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Towards a More Welcoming Start for New International Students: Developing a Bus Service from NYC to Campus

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Author Note: Daryl Santos is a Professor in the SSIE Department and Vice Provost for Diversity and Inclusiveness. He has been working with Anemone and Purnendu, graduate research assistants, on efforts related to improving the experience of international students at Binghamton University on a variety of fronts.

Abstract: The State University of New York at Binghamton has a diverse population of students including those from 117 countries. A large percentage of our new international students typically arrive into the USA into one of the NYC area international airports, and those are a three to four hour drive from our campus. Once they land, they will have to go through immigration interviews, customs, etc., which may be increasing in the current political climate. Subsequently, the typical path is that the students then lug their baggage to a shuttle service of some type to get to a bus station (e.g., NYC Port Authority), go to the ticket counter to get their bus ticket to downtown Binghamton, and once reaching downtown Binghamton, then for those that come to campus, still need to take a taxi or bus. All the while, they are lugging their typically large numbers of bags, again, as new students that are studying abroad, between all of these modes of transportation. In Summer 2017, we have embarked on a pilot bus service that we hope will alleviate the burdens of travel associated with this method of arriving to campus and create a much more comfortable onboarding process. In this pilot program, the campus offered a daily bus service from JFK Airport to Binghamton University campus. Thus, the students only needed to transport their bags to the bus one time, with the next stop being campus. We provided this service at a price point that is significantly lower than the combined cost of the aforementioned services (shuttle, bus, taxi, etc.). It is our hope that by providing this service we create an initial, welcoming climate for all of our new international students. Testimonials of students that opted in for this service have confirmed its success.

Keywords: International students; onboarding; transportation service