I didn't really want to waste my time doing my English homework for example. (laugh) And that's why, because usually people in Holland they learn French really good and German and English, and Dutch of course, and I only had the minimum. I only had Dutch and English and the rest those science classes, so, but to go to my TOEFL test, I had to take that one, and I was kind of afraid I wouldn't pass it so they wouldn't accept me here, but, I think I had 25 points higher than the requirements for CMC so that's not really high. It's probably better now. Way better.

AD had studied English in her home country of Indonesia. The English she studied was not intense. She lived in California awhile prior to coming to Colorado. While she was living in California, prior to coming to Colorado, she associated with many Indonesians, so much so that she spoke Indonesian more than she spoke English. She found that when she spoke only English, which she did when she moved to Colorado, her English improved.

AD: We learned English in Indonesia but kind of like only an hour per day. And it's only in the class. And in that English class we can talk with Indonesian, so it's not really like, to me it wasn't really helpful at all because we didn't talk in English. We didn't know like the grammar, like, where should I say with this grammar, like "where have you been" "where did you go" . . . I really see before when I first got here and I talk to other people with English and "huh, what did you say?" Now it's kind of more clear, and people just like, I can see from the people like from conversation, most of the people now don't go like "What, what was that?" And I did not really talk in English in San Francisco. I spoke with English only in classroom and with the teacher. That's it. Because I hang around with all Indonesians it seems like weird to talk with like to have conversation in English. I

always spoke in Indonesian with them. It's not really good.

R: Well, how is the language now, is that an obstacle for you still or are you able to use the language OK?

AD: Yeah. ...I think for six months and try to talk with English all the time and talk with different people and I didn't use Indonesian language at that time and so it's really help me with my English and now I'm really OK with it.

For J, familiarity with other languages helped him learn English. He is multi-lingual.

J: Spanish helped me a lot to learn English cause there's many words that I can relate to from Spanish cause I'm fluent in Spanish as well as in English... So I learned Spanish language and that's my second and English my third language. Hungarian is my first. I'm trying to learn French next year... Next year I'm going to learn French. My fourth language and a hopefully in five or six years I become fluent in that or if not I'm going to have to go play pro basketball in France and learn it that way.

For C, working in the cafeteria and also speaking English at home helped improve her English proficiency.

R: So, working in the cafeteria you are able to meet a lot of other people

C: Yes

R: and so that helped you to improve your language

C: That's right.

R: and it helped you feel not so lonely?

C: Uh, Huh. So when I start to work I can improve my English because I was speaking a lot of Portuguese at home because of my husband and his family and everybody. People come there and talk to me and ask me questions.

### American English

To the participants in this study, American English is different from other forms of English. Sometimes the

other English is clear; sometimes it sounds like poetry; sometimes it is not so clear. Many of the foreign students who participated in this study had experience with English other than American English.

J: My cousin's future husband, he's from England and he came to visit her in Hungary and I was talking to him and it was great because he talked that England English.

AD: Okay. It's just English is different maybe. Cause when I go when I went to Australia they used British English and the accent is different.

R: Are you getting to understand different English accents pretty well?

AD: Now?

R: Like if somebody was from Australia or from England?

AD: From England I have difficult time talking with Europeans. Maybe not all the Europeans like the ones who just got here or what did you say and I have really hard time listening to black people.

Other forms of English familiar to some of the participants in this study included British English, Australian English, and other European English. They recognized a difference in various versions of English.

### English Placement

Students had various experiences with the assessment of their English skills. One student did not have to take an English proficiency test at all. She just talked with the foreign student advisor, and he said her English was acceptable. This researcher happens to know that the college where this happened does indeed have a published

English proficiency requirement. In this case, the published requirement was disregarded and replaced by a rather informal approach of simply talking to the foreign student advisor.

G: I came here and I did not take the ESL course because I interview with the international counselor and he said that my English was pretty good, so I started to go into regular classes, attending regular classes.

R: So, you just interviewed with the international student advisor and he thought your English was good enough?

G: Well, he made me take the COMPASS test, and my scores in reading and writing were high, they were college levels, so they didn't ask me for a TOEFL for the course. No, no I don't have a TOEFL.

Other students experienced annoyance with the assessment testing process. They had taken the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and believed that it was adequate for the placement into their English classes at the college. They did not like the college's assessment test for English placement. Two of these participants had studied English since the age of twelve.

A: We also did a TOEFL test.

N: We did so much stuff.

A: Have you ever heard of TOEFL test? There are so many English test and then they just make like up like this one English test. I mean like the TOEFL test was a pretty, I thought that was a good test.

R: So you think the TOEFL test was good, but the placement test for your English classes at the college is not a good test.

A: Yeah

N: At least some international students

A: I think the TOEFL test might be. I think that's good enough. That should be it.

R: Well, that would be nice if you could use the TOEFL to take the place of some kind of English placement test.

A: Yeah.

In summary, the experiences with English placement varied for the participants.

### Language Difficulties

Participants in this study experienced difficulties with slang and speed of speaking, the American ethnic English, and with academic English.

The difficulty most frequently described with language had to do with how fast Americans talk and how much slang Americans use.

P: I would try to say is that if they could only try to slower the pace and for using slang, and just speak naturally. That would be a great help. Because most of the time it's the slang and a combination of words that just go like that, kind of takes you off track, takes anybody off track maybe, any of my fellow colleagues around me. It takes a lot of time trying to grasp what they are trying to say. But since I've been here for a year and I'm trying to grasp most of the things they say and I can not understand what they are trying to say. If they just make it simple then you can understand their English . . . and that's all. It's just a matter of slang and the pace they are talking. They talk fast.

S: I think teachers, the ones I have taken classes with here, they are helpful, I think so. I ask them a lot of questions cause I feel a little difficulty understanding the class cause everybody the way they speak here is faster than how I can understand the speed and the different things like doing the

project notes and ask that a lot and they are very helpful to me.

R: Do they take into consideration the language difference and the speed of their speaking?

S: Yes. Some of them do like my math teacher. She is very fast in speaking and I tell her that I can't understand when you speak that fast cause I ask her and she tries to make it a little slow. That helps. Language is also a problem here cause people here speak very fast and sometimes is very difficult to understand. So hearing the language, spoken language is very important.

AD is one of the participants who experienced difficulties with ethnic American English. She perceived it as a very different form of English and as part of the ethnic culture.

AD: From England I have difficult time talking with Europeans. Maybe not all the Europeans like the ones who just got here or what did you say and I have really hard time listening to black people. They just speak faster and with strange words. I was like really had a hard time when I was talking with my co-worker, he was black. Can you speak like slower and with English. Because I don't know to me they speak differently maybe the accent or the words they use like their own words and then.

R: That's another part of American culture.

AD: Yeah. The culture.

Some of the foreign students in this study had difficulties with the language in various subject areas. The subject area itself may or may not be difficult, but the language presents a problem.

C: Because what I've learned here in Algebra, I learn in high school in my country. All the international students say the same thing. It's so easy for us because we learned it in the high schools not in college. So, the only thing, the

trouble is the language not the material, it's not that difficult. Because we can do it. We can get an A if it was in Portuguese or Japanese or Chinese. R: So you understand the mathematics, it's just the language of the mathematics.

For some, there is a complaint that they have to learn in English, particularly when they're paying such high tuition.

Q: In that case they have to study so much because I'm studying in a different language.

C: But international student they are having trouble because English is not their first language. So they are going to go to like a Biology or Chemistry or Philosophy class and they are going to have some trouble for sure because it's English. Everything is in English. The teachers talk in English, all your classmates are English, American. So, I don't think it's fair that they pay that kind of money for people, it's not easy for us because we are far away from our family, from our house, our friends. We are just here because of the study because we want to grow up in our lives, want to be someone. And even though the United States is one of the best university in the world, if you are here it's a big step that we took in our lives. I don't see why we have to pay so much money in here.

C: Because it's not easy for us, the classes. The terms of the teacher. So, we are not going to be able to get an A all the time because of the language. Sometimes we get a C and we paying like \$3,000 and I got a C. They are going to be so upset at themselves. Because they spend a lot of money and they are not doing very well because of the English. And that's because of the English.

#### Language Improved With Use Over Time

English language use seems to have improved while the participants have been studying in English.

Generally, all participants in this study feel like they are doing fine now.

AD: I really see before when I first got here and I talk to other people with English and "huh, what did you say?" Now it's kind of more clear, and people just like, I can see from the people like from conversation, most of the people now don't go like "What, what was that?" [laugh]

R: How about in the classrooms, are you able to understand the lectures pretty well?

AD: Yeah

G: Well, I think my English has improved a lot.

