

APA DIVISION 17
INTERNATIONAL COUNSELING
PSYCHOLOGY (ICP)

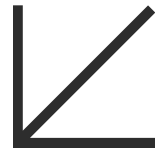
∟2025
**NEEDS
ASSESSMENT**

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01

OVERVIEW



Visa issues and access to resources are two major concerns for international students in the U.S., and such concerns were exacerbated by the policies proposed and enforced by the current administration. For this 2025 special project, we conducted a needs assessment focused on topics related to resources and visa issues for international scholars and students in the Clinical or Counseling Psychology Program. Our hope is to understand what are the current resources and gaps that Clinical and Counseling Psychology students are experiencing, whether programs feel competent in supporting their international students, and what students and programs need to improve the experiences of international scholars and students in the U.S.

Kayi Hui-Spears, PhD (Div 17 ICP U.S. based Chair)

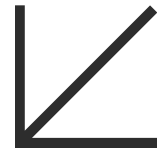
Bongjoo Hwang, PhD (Div 17 VP of International Affairs)

Finneas Wong (Div 17 ICP Student Representative)

Nishi Ravi (Div 17 ICP Student Representative)

02

METHOD



Two sets of online surveys were developed by the needs assessment team – one intended to be completed by Counseling/Clinical international PhD/PsyD students, and the other to be completed by training directors and department chairs of Counseling/Clinical PhD/PsyD programs. The 15-minute surveys were distributed via organizational listservs and at APA 2025. Data was collected during the months of May to September 2025.

SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND SCHOLARS IN CLINICAL & COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAMS

Call for Participants!

The International Counseling Psychology (ICP) Section of APA Division 17 is conducting a national needs assessment to better understand the resources, challenges, and visa-related issues that international students and scholars face in Clinical and Counseling Psychology programs.

We invite both doctoral students/scholars and program directors to take a short 15-minute survey to share their insights.





INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS & SCHOLARS

Are you an international student or scholar in a Clinical or Counseling Psychology doctoral program?

Scan the QR code above to take the student version of the survey!



PROGRAM DIRECTORS & CHAIRS

Are you a training director or department chair of a PhD or PsyD Clinical / Counseling Psychology program?

Scan the QR code above to take the program version of the survey!

WHY PARTICIPATE?

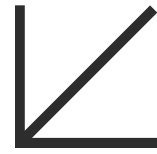
- Help shape policy and resources for future international students!
- Ensure that student voices and training perspectives are heard!
- Results will be shared in aggregate through the ICP newsletter - you can also request a copy!

Questions? Contact us: internationaldiv17@gmail.com

This is an informal, non-IRB approved survey. All responses are confidential and anonymous.

Recruitment flyer distributed at APA 2025.

03



RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

STUDENT RESPONDENTS

In total, 39 international students participated in the survey (M age = 29.98, SD = 5.11, range: 25–47). Most students (92%) reported they are currently on a F-1 visa. A majority of students were enrolled in a Counseling Psychology PhD program (84%), followed by Clinical Psychology PhD program (12%), and Counseling Psychology PsyD program (4%). The sample includes students at different stages of training as well as students who have completed their training.

Students were enrolled in programs in the following regions: Midwest (36%), Northeast (32%), South (28%), and West (4%). More than half of the sample came from East Asia (52%), followed by Southeast Asia (17%), South Asia (17%), Africa (5%), and North America (3%).

TRAINING/PROGRAM DIRECTOR RESPONDENTS

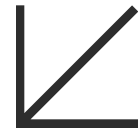
In total, 31 respondents participated in the survey, with 96% of them are program training directors (DCT). More than half of the respondents are currently in their first to third year of their position, and most of them reported their DCT terms being three years long. Program designation is as follows: Clinical Psychology PhD (38%), Counseling Psychology PhD (31%), Clinical Psychology PsyD (15%), Counseling Psychology PsyD (4%), and Other (12%). Respondents came from programs in the following regions: South (36%), Midwest (32%), West (20%), and Northeast (12%). On average, programs currently have 5 international students enrolled (range: 0–30), with most programs (88%) indicating that they have fewer than 10 international students currently enrolled.

