Project Title:
Diversity beyond Students: Families of International Students as Part of the Campus Community

Project Overview:
In Spring 2017 we were awarded a graduate research grant from the CSD in the amount of $1,500 dollars to fund our study on international students’ families, under the supervision of Dr. Maryam Hussain. With support from CSD and the Department of Political Science and International Relations, we sent out a survey to all of the undergraduate and graduate international students (N=2206) at UD on October 20, 2017, with five raffle prizes of $50 dollars to encourage participation. Following that, we organized an event for married international students at Perkins Student Center on November 1, 2017 with 19 participants. The survey had a response rate of 13.46% (N=297) and we recruited 10 interviewees, including students (n =3) and spouses (n = 7).

Finding Highlights:

Demographics:
• Among the 297 survey respondents:
  o 48% is female and 52% is male.
  o 50% is enrolled in a Ph.D. program, 29% in a Master’s program, and 21% in an Undergraduate program.
  o 77% is single and 23% is married, 10% have kid(s).
• Among the 10 interviewees:
  o 3 are married Ph.D. students, 2 females and 1 male.
  o 4 spouses have Master’s degrees, 1 spouse has Bachelor’s degree, and 2 have high school diplomas.

Social Engagement:
• Married students are significantly less likely to socially interact with American and other international students than single students.
• Female students are less likely to socially interact with American and other international students than male students.
• Graduate students are significantly more likely to socially interact with American and other international students than undergraduate students.

Financial Struggles:
• Among married students, students with spouses on F-2 visa are more financially vulnerable.
• Half of the married students with spouses on F-2 visa are financially dependent on their parents.
• More than 80% of the married students expressed that financial concerns play a big role in their social engagement.

Domestic Relationship:
• International students’ spouses, particularly those on F-2 visa, indicate being severely frustrated under the constraints of the work ban, which has led some students to question their decision to stay in this community.
• With most of the couples used to enjoy very equal domestic relationship, the impediments on spouse visa reintroduced the breadwinner/homemaker marriage model and thus the traditional gender roles.

University Policy:
• Spouses have no access to the Counseling center, and the access to the gym/library is conditional on membership fee since 2015.
• The provision of Medicaid for legal-alien in the State of Delaware is rarely known among international students. Instead, the healthcare plan they are offered costs around $4,000/person for the dependents.

Assessment of Project:

Goals:
• Impacting the university’s policies with regards to creating more space for international families.
• The cumulative knowledge development on the studies on international students and their spouses, particularly a group that has been long invisible in academic research.

Assessment:
• Through the meeting with the OISS Assistant Director Matt Drexler and the Community Outreach Associate Maria Ali, we fully communicated the struggles of international families. The project brief will be shared with OISS for improving the spouses’ engagement in the campus community.
• In total, we have written two papers out of this project:
  o *It is For Our Future: Families of International Students* was presented on April 7th, 2018 at the International Studies Association (ISA) Annual Conference in San Francisco, CA.
  o *It is For Our Future: Families of International Students* won the 2018 Excellence Research Award from the Department of Political Science and International Relations at University of Delaware.
  o *It is For Our Future: Families of International Students* will also be send out for the Best Graduate Student Paper Competition of 2018 ISA Annual Conference as well as to *International Studies Review* for publication during the summer.
  o The second paper, *Turning Back the Clock, Spouses of International Students in the US* will be sent to *International Feminist Journal of Politics* for publication during the summer.
• We will make a presentation to disseminate the findings of the project in the fall semester.