R: OK, great. And so have you been able to do OK in your classes?

G: Yes

R: Understanding the teacher, and all that?

G: Yes. I don't have any problem.

G: Well, sometimes you know like little things about the context, but that's part of the learning I'm getting. Yeah, but no, not a big problem.

Two of the participants went to high school in America. Neither of them had very high English skills at the time. The terms "lonely" and "scared" are used as they talk about their inability to speak English.

C: And like during the break time, the lunchtime, I was always by myself. I was younger though. I was like only 17. I couldn't speak English very well. I could understand but I couldn't say. And I was remember like, people eating lunch and no body asked me anything, it was like, I feel really. I mean I was lonely.

L: At the beginning I was scared because I didn't know any English.

Both C and L chose to disclose their inability in English while in high school. Both later disclosed that

they were doing fine now. Their English improved with time and use.

In summary, the experiences with the language included learning English from various sources such as high school, movies, books, television, radio. Several obstacles to communication in English included use of slang language, use of ethnic American English, Americans talking too fast, and difficulties with academic English. Assessment tests were viewed as inadequate and inappropriate. American English is perceived as only one approach to the English language rather than the correct approach to the English language. All participants' English improved with use and time.

#### Experience with the Culture

All of the participants in this study commented on the cultural aspects of their experience. Cultural differences were identified as the biggest challenge and as a great benefit as well.

A great benefit of the experience in the United States is the cultural sharing. Participants found great benefit from this experience. This was considered to be a benefit both for the foreign students and for those with whom they shared culture. It expands one's worldview. Even fun is culturally different. Some of

the participants' experiences are described below. These experiences are typical of the participants' experiences, and it is from these kinds of experiences that the cultural theme emerged.

L: It's amazing how big your view of the world change when you go from one country to another, from one culture to another.

N: Yeah, and you learn so much stuff and because I always lived at home you know in high school and you're kind of here in the dorms and you're in a different country, and you learn to deal with people, you learn to get rides and you know, downtown or whatever

A: Yeah

N: you learn so much new things and it doesn't matter if you fail all your classes, I mean it's good if you don't fail all your classes

A: It's not about the classes

N: No, it's not. You go here for, you don't go here for the classes

A: It's like a life experience

L: Two weeks ago they make this meeting with six foreign students that we came and we talked about our country, you know, and we cooked food from our country. So the students in the school and we could share our culture to other students. I think that was really, really neat. I was, when you can talk to people about your culture, you feel kind of like you do good for your culture and your helping somebody else to understand more about the world, you know. I think that kind of thing that they were doing that was great. To be able to share our culture to other people to learn even more. There are some teachers that have asked us to know, there is one business teacher that asked us to go and talk about our country in a business class, you know, this one chapter talk about international business and stuff and they ask to go to them . . . actually that's pretty good.

The experience of a different culture was the biggest challenge for some participants. These same

participants viewed it as beneficial, and yet this was still the biggest challenge in their experience here.

L: I say more culture things, more than the school. School, there's nothing I would say I don't like about school more than the culture side. I get so sick, but besides that, you know, maybe because I don't have much more experience and I can go on and compare with other school but I say school here is pretty good. So this two years are going to help me because, see I really believe that this true. When you go from high school to a bigger school, to a university, you have a kind of social kind of shock, you know. Like going from a small class to a huge class. I think it's kind of tough to adapt to that. So going to a junior college I think it help me to get into college, you know, how college work, how grades work, what kind of thing I need to be expecting from a college. So it's kind of like making a step between you know . . . from one side to another. That's making a step. So everything, everything is, culture things like missing friends, those kind of things. Those are the biggest things. The hardest thing is going from one culture to another and that's always tough. But everything has to do with culture things.

R: School is good. Food isn't too good. Cultural things is the biggest challenge.

L: Yeah, that's the one. That's the one.

J: Seventeen I had to grow up. Had to forget about, responsibilities, a lot of responsibilities, in a different country, how to run my live, learn this lifestyle, . . . had to get used to things, had to adapt constantly through new things that society here has on me.

Even fun is culturally different. Some missed sports such as soccer. Some noticed the difference in the use of alcohol. For one, the lack of availability of a clubhouse, common at home, was different.

L: I think of sports like for instance I miss soccer a lot and I always every weekend, every night

and day there is I'm looking for some people to play soccer and it's not too many.

C: And sometimes just wondered because, I don't think the teenagers here have so much fun. Because like, I understand that you have to be 21 to go to a dance club, to drink alcohol, that's different in Brazil.

Y: I think, some environment, the mentoring environment in the US, in this community college, cause they don't. Okay, the system is different. In Japan some university can stay in clubhouse in all night long and have a party or something. But here, for security or something, we cannot get into here. So for example, Japanese university student, okay, today no lecture nothing to do. Just go to clubroom and have fun, study there, talk to other people or some activity. They can do that.

Different.culture. In Japan nobody has car or drives. Very few and very . . . That's why they do.

R: So they party all night?

Y: Not party. Just stay and talk and watching TV or something like that.

The age of a person had different meanings in home cultures compared to American culture.

P: Because right now I'm 23 years right now. You know in America 23 is a big age, you should be probably doing something. Where I'm from it's a different way of living, it's a different culture, 23 don't mean anything. It doesn't mean anything. Where I come from again it's like this, it's curious that if American compared to an African is far different in a sense.

One cultural feature identified by Y is what he called "whatever Americans." They are apathetic. They don't care, so they just say, "whatever."

Y: So, these "whatever" Americans, it's very different from the culture in Japan, but you don't mind the "whatever" Americans, because they don't bother you, and they don't care if you're here or not. Let me give you an example. OK I live with

some roommate, Americans. For example, taking a bath. Japanese people always take a bath during night, right before they go to bed, but usually Americans have, take a bath early in the morning or right before going to work. I will take a bath, they said "what are you taking a bath during night," or "yeah," "OK, go ahead" or something like this. And the other one is dinner. Japanese people usually take dinner after 7:00 or 8:00. Some Americans have dinner between 5 and 6 or 4 and 5. So I said I will have dinner after 9:00 8:00. OK go ahead. I don't care.

Y viewed teachers in America as different from teachers in Japan. Japanese teachers followed a content guide. Here, it does not seem that teachers do that.

Y: OK, So I think Japanese teachers base on the teaching manual or how to teach or common philosophy to teaching. And Japanese teachers add their opinion on the base but American teacher I think their opinion or philosophy is base and in addition and they add their direction or teaching manual. Hopefully you get it.

R: Let me see if I can say it again. At a community college each course is supposed to have a curriculum content guide.

Y: I cannot say should. I don't know which is better.

R: But they are supposed to follow the curriculum content guide. But what you are saying is, and this curriculum content guide that would be like the base.

Y: Should be base of teaching. But they, I think teachers don't think so.

In one case, the cultural experience was such that a participant felt like she did not fit in with the culture.

AD: The culture, American culture, is very different than my culture. To me, I am different

than the others and then to me it seems kind of like I don't know if I'm in the class, I can tell that I'm different. I feel that they look at me differently. My English is not really good and maybe sometimes they don't really want to talk to me, because they don't want to spend time just listening to me, like concentrate on me, I think. I don't know it's just like Colorado Springs is more like lot of whites rather than the other cultures.

R: Well, does it bother you that you feel like you don't fit it or is it like, well I feel like I don't fit but I don't care?

AD: I don't care. [laughing] I don't really care though because I don't feel uncomfortable but maybe they feel something like that so I don't really care. That's me. What should I do I cannot change like just to be white or just to fit in to the community.

The indifference and meaningless greetings common in the United States was bothersome to some.

AD: I don't know, it's like bothering me since the first time I got here. In here in US like they ask like what's up, how's it going but they just before I answer the question they already left. Why is that? Is that a culture thing? Because lots of people do that like "what's up". I want to say something but they already left. Is it just bothering me since I got here.

For some, the fact that America was so culturally different was an attractive feature.

R: So really this is, it's not so much the academic things that you're learning, it's learning the English, experiencing American culture, and experiencing a culture that's very different than Holland with the mountains and the snow

N: Yeah, that's why I wanted to go to America. Because the culture is so different.

N: Yeah, well, I think the community college here for me is way different than it is in Holland.

R: So coming to a community college in Colorado is to take a year off and go skiing

A: Yeah. That's because nothing transfers to Holland. Nothing we do here. Just see how classes are here, how the people are, other cultures. Yeah.

Transportation is culturally different. In other cultures, transportation by buses, trains, bicycles is quite common.