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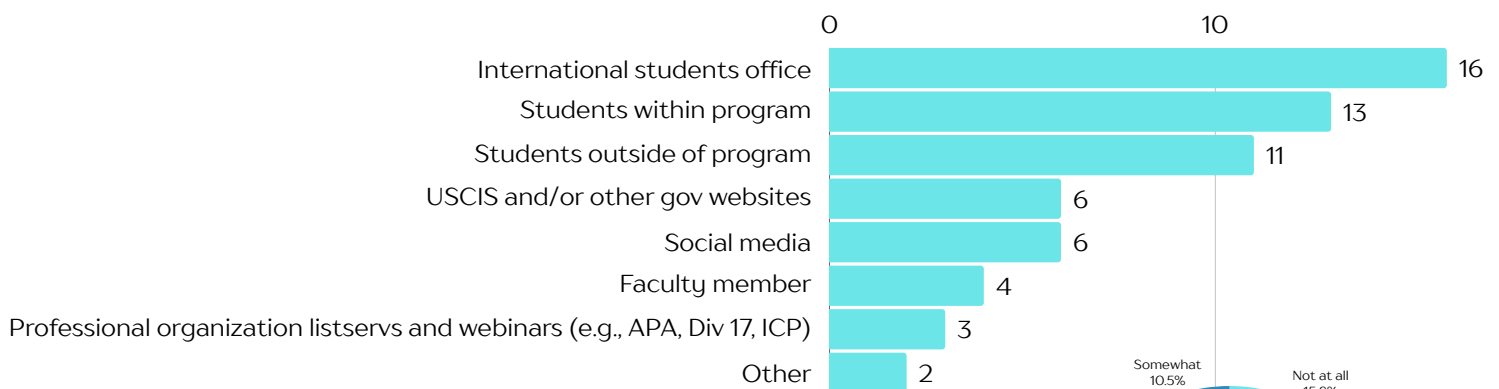
04
**STUDENT
LEVEL
RESULTS**

+ 2025 Needs Assessment

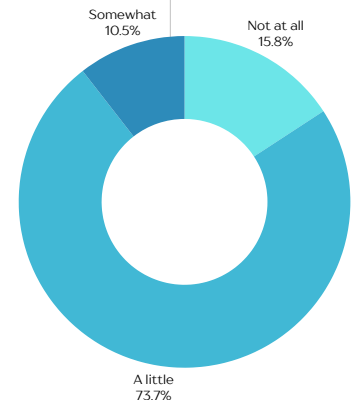
KNOWLEDGE ON POLICIES



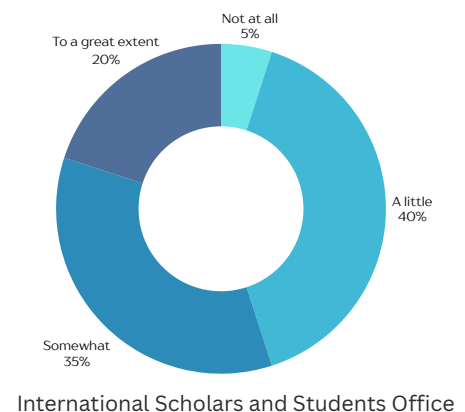
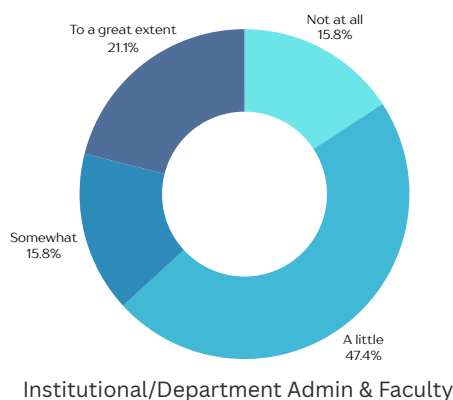
Students perceived themselves to be “somewhat” (80%) or “to a great extent” (20%) familiar with visa policies and regulations. They obtained information from various sources, with the international students office and fellow international students within their program as top choices.



However, students perceived that their institutional/department administrators and faculty have minimal knowledge of visa policies and regulations.



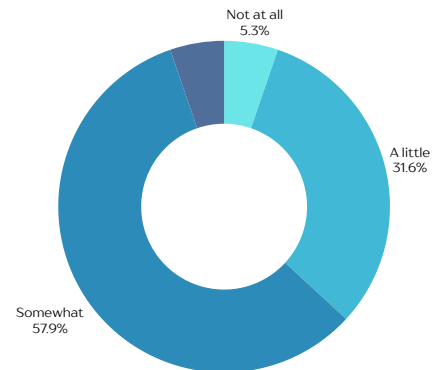
Students’ answers varied when asked whether institutional/department administrators and faculty as well as the international scholars and students office were helpful when navigating visa issues and concerns.



VISA CONCERNS & PROGRAM STEM DESIGNATION

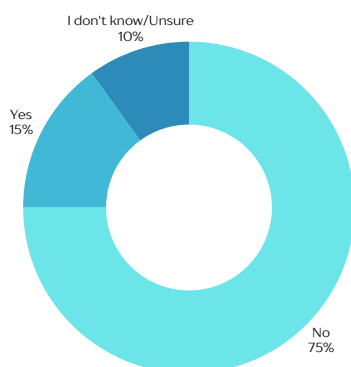


Under the current sociopolitical climate, more than half of the students expressed feeling somewhat (57.9%) worried about their visa status.

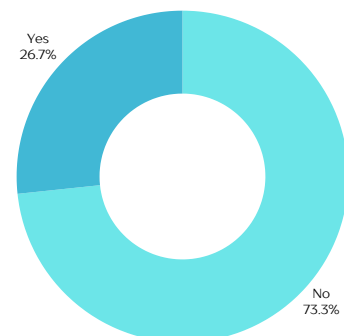


International students who graduate from programs with a CIP code that belongs to the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) STEM-Designated list are qualified to obtain STEM OPT extension, bringing their total OPT time to 3 years for any post-graduation training and job opportunities. DHS recently rejected the federal level petition by individuals from Div 17 and the APA Chief Education Officer to move Counseling Psychology's CIP code into the designated list. So far, some programs have successfully changed their CIP code to approved codes to benefit their international students.

When asked about their programs' CIP code status, students responded:



Program Currently STEM Designated



Program Working to Obtain STEM Designation

RECEIVING SUPPORT FOR VISA ISSUES & IMMIGRATION STATUS CONCERNS

When asked about what existing resources and support they have when navigating visa issues and immigration status concerns, students reported receiving support mostly from friends and individuals who have gone through similar visa/immigration processes. Students also indicated seeking help from sources such as the campus office designated for international scholars and students, academic advisors, and online resources.

Students also provided additional opinions regarding how they would like to be better supported in terms of visa concerns.

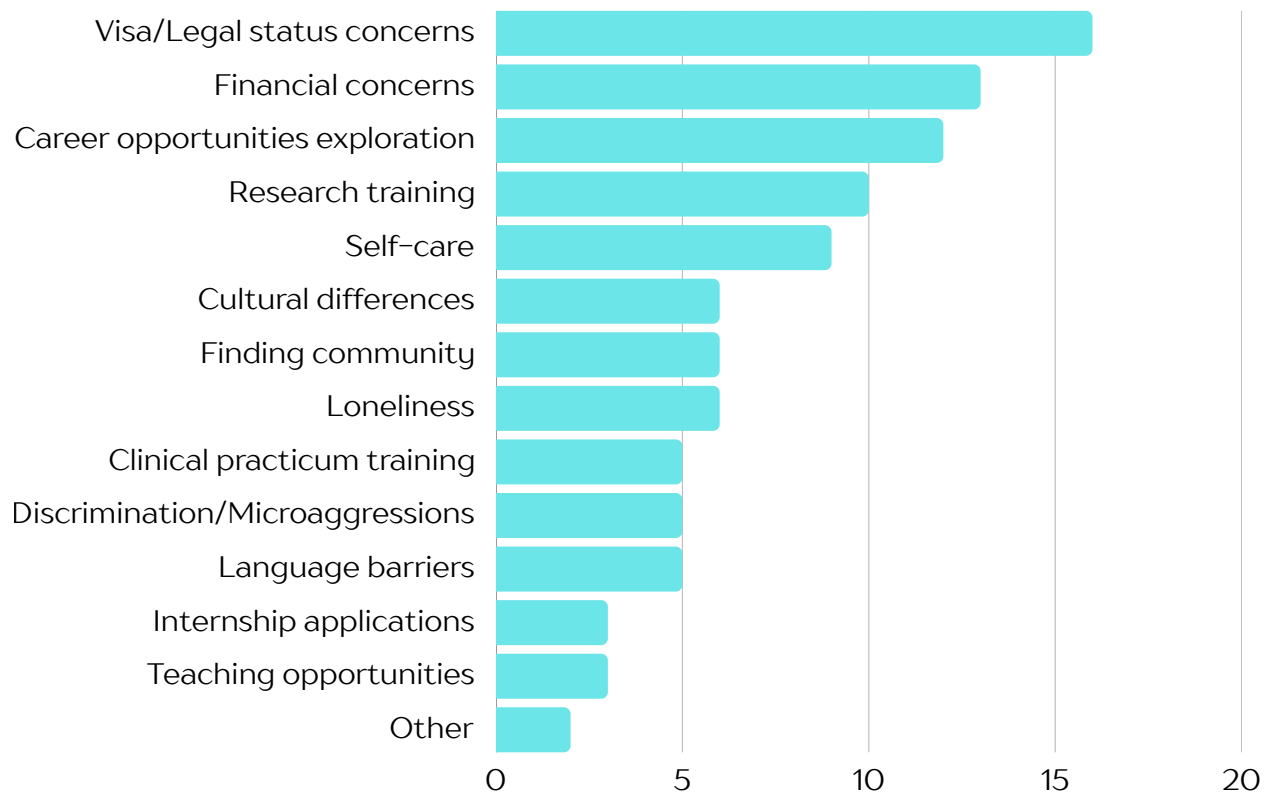
Responses included:

- A list of programs/internship sites/postdoc programs with detailed information related to visa policies (e.g., if the program is STEM-designated and qualifies for OPT-extension, length of post-doc position, visa sponsorship possibilities, funding limitations)
- General and official guidelines related to international student affairs are provided by APA to programs/DCTs
- Increase faculty/administrative personnel's knowledge on visa policies and restrictions
- CPT/OPT workshops across programs related to clinical practicum training and internship
- Directory of affordable immigration attorneys
- Consultation opportunities with immigration attorneys
- Scholarship opportunities

HOW TO BEST SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS?



While, as expected, visa/legal status concerns caused a lot of stress for international students, they also reported encountering other challenges and barriers when receiving training in the U.S.



*Research training: academic writing, academic presentations, research methods, publications

*Clinical practicum training: finding opportunities, clinical note/report writing, navigating bureaucracy

Students hoped that under the current sociopolitical climate, they could be supported in the following ways:

- Others being more supportive, aware, and informed about new/developing policies, and how these policies might impact international students
- Advocating for international students
- Receiving free legal consultation from universities
- Clear line of communication from universities and programs to avoid fearmongering and uncertainty

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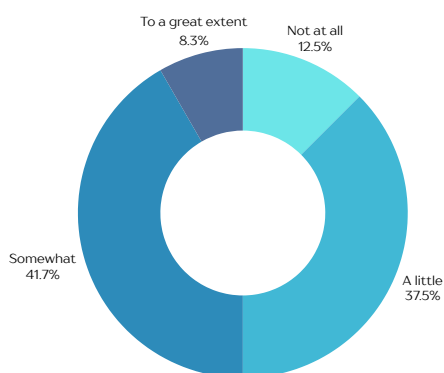
PROGRAM LEVEL RESULTS

+ 2025 Needs Assessment

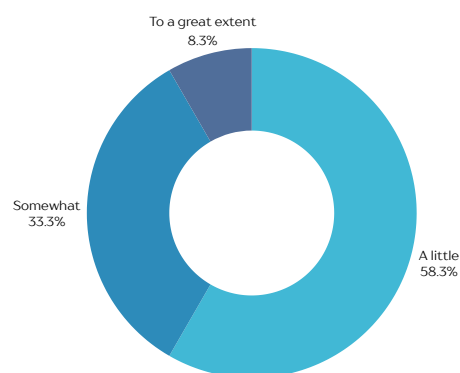
KNOWLEDGE ON POLICIES



Department chairs and/or program training directors perceived themselves to be “a little” (38%) or “somewhat” (42%) familiar with visa policies and regulations. Similar perceptions were given to their institutional/department administrators and faculty.