N: That's a little bit different from home because we drive bikes. We have really good bus system and train system. And we can basically go everywhere without a car. You can go everywhere. Whenever you want a train goes every 5 minutes to where you want to go.

A: Something I really miss

N: And if the train doesn't go there's a bus going and in the big cities we have subways, like in London and all kinds of stuff.

R: So you miss the transportation as part of your culture back home?

A: Yes. You miss kind of like the freedom. At least here I can't do the things like on my own time. Like today right now I decide to go somewhere and I can't.

Course selection in college is culturally different. In some cultures, the course selection is made for the student. The curriculum is set. Here, students choose for themselves what courses they will take.

N: I know I had problems with like getting my class and making a schedule and because everything is so different here. Like in Holland if you go to a school they just have a pre-made program, you don't pick the classes you want. So I had no clue what was going on like when they were talking about picking classes and I think they should take a little bit more time for international students to tell us how it works and like those test that we did.

A: Yeah. Everybody just grows up with it here. Like they know what to do and they know they have to

pick the classes but it's different at home so that's why I had no clue as to what was going on. I didn't know what they were talking about.

High school graduation competencies are culturally different. N and A were able to comment on this difference. This difference in America created some inconvenience for them.

N: Yeah. I understand that because the high schools are so different here. This one level high school are so different because a girl, a high school girl, that's in my English Comp class and she moved from Pennsylvania to here and she said everything is so easy here and everything in high school was way harder in Pennsylvania.

A: Yeah. The difference.

N: It's way different and that's why they have those placement test. But in Holland everything is kind of the same if you have that diploma,

A: The final exams are national. They are all over Holland and they go to like this place and they graded all the same, like every student on that level if they graduate they have the same English level .

N: Not the same. But they have the same basic level.

Even with all the cultural sharing experiences, still there's no place like home. "L: Everything is best in the culture you're coming from, too, you know."

In summary, the experience with the culture included the fact that the different culture was a great benefit and the biggest challenge. Even fun is different, including sports and alcohol use. Transportation is very different. The significance of one's age is different.

The apathetic "whatever Americans" was a challenge. The teaching approach used by the teachers, course selection, high school graduation competencies were all culturally different. Even with all these differences and challenges, the cultural difference was the attractive feature for drawing some to this country.

#### Experience with Technology and Communication

Technology, and especially e-mail, is an important approach to communication for nearly all the participants in this study. E-mail provides a way to communicate with relatives and friends at great distances and is important for school assignments. All of the participants but one in this study had e-mail and used it regularly. E-mail was the preferred method of communicating with the participants who had e-mail. These participants seemed to be quite computer literate.

One observation is that none of the e-mail addresses were campus addresses. All the addresses were through other providers such as America Online and Hotmail. This is one instance where the absence of information speaks. There was an absence of campus-provided e-mail. Even though the college did not provide e-mail, the foreign students were still able to acquire it and use it.

The portions of the interview transcription listed below show the kinds of ways that technology and communication are part of the participants' experiences. It is out of these kinds of experiences that the technology and communication theme emerged.

J commented on the way he used technology to keep in contact with his parents.

J: They miss me of course I mean, it's logical. I write e-mails usually everyday to my parents and talk on the phone, varies from one to two weeks depend on most situations.

J uses e-mail to keep in contact with his brother. During the interview it became clear that there is not a great amount of communication between J and his brother. However, e-mail was a useful form of communication, even though the e-mail is brief. "So, he writes me e-mails, his e-mails are three lines long."

J found special meaning in his selection of his e-mail address. His selection included that which is important to him, his grandfather and basketball.

J: It's my grandfather's name and my first ever basketball number. So that's where it came from. I say that everyday.

E-mail was the preferred method for communicating with the participants in this study for all but one

participant. E-mail was something that they regularly used.

R: Would you like me to mail that to you or do you have an e-mail address where I could try to e-mail it?

L: I'll give you my e-mail address. If I have any comments or anything I e-mail back to you.

Computer literacy was quite evident during discussions about sending e-mail or sending documents as attachments. The following conversation with P illustrates this literacy.

R: OK. I might be able to send it as an attachment to the e-mail, or I might just copy and paste it into the e-mail text itself.

P: (unclear) I have Microsoft word on my computer, so you can do it as an attachment.

R: You prefer the attachment?

P: The attachment is better. You know where you just go ... go right to Microsoft word...

Homesickness was a theme that appeared with several participants in this study. For N, technology, including e-mail, provided a way to keep in contact with those at home whom he missed.

N: Well, the first semester for me I was really homesick a little bit. I had a girlfriend living there, so I was kind of homesick and I wish I wasn't homesick. That's what I regret. But, I'm not homesick now.

R: Were you able to keep in contact with her?

N: Oh, yeah, by phone and e-mail and stuff.

Technology provided Y with opportunities to keep in contact with friends and to help him study. ICQ, a way

to send instant messages to others who are on the internet synchronously, provided yet another helpful approach to communication. Y's e-mail address was a useful tool for him to receive important information from others.

Y: Computers are very helpful. Computers, e-mail, that is one of the important things to survive in the US. We can contact e-mail to Japan or my fans or my ex-class mates. Everybody has e-mail and we can pass questions, some questions for teachers and . . . and that is so good and to have a computer that is very good out here. I got laptop, so one of my favorite toy.

Y: Please try [www.ICQ.com](http://www.ICQ.com). That is between international student. For me that was helpful. My ex-classmate at PPCC. He transfer to Florida there and to e-mail is also good but I have to write it down each time and send it to him but ICQ is on the list here, name and he is on-line right now, I can talk to him. I can just click the name and say hello and send it to him and he will reply in 5 seconds.

R: So, that's important.

Y: That's important. Besides e-mail. Sometime better than e-mail, faster than e-mail.

There was only one disadvantage to e-mail identified by one participant. That disadvantage is that she received less regular mail because of having e-mail. She wanted to receive more regular mail.

R: Do you think that e-mail is a good idea for international students?

A: I like it but you don't get as much mail.

R: So, e-mail is a disadvantage because you don't get any of the real mail.

A: yeah.

N: It's not for me. I really have a lot of mail

A: I have a lot of mail but I would have more.

R: You like getting the letters?

A: Yeah. I like getting letters better because I keep them. I don't keep my e-mail. I just I could pile like this and not take them home. It's like if you write a letter you take more time for it. And like an e-mail can be really short and like, I think writing like two letters, is like you have longer letters and take more time to write what you did. Yeah, I like that better actually. I mean I like e-mail, too, because it's fast and it's cheap, it's free. So it's kind of like either one.

In summary, technology, especially e-mail, was important for keeping in contact with distant family members. This electronic contact helped ease homesickness. E-mail was used to keep in contact with near and distant friends and to assist with studies. Computer literacy in the participants was very evident.

#### Summary of Challenges and Blessings

There was a mix of challenges and blessings for the participants. Acquiring expertise in the English language was a blessing, and at the same time presented some difficulties. Some difficulties included the challenge of various forms of English, frustrations with the English placement tests used by the colleges, challenges with ethnic English and the language of academic subject areas. Experiencing a new culture, American culture, was a great blessing, yet cultural adjustments presented challenges for the participants. Experience with technology was clearly a blessing, with

the only challenges being the usual and customary challenges that are involved in using computers.

#### Variations in the Experience

The foreign students in this study had some notable variations in their experiences while studying at community colleges in Colorado. Those variations were manifested in their goals and purposes for studying at the community college, their contact with family members and significant others, their financial concerns, and some other unexpected findings.

#### Goals and Purposes for Studying

One theme that emerged among the participants is their academic plans. There was variety in their goals and purposes for studying at a community college in Colorado. For many, the plan was to complete an Associate degree at the community college en route to transferring to a university. For others, the academic plan was to return to their home country and study there without regard for what may or may not transfer from the community college.

Most participants considered the time spent at a community college prior to going to a university was a good thing. It was good because of the greater attention students received from the teachers, because of the

smaller classes, because the college was smaller, tuition was lower, and it gave the student time to become adjusted to an American way of higher education. Some knew precisely what their transfer plans were after studying at a community college; others were not so clear in their plans.

The comments that follow typify the participants' comments out of which themes emerged. The attention from faculty and the concern for the students on the part of the faculty is illustrated by these comments:

L: I have a good relationship with teachers because they are more concern, you know....

G: I feel here that teachers are really interested in you to learn, as in you as a person, they are very helpful and they are willing to give you enough information or advising in whatever you need.

The theme of smaller classes emerged from comments such as these:

J: Now I realize because I like the small classes, I like it. A good ratio of teacher to student that is one to fourteen, I think. So it's good.

S: The way the teacher, I think here this college, teachers are good. Classes are like reasonable size.