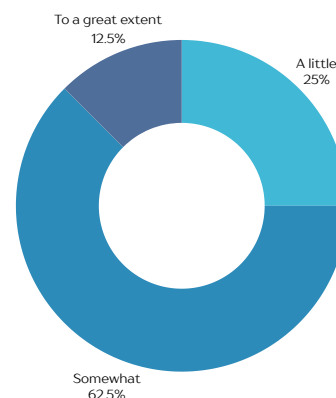


Department chairs/Program training directors

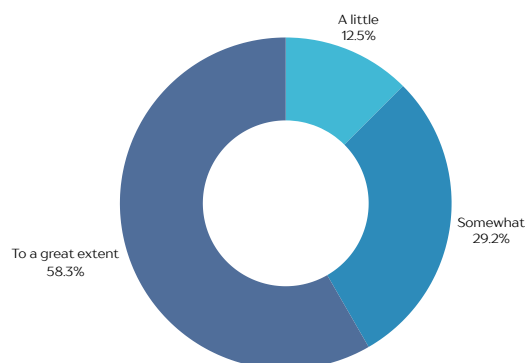


Institutional/Department Admin & Faculty

Generally speaking, department chairs and/or program training directors feel somewhat knowledgeable (63%) about how immigration policy changes and the political climate impact international students.



Department chairs and/or program training directors seem to rely and find the campus office designated to support international scholars and students helpful in navigating visa issues and concerns.



CHALLENGES AND SUPPORT FOR VISA ISSUES & IMMIGRATION STATUS CONCERNS



Programs reported that their international students encountered specific visa and immigration status challenges due to the current sociopolitical climate. The majority of the responses highlighted the emotional burden (e.g., fear, anxiety, stress, sense of limbo) around not being able to re-enter the U.S. after returning home, acquiring and retaining visa, sudden visa revocation, especially at transitional points, and uncertainty of the implementation of newly proposed policies.

To combat the stress and emotional burden on students, programs reported they offered meetings with students to provide emotional support as well as share resources. Some department chairs/program training directors have gone the extra mile to provide financial support for attorney consultations and engage in advocacy efforts. In addition, programs opt for connecting students to the designated campus office for international scholars and students for practical and logistical support.

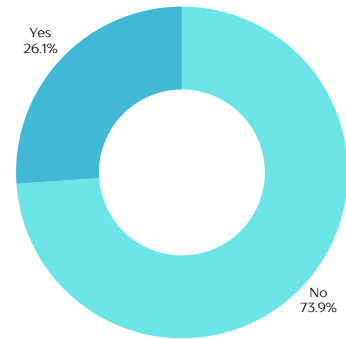
However, programs recognize that there are limitations to current efforts, especially when interacting with the university and campus office for international scholars and students, and would appreciate additional information to better support their students:

- Up-to-date repository of visa-related news, implemented policy changes, and proposed policy changes
- High-quality, personalized legal advice
- Listserv for questions and resource sharing to support students
- Concise A/V materials and infographics of key facts for distribution to students and faculty

PROGRAM STEM DESIGNATION



Of the department chairs and/or program training directors responded, 26% shared that their program is currently STEM-designated. All STEM designations were obtained post 2020.



Programs that went through the STEM-designation petition process did not report major obstacles other than bureaucratic stalls. However, they appreciated having other programs that had gone through the process as templates, as well as utilizing the CUDCP listserv for information and resources.

Below are some words of wisdom from programs that have completed the petition process to those that are currently navigating the petition process.

Reach out to other programs! There's a list that's been circulating on the Division 17 listserv that notes who's been STEM designated.

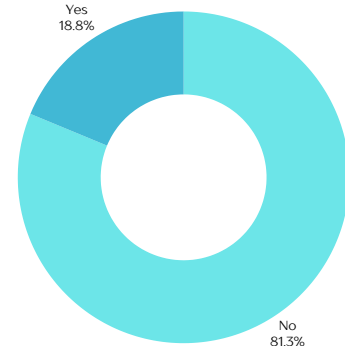
Be persistent and focus on the research that's done in your program.

I'd recommend getting resources from programs that successfully navigated this, as well as working to get support at all levels. Department chairs, etc., can step in if things get stuck higher up.

PROGRAM STEM DESIGNATION



Of the 74% of programs that currently do not have a STEM-designation, 19% are working to obtain STEM-designation.



Those currently working to obtain STEM-designation reported that the petition was prompted by their students, and by pursuing the petition, they hope to provide international students with more flexibility. Programs have either just started the process or have submitted their application to the Provost's Office for approval. However, a main obstacle encountered was that universities did not have a standardized petition process and had to create one on the spot.