The choice to attend the community college was a financial decision. The cost is lower studying at a community college.

C: Even though because it's a lot cheaper. I could take all the classes that I'm taking here at the university but I would have to pay like \$8,000

instead of \$3,000. So, it's a lot cheaper. The best way to begin is the community college, that's for sure.

S: I say it is good cause you know like the financial thing like you know it cost a little less than the four-year college.

One participant expressed concern about making sure that the courses taken at the community college would indeed transfer to the university. Only one participant believed that it would be better to start at a university rather than a community college.

All participants held the view that school at the community college is good. There were other challenges, such as cultural adjustment as described in the previous section of this study, but school was good.

#### Continue Education by Transferring

A frequently expressed view was the view that it is better to attend a community college as a first step in one's academic pilgrimage prior to attending a university. The community college creates a foundation for further study at a university. The financial savings was a factor as well, as described in the previous section of this study. For example, one participant was planning to transfer to a major university in Colorado with plans of entering medical school. For this student, the lower tuition at the community college was the reason

for attending the community college rather than going directly to the university. Another participant had a clear plan of studying Computer Information Systems at the community college, then transferring to a university to complete a bachelors degree in this field. He viewed the community college experience as beneficial financially, plus he appreciated the attention that he received at the community college. He viewed his time at the community college as an important step in his academic pilgrimage.

- A: I think for international student, community college is the first step before going to university. Rather than go direct to university.
- C: That going to the community college fits in with your goal of transferring to a university and then going to medical school. So, it's a lot cheaper. The best way to begin is the community college, that's for sure.
- P: To just base a foundation of what I'm going to do from here to transfer to university. A . . . university has a foundation stage too, but it's gonna be better for me if I start from a community college and to where I'm heading.
- AD: But I think from my experience at UC Berkley it's really helpful if you go to community college first rather than just go to university.
- G: I have made the right choice going here first, and this is going to make me feel more comfortable and have more confidence too in my language and my behaving around all these new cultural.

Some participants were planning to complete a degree at the community college prior to transferring. Some participants were clear that they were planning to

transfer to a university after spending time at the community college.

J: Well, I'm getting my Associate Arts degree here and I'm taking a general business

G: I am planning to attend 2 years here in Red Rocks, and get an Associate degree, and then transfer to a university or a 4-year college, I haven't decided yet.

S: I trying to get an Associates degree from Pikes Peak. After that I am going to a four-year college. Get my Bachelors.

P: That's always been my dream to transfer from here to a bigger university and have a lot of broad knowledge but one thing is I love starting community college, you know, because it gave me time to start from my foundation.

C: My major is going to be speech, language and human science and after that my plans are go to CU to study medicine. That's what I want to. I'm trying to go to CU Boulder because I have some credits from Brazil because I started my major in speech language and human science in Brazil. And I wanted to finish here.

AD: I want to get a B.A. degree. This course system in Pikes Peak I took like the general education and then transfer to Minnesota.

J: I keep going to college and keep that scholarship and hopefully next year I'm coming back for one more year and be a sophomore and my plans are to go to a four year college, get my Bachelors, and I might go up to Masters depending, even to Doctors.

Q: I'm looking for like CU Boulder and CU Denver. That is good for me. Because there are a lot of ethnic students.

J and L saw their community college experience as an important step toward their future bachelors degrees and toward their future careers. Both these students received athletic scholarships to pay for all their expenses at the community college. J was pleased to have

the opportunity to play basketball and receive the scholarship, which in turn led to the opportunity to study. Playing basketball at the community college would prepare him to get a scholarship at a university, to play at the university level. This would then prepare him for a career in the NBA, or enhance his career as a sports player's manager.

In summary, most participants considered that attending a community college prior to transferring to a university was better than going directly to a university. The advantages included lower tuition at the community college, smaller class size and more attention from the community college teachers. The community college experience created a good foundation for further studies in the future.

#### Community College Perceived To Be Easier

Some of the benefits of attending a community college included the advantage that the coursework and subjects are perceived to be easier, the teachers are more involved with the students, a student feels less uncomfortable than at a university.

AD: I think because maybe because the subjects are easy and the teacher more involved with students with more attention to them. And the classes I think are smaller.

C: The best way to start is a community college. I think, that's for sure. It's cheaper and it's smaller so you are going to get use to and then once you go to the university which is huge. CU Boulder is huge. I got lost there two times. You're going to feel more comfortable, you know what I mean? If you start at the beginning. Everything is right time to happen. Start at the beginning and then go as far as you can.

G: I have heard that going into a 4-year college or a university directly, that it's pretty hard, because classes go like lecture.

L: But here it's more like, junior college is more like a step after high school, it's kind of the same, you know, not too many people in the class, thirty people in the classes. So they keep it, you know, really easy and nice.

L: the classes are not too hard so it's not like you're really, you know, have to work a lot. I don't think the class hard.

Some aspects of attending a community college were perceived as easy. Academics generally were considered easy. It could be more rigorous. It was like taking a year off from studying.

N: so, yeah, this is more like a year off for me. 'cause, you know I really worked really hard in high school and I thought, well, you know, let's take a break before we go to university and have to work hard again, you know? And if you just, I don't know, I want to see a lot of stuff of the world, and if you're just sitting in school all the time, that's kind of boring.

R: Okay, N was saying that for him this was kind of a year off from school. Is that how it is for you?

A: Yeah. Yeah. Pretty much.

N: It's kind of weird to go to school to take a year off from school.

For the two participants who were here for the recreation rather than the academics, the easier the better.

Calculus was considered easy by one participant. Students used calculators in the calculus class, which made it too easy. This student's mathematics background was such that he was accustomed to solving mathematical problems himself without the use of a calculator.

N: The teacher was really nice, was a really good guy. But it's kind of the way they teach calculus here or something. It would be just like you would come up with a problem at beginning of class and he would say yeah, this is the problem and blah, blah, you can do this in algebraic way, you know, but he would just glance over it really fast and then you do it like this on your calculator and you would have to practice that for 50 times. So I thought, I don't know, I don't think this is really what I wanted to know about calculus.

R: So, calculus was boring?

N: Yeah, well in a way. Because still, I really like math, so I still really like all the problems and if I really had a lot of time I would just not use the calculator. And just figure it out for myself, how to do it without the calculator, the algebraic way. I didn't have any time because I wanted to go climbing and skiing and fun stuff.

R: So are you in calculus?

N: I was in calculus but [laughing] I dropped the class. Because, I don't know, we just had a really big calculator and it could everything for you. You just poked the buttons and that's it, there's the answer and it's just like copying the answers from the back of your book, you know.

R: So you dropped calculus so you could go climbing and skiing not because of the calculator?

N: Well, kind of. Also because of calculator. It was just all the people in the class too, because they were not really what like the really

intelligent mathematic people. They were like people who really liked to push buttons and I was like come on this is weird.

R: Was the math easy for you though?

N: Well, with the calculator it was really really easy. But if you do it without calculator then it's kind of hard.

R: And you wanted to learn how to do it without the calculator?

N: Yeah.

R: The calculator was cheating.

N: Yeah. I think it's cheating. I think it's good to use sometimes but we just only used calculators.

Two participants viewed the community college as easier than a four-year university.

R: How do you think it would be different if you were at a four-year university, taking freshman or sophomore level courses?

N: Oh, I think it would be way different. Would probably be harder, because it's a four-year school and I don't know, it depends of course which college or university you go to in America. You go to United States college or something it's going to be harder, or there are more harder courses there than at a normal or lower college.

R: So you thought it could be a little more rigorous academically?

N: Yeah, but then if you want something like that and I learned it while I was here, then you have to do four-year college or state college or maybe to a university.

A: Yeah, we didn't know that a two-year college had a lower level. This is pretty much a college to get rid of your core classes. Then afterwards to a university.

N: Yeah. And, if you go to community college then, a two-year college here, it's so different. Everything's so easy and stuff.

R: So it's easier here for you than in Holland

N: Yeah. And that's kind of where the problem is for me. Because, it's so easy or you know, some courses are really easy. I have English Comp 1 and that's kind of hard. It's going pretty good.

R: Why do you think it's so easy?

N: Well I think because CMC wants it to be, uh, CMC want's everybody to be able to go here with a high school diploma, so it has to be easy. And then it's a two year college, too, so they don't really have, you know, opportunity to really go deep into everything. So, I think that's why it's easy.

For A, that which she anticipated to be difficult, anatomy and physiology, was actually easy because she had already learned most of the content in her high school.

R: So what about just like the difficulty of the classes or things like that?

A: I had anatomy and physiology last semester and that was suppose to be a really hard class but most of the physiology was rehearsal from what I did in biology in high school. The anatomy was new to me well there was just a lot to learn it wasn't like it was really hard. Other classes aren't real hard. I don't know this semester I didn't really go to class.

The perception of easiness of the community college was considered a disappointment to two participants. These two participants were the two who were here for recreation rather than academic pursuits.

R: Well, as you look at your experience here, is there anything that has disappointed you about your experience studying at a community college?

N: Well, I thought the level was a little high here.

R: The level was high?

N: Yeah. higher

A: Thought it would be higher.

N: Yeah, I thought, I expected that it was harder that you could take hard math classes. You don't have to bring your calculator every class and all kinds of stuff like that.

R: So you thought it could be a little more rigorous academically?

A: Yeah, we didn't know that a two-year college had a lower level. This is pretty much a college to get rid of your core classes. Then afterwards to a university.

N: And then it is no problem for us because nothing is transferable and we don't want to be studying all day and we just want to go out so the easier the better. As long as it keeps us interested.

J's perspective on the ease or difficulty of the community college was that the difficulty depends on the courses one is taking and the number of credits in a semester.

J: Some people say that's it easier college in United States is easier. But it depends on how many credits you are taking also major, what are you long term plans

For AD, the easy grades, the ability to achieve an "A" easily, was the feature that she enjoyed the most about studying at a community college.

R: Of everything that happens to you at the school or in the community or whatever, what is it that's the best for you that you enjoy the most or what's the best thing about a community college or the best feature of studying at a community college? Of all of the good things what is the most good?

AD: I don't know to me I could get an A very easily.

R: Easy grades. That's the best.

AD: Yeah. Easy grades and then I don't know but there's like differences between the south campus and this campus.

In summary, many participants considered the community college to be easy. For some it had to do with the high school background that they brought with them to

the community college. For one, using a calculator to work calculus problems made calculus easy. For another, the science background in high school made anatomy and physiology seem easy. Another viewed the ease or difficulty as a function of the difficulty of the courses and number of credits taken. None of the participants viewed the community college as being more difficult than they expected, with the exception of some language challenges addressed elsewhere in this study. It is useful to note that only one of the foreign students had any personal experience at another American university prior to attending the community college. The perception of ease and difficulty is the personal perception and opinion of the foreign student based on what he/she believes the situation to be at a university rather than based on personal experience at the university.

### Recreation

Two students from Holland selected their community college because it was in the mountains and because skiing and rock climbing was a readily available form of recreation. N and A were quite clear that it did not matter to them how they did academically. The important priority was skiing and rock climbing. They both did view their first semester, fall semester, as somewhat

important academically, in that they needed to succeed academically to stay in the college during the spring semester. During the spring semester, the semester of this interview, their academic progress was inconsequential. If the day was a nice day for skiing, they would go skiing rather than attending classes. If it was a nice day for rock climbing, they would climb rather than attend class.

Both these students viewed their time at the community college as taking a year off from college. Nothing would transfer from the community college to the university in their home country, so there was no reason to have to do well academically. It was more important to improve their rock climbing and skiing skills than to enhance their academic development. Both students were planning to return to their home country after only one year at the community college. Transferring to a university in the United States was a moot issue for them. For A and N, there was no concern about transferability of courses. They were planning to return to their home country to study. They were more interested in the improvement of their English and their outdoor recreation skills than in the transferability of courses.

N: And then another thing is that it's not really a big deal for the schools because none of us are going for a degree or something. Not transferable. So it doesn't really matter.  
R: It almost sounds like whatever you do here or whatever grades you get it really doesn't matter.  
A: No, it doesn't  
N: No, it doesn't.  
A: Well I don't know how other countries are but I mean like, if you're from Holland then you don't need the classes here (laugh)  
N: No, not really (laugh)  
R: But it's good skiing  
N & A: Yeah, oh yeah.  
A: That's why we came.

For these two students from Holland, the important reason for attending a community college in Colorado was for the recreation opportunities. Neither grades nor transferability was an important consideration. Recreation was the important consideration.

#### Contact With Family and Significant Others

Part of the experience of the participants that emerged from the data included their contact with friends and relatives in their home countries. There was considerable variety in the experiences of the participants. Some of the participants had considerable on-going contact with home. Some of the contact was favorable. Some of the contact involved difficulties.

### Favorable Contact and Struggles

A had a boyfriend in her home country. After her time in Colorado, she concluded that she would not continue this relationship when she returned home.

R: When you go back will you still have a relationship with your boyfriend?

A: No. [laugh]

R: Does that matter to you?

A: No. No. I found out here that that was not working.

N had a girlfriend in his home country. In contrast with A, he broke up with his girlfriend when he came to the United States. He maintained contact with her while he was here, and he was going to re-establish his relationship with his girlfriend when he returned to his home country.

N: I think it's good but it's really hard. I think the easiest thing is to just break off the relationship before you go.

A: That's what I did.

N: Yeah, cause it's just really hard when we sit here. But then the other side

A: But that doesn't work. I mean if you had a good relationship.

N: Yeah, if you're really in love then you can break it up, you know. That's just the way it is.

R: So when you go back will you still have a relationship with your girlfriend?

N: Yeah. Everything is working out, real good.

C had a boyfriend or husband whom she knew in Brazil, and he now lives in Colorado. It was not clear in the interview exactly what her relationship with this

fellow was. Sometimes she referred to him as her boyfriend, sometimes her husband.

R: Now, does your husband live in Brazil or does he live here?

C: Well, he's from my city in Brazil.

R: He's from Brazil?

C: He's from Brazil. Also, he's been here for five years because his mother is an American citizen. So his mother came here. I knew him in Brazil before. He goes to Brazil like every year and we just get to see each other once a year and then he decided to come to the United States to Colorado.

C had frequent contact with her father in Brazil.

One of C's concerns was about her transportation. Her father was willing to help her financially with the purchase of a car, but she did not want his help.

C: But I didn't want to ask my dad. I called him yesterday and he said did you buy your car and I say no dad, I'm trying to save some money. He said I can help you just tell me how much it is and then I can help you. I said Okay.

For L, the camaraderie he experienced at the community college and in the community created a sense of family for him.

L: That makes sense if I have to say something I like all this, I would say people, you know, are kinda like big family.

J's family seemed quite dear to him. He talked about his grandfather, grandmother, brother, mother, father. All his comments indicated a positive relationship with them.

L had a strong relationship with family and friends in Argentina. These relationships helped him to want to stay in Argentina. When L was in Argentina after being in the United States awhile, and before coming to the community college, he really enjoyed the time with his family and friends.

L: In Argentina I found like pro basketball team asking me to play for them. I was 18 years. I had a good time here and I was back with my family and with my niece and all my friends and having a good time.

J appreciated his family background. His family background gave him exposure to professional sports, which is the area he plans for his own career.

J: It's in my blood because my father played 22 years of professional soccer in Europe. So I grew up in the emotions and lifestyles of a player and I know what it seems like and I know that it's difficult for a family and ...because I was brought up, very good guy, good manners nobody complains about me that much. I realize, wow, what a best family I came from.

J's family background helped build into him self-confidence that helped him reach for and attain his goals. This confidence helped him be more successful at the community college

J: But I believe in me a lot in myself. You have to believe when you are reaching for goals this high and my family does for me all through these years.

J has contact with his mother, which includes inquiries about his brother. There was always a sense of fondness as J disclosed about his relationship with his mother and brother.

J: So, I always ask my mother, hey mom, how's my brother doing? Oh he's doing good. Then of course, sometimes she tells me that he misses me too because I went home at Christmas time and I realized that my picture is everywhere in the house. Mom put my picture in the kitchen, bedroom, every room, shelf, every room my picture. And ah, my brother was going down to the kitchen and started looking at my pictures one by one and he said, hey, I'm proud of this guy, he's my brother. He never tells me that. He doesn't know that I know that. But it makes me feel so good, that I hear it from my mom, so it's.

Family provided the financial support for both N and A. They were not sure if they would have to repay their family or not. The financial support from home was such that neither A nor N indicated any concern about finances while they were in the United States. These two participants with no pressing financial concerns had a very different reason for being here than the participants who did have financial concerns. A and N were here to play. All other participants were here to study.

N: Yeah. And, uh, I don't know, it was not really a problem. Well I still have to find out actually because I borrowed a lot of money from my parents.

A: Yeah, me too. I just get my parents on the phone

R: From your parents?

N: Yeah, money and when I'm home I don't know what they're going to say maybe they're going to say well your going to pay us.

A: I think they are going to make me pay everything back.

N: I don't know what they're going to do. Cause I wouldn't really want to go into my study year with a debt.

J experienced the loss of his grandfather while he was in the United States. He had an affectionate relationship with his grandfather, and it was difficult for J when he died. J's philosophical approach to life helped him cope with the loss.

J: Like as of what happened this Jan.14 when my grandfather passed away. It was a very hard time for me. I told my parents that night that I don't think I can handle talking to you guys because it's going to make it harder for me. And we didn't talk for almost 2 months, because I couldn't handle talking with my people at home in my family because I knew that when I made a commitment to get on the plane to come here that no matter if my grandfather I'll see him again, I can not go home. So it's hard for me to digest that I will not see my grandfather again in my life. I don't really know, I mean I kind of went through the process of first deny. I didn't believe what happened and cause I still . really don't because I leave home, I don't know, is it going to hit me whenever I go home. I'm going to see my grandmother and she comes up by herself and as we know that it is gonna be hard. They've been married almost 50 years, it's gonna be 50 years this year. It's just things that nobody tells you when you come to another country, you know. You know that they are there and they can happen but you don't want to . . . because life is hard enough by itself, why make it harder. But then this happens and then you realize that, hey, you've got to go through this. I realize that your gonna wake up the next day there's another 5 billion people waking up tomorrow and life goes on. The sun comes up, sun

goes down and your heart keeps beating and that's just part of life. That is hard.

In summary, there were struggles and there were favorable contacts with family members and significant others. Some of the contacts involved boyfriend/girlfriend concerns. The separation from a boyfriend/girlfriend enhanced the relationship for one participant and helped dissolve the relationship for another participant. Some contacts involved favorable contact with parents. One student's contact involved grief over the loss of a relative.

#### Homesickness

Homesickness was experienced by many of the participants in this study. Contact with relatives at home helped, contact with host families helped, experience with the community college as a big family helped.

Q experienced homesickness when she first came to the United States. She experienced frustration at the difficulty in adjusting to her situation as an American student.

Q: It happens to me. Initially I couldn't accommodate, but day by day I getting really, really good. I'm becoming like American student. We were born here, like them. But initially like I get so homesick. I feel like to go back and I was really

frustrated that I'm not going to accommodate with this situation, could I.

She believed that school officials should encourage foreign students that it will be all right.

Q: Like, the instructors or the school authorities taking care of, especially if they feel like homesick, they should be a little bit very friendly to the students to go to them maybe the students feels insecure, maybe for one or two months, they should assure them that it will be alright, for the time being it will be alright, it will be ok. It happens to every student, but the school official should, the way they're bringing, they're taking so much money and to assure them, ok, you'll be all right.

C also experienced homesickness. She associated her homesickness to missing her family, as opposed to missing other aspects of her home country.

C: When I feel like homesick because sometimes I'm homesick because my family is in Brazil.

C: Everything I can do at home, I can do here. It's really nice place. I was thinking about it yesterday because I don't miss my home as much as I missed like two months ago.

L also missed his family.

L: You know, missing families and stuff like that, you know, sometimes you get into the weekend and you know you see your friends going to see their families and because they live like two hours, three hours away, they can go and drive. For me it would be like 16 hours on a plane, you know, so it's kind of like, it's impossible.

L: So everything, everything is, culture things like missing friends, those kind of things I already have. Those are the biggest things that you've got to here.

J enjoyed keeping in contact with his family.

J: It's a drag because I'm away from home. And you know you go away and of course, everybody goes away, they leave the nest. For me, it was at age 17. I wish I had Hungarian back here. I wish I had known many poems from home because I love Hungarian poetry but I don't read enough. I love it because it's so romantic, sometimes sad, it's true, it's touchable, I mean it feels very good to read it. It's a poem and you read it and you can relate to cause it's so nationalistic, it's so Hungarian, basically. So it's just national. So they see the one thing, the poem by itself. They don't realize how great a thing the poem is. So the poems, I read a lot of poetry while I was here the first year cause I started realizing that, hey, I miss my country. 'Cause here I can still, it's hard to talk it about still. In two minutes I was beginning to think about it and think about it and . . . that was all I could think about cause some people, I was very close. I'm close to all my grandparents, all of them.

P also missed his home. However, missing home was secondary to his goal of acquiring an education. For P there was continued contact with his family because some of his family lived in Colorado. In fact, he lived with his relatives.

P: Actually, I miss my home a lot, too. But, so far, missing home is not the point here. My uncle . . . to study in America, and maybe see him someday. Missing him not the thing, but get an education. Even if I'm home, I need education. So, missing him is a secondary thing for me. My primary goal here is to learn.

R: That's great. So your mother is here in the United States?

P: Yeah. My mom is here and my sisters here. I have three sisters. My three have three sisters write me. One just had a separation, she was married.

R: At least you got some family over here. That probably helps the missing your other family members in Liberia.

P: Yeah.

R: So, do you live at home with your relatives here?

P: Yeah. I live at home with my relatives. I live with my mom and sister.

S missed his family and friends.

R: Do you miss Nepal?

S: Yeah, I do. My friends, families, lots of things.

For C, her reason for choosing Colorado as a location to study included the presence of her boyfriend.

C: I choose Colorado to come here because my boyfriend use to live here so I came to Colorado because . . .

L expressed his longing for home in the context of describing how much he enjoyed visiting home recently.

L: Yeah, in Argentina. When I went back, see I went for the summer and it was great. Then when I went back like more expecting I was going to stay there forever and it was a totally different picture, you know. So I go wow, what will I do?

In summary, homesickness was a common experience. Participants missed family more than other aspects of their home country. For P and L, the personal goal of acquiring an education was stronger than the ache of homesickness and helped them overcome homesickness.

### Staying in America or Returning to Home Country

There was variation in the experience of whether participants would return to their home country, as required by the F-1 visa, or whether they would stay in the United States. Some of the participants were definitely planning to return home. Some of them were trying to stay in the United States. One had managed with the help of a lawyer to change his INS status to a status that would allow him to stay in the United States whether or not he was a student. This change in status was accomplished so that the student could be eligible for in-state tuition rates. Another was planning to change her status based on a marriage to an American citizen. One of the requirements for having an F-1 visa is that the student has a home in his/her home country and he/she is planning to return to the home country after completing the program of study.

The one participant who had changed the INS status did so in order to pay resident tuition, rather than non-resident tuition. Tuition cost, not nationality, was the issue for this student. F-1 students are required to pay non-resident tuition rates. This participant was planning to eventually return to the home country to help his/her people. Meanwhile, he/she would stay with

relatives in Colorado, acquire resident status, and continue to study. P used a lawyer to help change the INS status.

R: Well, if your status changes and you become a permanent resident or something like that, how do you think that would affect your career goals or your life goals from the standpoint of, you know, would you want to return to Liberia or would you rather stay here, or what do you think?

P: I will say this and I will say it honestly, if I'm entitled to resident status I will take the opportunity, will take great advantage of that. Learn as much as I can, live here for awhile, establish my life here, go back home and try to educate my people too.

P: I've come across that. I've never filing for any status you know for my status changing with money before. I've always gone to a lawyer, somebody to help me and they can give me information of what's going on.

R: Have you filed to have your visa status changed?

P: Yes. It has changed, it has changed.

AD applied to get a green card. The term "green card" is a slang term used to describe the INS status of permanent resident or resident alien. Years ago, this INS card was green in color, hence the name. The color of the card has changed, but the name "green card" remains. AD was hoping to be selected through INS's lottery system, whereby I.N.S. grants resident status to a certain number of people from certain countries. AD had expressed that she was a minority in her home country. However, being a minority in the United States was much better than being a minority in the home

country. So, AD was trying to stay in the U.S. It became clear during the interview that AD had no intention of returning to the home country. This is noteworthy since a requirement for receiving an F-1 visa is the idea that the student has a home in his/her home country and he/she is planning to return to the home country.

AD: I try to send a green card application . . . but I don't know. I never got it.

R: Like the lottery?

AD: Yeah, like the lottery. I don't know like what's going on in the immigration? How come I don't get it?

R: I don't know. I don't work for immigration.

AD: [laugh] I'm just like wondering.

R: Well, I'm not really sure how the lottery works. They just select a certain number of applications that they would give permanent resident status to. Something like that. I don't know.

R: Well, what do you plan to do after you finish the community college, you'll transfer to a university. What do you want to do after you finish the university?

AD: I don't know. I'm not gonna. My plan now I don't gonna go home. I'm not gonna go home for good like get a job there. Maybe I will visit my family but I'm not gonna go home for good, you know. I really want to stay here and just finish my degree and then get a job and if I could get a green card or permanent resident, or, I don't know, I will try. I'm not gonna go home. Being a minority here is better than being minority there. [laugh] I really don't want to go home.

AD: I don't have any plans to go home. Right now, maybe I will change my mind.

A and N were both planning to return to their home country. N would be continuing his studies at a

university in Holland. A would be starting her studies at a university.

R: So do you both plan to return to Holland when you're done here?

A: Yeah. I'm going home like in a month.

N: I'm going home in two weeks. Within two weeks

R: But you're planning to go back to the university in Holland. What are your plans after going here?

A: Yeah. I'm also going back to the university.

R: Back to the university in Holland?

A: Not back. I'm starting there.

J felt certain that he would be returning to the United States in the future. He did not comment on the INS status that he would have when he returned.

J: And I know I'm coming back anyways cause it goes, cause I know once I get on the plane to go home there's going to be a day when I get on the plane at home to come back here. Sometimes simple things are pessimistic from negative point of view. There is nothing negative about it.

While he felt certain that he would be returning to the United States, he also was looking forward to going home.

J: basically life in the United States, to tell you the truth, I'm counting the days for me to go home. I'm going home May 9th and I have 50 days left. It's a big countdown for me. It's not because I don't like it here. It's because I like it so much over there.

C was wanting and waiting to become classified as a resident. She had a boyfriend, or maybe a husband (it wasn't clear to the interviewer during the interview if he was her boyfriend or her husband) who was an American

citizen. That relationship would be the basis for her receiving permanent resident status from INS.

C: And I'm just waiting to be a resident. I can't be a resident being an international student. I have to apply for American citizen which is very complicated. But my boyfriend he's American. He's from Brazil but he's also an American citizen. So we get married and I have to work on my papers to be a resident and it takes forever.

In summary, the participants' goals for their future in the United States varied greatly. Some were planning to stay in the United States if the I.N.S. issues could be resolved. Others were planning to return to their home countries.

#### Financial Concerns

The experience with finances varied greatly. For the students from Holland who were here for recreation, finances were not a great concern. Their parents were paying for their education. For the basketball players with academic scholarships, finances were a slight concern, but not great. Their tuition, fees, books, meals, and housing were paid by their basketball scholarship. This scholarship and financial support made it possible to study. They would work on campus for some extra spending money. For others, particularly those from Nepal, Bangladesh, and Liberia, finances were a great concern. The community college was selected in

large part because of the financial advantages. The community college is cheaper. Some participants wanted the community college to provide scholarships or other financial aid to foreign students.

Foreign students were concerned about the cost of education and about their ability to get jobs and earn incomes in their home countries. They felt that more scholarship opportunities should be available to foreign students.

#### Unexpected Findings

There were some findings that were not expected. Some participants plan to stay in the United States rather than return to their home country. Other participants came to the country for a primary purpose other than studying.

#### Staying in the United States

Several of the participants in this study were not planning to return to their home country. This is significant because part of the Immigration and Naturalization regulations for F-1 visa students includes the requirement that the student is maintaining a home in his or her home country that he or she is not intending to abandon. One participant had already changed his F-1 status to a status that would allow him to stay in the

United States and acquire residency for tuition purposes. Another participant was trying to change her status so that she could acquire residency for tuition purposes. For these two participants, the main concern was the financial opportunities they obtained by changing INS status. Another participant did not intend to return to her home country because for her it was better to be a minority in the United States than to be a minority in her home country. The intention to stay in this country was an unexpected finding.

It is not known to this researcher if this intention to remain in this country indicates a change of intention after living in the United States or if it indicates dishonesty on the part of the foreign student at the time of applying for the student visa.

### Recreation

Two participants came to the United States for the purpose of recreation rather than studying. Studying was incidental to the recreation. For these two participants, perhaps a tourist visa would have been more appropriate than a student (F-1) visa. Immigration and Naturalization Services regulations would not have prevented them from attending some courses at a community college while they were in the country as tourists as

long as they fulfilled their responsibilities as tourists.

### Summary of Variations

There were variations in the experiences of participants in this study, including their goals and reasons for studying, their contact with family members and significant others, and the nature of their financial concerns. Unexpected findings with regard to the importance of recreation over academics, and with regard to the intention to stay in the United States also presented variety to the experiences.

### Summary

The findings in this study answered the research question of how foreign students experience life while studying in community colleges in Colorado.

Eleven foreign students representing nine countries from five community colleges in Colorado participated in the study. The study revealed major settings for the experiences, challenges and blessings in the experience, and variations in the experience. The major settings for the experiences were the community college itself and the off-campus community. The mix of challenges and blessings included experience with the English language, experiences with the culture, and experience with

technology and communication. Variations in the experience included the goals and purposes for studying at a community college in Colorado, contact with family members and significant others, financial concerns, and their intentions to return to their home countries or stay in the United States.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is organized around the topics of discussion of the findings and recommendations based on the findings.

### Discussion

The topics for discussion include the community college as a great beginning experience for foreign students, the blessings and difficulties of their experiences, the experiences with technology and communication, the experience with the English language, and the foreign student advisor.

#### Community College a Great Beginning

The participants in this dissertation viewed the community college as a great place to begin their education. The reason it is a great place to begin is the attention from the faculty, the smaller class sizes, lower cost in tuition, opportunities to interact with others on campus and in the community. This concern for attention, smaller class sizes, lower tuition, and interaction is consistent with Blackwell's (1994) study.

The participants in this study considered the community college as a great place to begin for reasons similar to the ideas presented by Bus (2000). The programs which facilitate transfer to a university, ease of admission, and less expensive tuition were highlighted by the participants in this study.

Most of the participants in this study had no basis from personal experience for comparing the community college with an American university. However, this perception was their belief, their reality.

With the ever-increasing enrollments of foreign students at community colleges, it is likely that community colleges will receive more and more publicity in the students' home countries, thus fueling the continued enrollment increases. With the likelihood of continued enrollment increases, the importance of community colleges offering a positive and meaningful experience for foreign students is supported.

The findings that a community college is a great place to begin was the basis for an article by this researcher, published in Spanish (Crawford, 2000).

#### Cultural Blessings and Difficulties

The cultural difference between the United States and the foreign students' home countries was

simultaneously the biggest difficulty and biggest blessing. To enhance the blessing component, and reduce the difficulty component, community college administrators and foreign student advisors can better prepare incoming foreign students by creating a course for credit which the foreign students can take in their home country prior to enrollment in a college or university in the United States. This can prepare foreign students with more realistic views of what to expect in the United States with academic customs, transportation, socializing opportunities, social customs, and currency. This can be congruent with the on-campus orientation that the foreign student advisor provides so that the pre-campus experience in the foreign student's home country is part one of the orientation; the on-campus orientation is the continuation of it.

#### Technology and Communication

The foreign students who participated in this study used technology as an important part of their experience. Grant (1999) identified an assortment of technologies that have been impactful to students generally, and particularly for foreign students. The technology that was most useful to the participants in this study, and is consistent with one of Grant's (1999) observations, was

e-mail. All but one of the participants had a personal e-mail address.

Grant (1999) suggests that foreign students are less accustomed to technology due to cost, and due to cultures that do not include technology. While this was not the case with most participants in this study, it was indeed the experience of one of the participants. The one participant who did not have a personal e-mail address was from Nepal, a country not generally known for cutting edge technology. So, for the Nepalese participant, the home culture's scarcity of new technology may have contributed to not establishing a personal e-mail account, even though the technology was readily available in the community college culture.

#### Language Difficulties and Development

Language development was at the same time a blessing and a difficulty. Participants in this study found their opportunities to develop their English language skills while studying in the United States a great benefit to their personal growth. At the same time the language brought some particular difficulties. For some, the extensive use of slang by the American students created some challenges. The speed of speaking created some difficulties. These experiences are comparable to

suggestions made by Collingridge (1999) about the use of slang, vocabulary selection, and use of simpler vocabulary.

The language difficulties experienced by participants in this study were congruent with expectations based on the literature. Some foreign students experienced difficulties with the language academically and personally. It was also a common experience that the language skills improved over time with use.

#### Foreign Student Advisor

The participants in this study had favorable experiences with their foreign student advisors. The way the participants describe their FSAs is consistent with the descriptions of culturally competent counselors (Lee, Richardson, 1991) and congruent with the desired characteristics (Althen, 1995) for foreign student advisors.

#### Community Away From Campus

Barratt and Huba (1994) found that foreign students' positive evaluation of people from the community was related to the ability to communicate with Americans and develop relationships with Americans. The participants in this study generally held a favorable view of the

people in the community. However, there is nothing in the findings of this study to indicate that this favorable view of the community is directly attributed to the foreign students' ability to communicate and have relationships with Americans. There is nothing to contradict Barratt and Huba's finding, but nothing to directly and clearly support it either.

### Recommendations

This study leads to recommendations to foreign student advisors and administrators at community colleges, recommendations to the community, recommendations to the foreign students, and recommendations for further study.

#### Recommendations to Foreign Student Advisors and

#### Administrators

Recommendations appropriate to the findings of this study include recommendations for clear information, ongoing training for foreign student advisors and for faculty who work with foreign students, and recruitment of foreign students.

#### Clear information

Foreign students need to have easy access to information that is important to them. This included information about the college, Immigration and

Naturalization Services, and possible financial resources.

College information.

Colleges should make information clear to the foreign student as to policies, requirements and experiences at the community college. Make this clear to the potential foreign students as well as to current domestic students. With the popularity of the use of the Internet by foreign students, one approach could be to post information on the college's website in such a way that it is easy to find, easy to navigate, easy to understand for the foreign student. The webmasters must keep in mind that information needs to be presented in such a way that readers who are not familiar with the United States' educational jargon and educational culture will be able to understand the meaning of the content on the web page.

One personal application that this researcher is doing as a result of this study is to improve the content and ease of navigation on the web page for foreign students at the community college where the researcher works.

### Immigration and Naturalization Services information.

Immigration and Naturalization Services regulations are sometimes difficult to find and more difficult to understand. Colleges can present INS information as clearly as possible and easily available to foreign students. A link to the INS site can be placed on the foreign student advisors' web page. There is considerable confusion about new laws now in effect due to changes in immigration laws in recent years. Colleges need to do what they can to facilitate their foreign students' search for this information. The web address for Immigration and Naturalization Services is [www.ins.usdoj.gov/graphics/index.htm](http://www.ins.usdoj.gov/graphics/index.htm). The web address for the National Association of Foreign Student Advisors (NAFSA) is [www.nafsa.org](http://www.nafsa.org). These sites have very useful Immigration and Naturalization Services information.

### Scholarship information.

The community college can create a resource area that houses special information for foreign students' scholarships, so the foreign students can find that information easily and readily. There could be a web page on the Foreign Student Advisor's web site with links to information for foreign students' scholarships. Hard copies of the information could be in the college library

or some other suitable and appropriate location. This could include scholarships from private businesses, agencies of American government, international organizations, foreign governments, and anything else that can be imagined. This information about financial resources will provide a great service to the foreign students who need financial help.

#### Orientation for new foreign students.

This researcher recommends that the foreign student advisor or appropriate administrator at the community college implement a meaningful and thorough orientation for new foreign students. This can make the foreign student's adjustment to the academic and social culture less burdensome for the student. Better adjustment to the culture will lead to a better experience for the student.

#### Training

Training is recommended for foreign student advisors and for faculty who work with foreign students. Appropriate training can help improve the effectiveness of the advisor and the faculty, thus enhancing a positive experience for the foreign students.

### Training for foreign student advisors.

The foreign student advisor needs to know INS laws. This involves the FSA keeping up-to-date by attending professional conferences that are offered nationally and locally.

Issues related to the transfer of foreign students from community colleges into universities is important to the students. Foreign student advisors must be knowledgeable about transfer issues, including information about what courses transfer and INS requirements related to transferring.

Foreign student advisors need to know appropriate assessment and placement, especially in mathematics. Sometimes foreign students score low in math placement tests due to the measurements of inches, feet, miles, pounds, and other American units of measurement. Many foreign students know the metric system, rather than the American system. FSAs should give particular attention to the assessment test results used with foreign students. FSAs should take into consideration the foreign students' academic background in their home countries. If a foreign student can work calculus with ease, but has difficulty with the American measurements of inches, feet, ounces, pounds, rather than the metric

system, that student does not need to take an introduction to mathematics course. Advisors need to take assessment seriously, realizing that the typical approaches used in Colorado Community Colleges might not provide the most accurate placement when administered in the usual way. At the same time, advisors should not assume that a foreign student's low math placement score is necessarily incorrect. The low score could indeed be an accurate placement.

In summary, advisors' training needs to include information about Immigration and Naturalization Services regulations, transfer issue so as to facilitate the transfer process from the community college to a university, and appropriate assessment techniques which consider cultural and national differences.

#### Training for faculty who work with foreign students.

Appropriate language training may help faculty who work with foreign students to be more effective communicators. Faculty need to speak slowly and clearly, and avoid meaningless phrases and insincere greetings. This recommendation is applicable to all who work with foreign students, especially foreign students who are new to the United States. For some foreign students, language is not a problem. For others, it is a great

difficulty. Since there is no way to know a student's English ability by merely looking at him/her, the best approach is to speak slowly and clearly at first.

Faculty need to say what they mean and mean what they say. Avoid the meaningless phrases such as "How are you?" unless truly wanting to know how someone is.

Replace these meaningless phrase greetings with a more appropriate and true greeting. As a personal application of this study, this researcher now avoids saying "How are you?" whenever the researcher wants to merely extend a casual greeting. Instead, this researcher now simply says, "It's nice to see you."

#### Recruitment

Community colleges could help meet a great need in the world by advertising in third world countries. When finances are a real concern, such as for a student from a poor country, a community college is a great place to begin. In recent years this researcher participated in a discussion with many foreign student advisors in Colorado as to where to spend advertising dollars in trying to recruit foreign students to community colleges in Colorado. The consensus seemed to be to advertise in wealthy countries from which foreign students were already attending colleges in Colorado. Therefore, a

recommendation from this study is for colleges to advertise more in poor countries rather than just in wealthier countries. The students from poor countries would benefit from the economic value of the education acquired at a community college. This would be a philanthropic statement for the community college as much as a fiscal statement.

#### Recommendations to the Community

Community colleges can be catalysts for the development of social organizations for foreign students that are community-based rather than college-based. The importance of community-based organizations can be seen by the fact that the National Association of Foreign Student Advisors (NAFSA) has a section of the organization that is specifically dedicated to community organizations. Such community-based organizations can provide another opportunity for the foreign students to interact with Americans and with other foreign students from a similar culture as their own. This can be particularly feasible in locations where a university is located in the same community as the community college. The community organization can involve participants from both the university and the community college. The community college foreign students will have

opportunities to interact with foreign students from the local university. If such community organizations already exist in the vicinity of the community college, the foreign student advisor can take proactive approaches to involve the foreign students in these community organizations, and the community organization can take a proactive approach in involving students from the community college.

#### Recommendations to the Foreign Student

Some of the expectations of some foreign students seem unrealistic to this researcher. Some of the participants in this study believed that schools should provide transportation; schools should provide easy access to scholarship information so that the foreign students don't need to take any of their time to find such information; schools should take care of foreign students financially and guarantee jobs for them upon completion. In reality, these expectations are not usually provided for domestic students, and it is not realistic to expect that they will be provided for foreign students. The recommendation to these students is for them to find out what U.S. schools can actually offer to students, so as to have expectations that are more congruent with what they will actually encounter.

Foreign students need to realize that colleges and universities cannot arbitrarily disregard Immigration and Naturalization regulations or disregard state tuition regulations in order to help a foreign student. Foreign students are responsible for locating and selecting whatever kind of educational institutions that are most suitable for meeting the students' needs. Foreign students assume responsibility for funds in whatever way the funds are available to the student. In situations where accreditation is important, foreign students need to be sure to select appropriately accredited institutions. When planning to transfer, the student, either foreign or domestic, is responsible for selecting the school where he/she will transfer. When foreign students have questions about their academic plans, their specific courses, or other concerns, the student needs to assume responsibility for acquiring the information or the answers to questions. The foreign student advisor does not know that a student has needs or questions unless the student makes them known.

#### Recommendations for Further Study

This researcher recommends further qualitative study into the experiences of foreign students in community colleges in other states. This researcher anticipates

that the experiences will be similar in some ways and different in some ways based on the location of the other community college. In community colleges in New York or Miami where there are greater numbers of foreign students and nearby immigration ports of entry, the foreign students will likely have some differences in their experiences.

This researcher recommends further qualitative study into the experiences of foreign students in universities after they have transferred from a community college. The experience at the community college prior to transferring to the university might be impactful on the experience at the university.

Further study into the experiences of unsuccessful foreign students is recommended. The students in this study were academically successful, and in proper status with Immigration and Naturalization Services. This researcher has had personal experiences with foreign students who have not been successful academically, or are not in proper status with Immigration and Naturalization Services. The experiences of unsuccessful foreign students is beyond the scope of this dissertation; however, this is an area of study that deserves further investigation.

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