Programs that do not currently have plans to pursue STEM-designation shared their considerations:

- Not a priority/not relevant due to students' career trajectory
- Previously relied on APA's efforts to petition to DHS
- Were informed that the program is not qualified for petitioning
- Were previously unaware of the possibility

We recognize that a recent policy change regarding certain STEM CIP codes affecting student loan eligibility for local students might induce hesitation in programs pursuing a STEM designation.

Regardless of how programs decide to move forward, we encourage programs to continue their support for international students during these challenging times rather than dismissing or deprioritizing their needs, and to consider ways to advocate and resist federal system controls over funding.

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PSYCHOLOGY (ICP)

06 **TAKEAWAYS**

+ 2025 Needs Assessment

DISCUSSION & KEY TAKEAWAYS



A knowledge gap, not just a perception gap. Students rate faculty/admin visa knowledge as minimal (73.7% say "a little"). DCTs' own self-ratings agree, as only 38–42% call themselves "a little" to "somewhat" familiar. Students' reliance on peers over institutional channels reflects a real gap and is not a misperception.

A support mismatch. DCTs report relying on the international office "to a great extent" (58.3%). Students rate it lower, most say "a little" (40%) helpful. Programs may be over-relying on referrals without confirming that they resolve student concerns. Programs are providing emotional support and referrals, but students want tangible, policy-level resources, a mismatch creating a clear supply-demand gap.

Where do needs converge? Both students and programs want an up-to-date policy repository and access to affordable/personalized legal support. Students additionally want STEM/funding transparency by program and CPT/OPT workshops; programs want shareable materials and a listserv.

STEM designation is uneven and new. Only 26% of programs are STEM-designated, all post-2020. DHS rejected Div 17/APA's federal petition to redesignate Counseling Psychology's CIP code, so programs must self-petition, often building the process from scratch. Access to the OPT extension currently depends heavily on the student's program, rather than on their merits or needs.

Bottom line

The current climate hasn't created new gaps so much as exposed existing ones. Students are compensating through informal networks; programs through individual DCT effort. Closing the gap likely needs Division 17/APA-level infrastructure, not just individual programmatic fixes.

RESOURCES



VISA & IMMIGRATION NEWS

- Immigration News & Updates (UMD ISSS) — <https://marylandglobal.umd.edu/global-learning-all/international-students-scholars/visas-immigration/immigration-news-updates>
- Sevis Savvy (CPT/OPT/STEM OPT guidance) — <https://sevis Savvy.com/>

NATIONAL DATA & GUIDELINES

- Higher Ed Immigration Portal — <https://www.higheredimmigrationportal.org/international-students/>
- Study in the States (F-1 Guide) — <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/guide/f-1/f-1-postsecondary>
- BestColleges International Student Guide — <https://www.bestcolleges.com/resources/international-student-guide/>
- EducationUSA 5 Steps to Study — <https://educationusa.state.gov/your-5-steps-us-study>
- JED Foundation Guide — <https://jedfoundation.org/resource/attending-college-in-the-us-as-an-international-student/>

BOOKS

- iTHRIVE by Lei Wang, Ph.D. — <https://www.amazon.com/iTHRIVE-International-Students-Guide-Thriving/dp/195372003X>

RESOURCES



FACULTY/STAFF GUIDES

- Faculty Support for International Students – <https://globaled.us/internationalization/faculty-support-for-international-students.asp>

FINANCIAL AID & SCHOLARSHIPS

- MPower Global Citizen Scholarship – <https://www.mpowerfinancing.com/scholarships/global-citizen>
- APA Dissertation Research Award – <https://www.apa.org/about/awards/scidir-dissertre?tab=2>
- Psi Chi Graduate Research Grants – <https://www.psichi.org/page/gradresinfo#.ZGLPvuzMLq0>
- APF Koppitz Fellowship – <https://apf.apa.org/funding/koppitz-child-psychology-fellowship/>

LEGAL HELP

- [Immigration Lawyers List \(Choi & Yakunina\) – https://docs.google.com/document/d/1rzS8hmLHCSY-A5MWBaLabUGP1U9Rr2zE/edit?usp=sharing&oid=116853438591883314379&rtpof=true&sd=true](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1rzS8hmLHCSY-A5MWBaLabUGP1U9Rr2zE/edit?usp=sharing&oid=116853438591883314379&rtpof=true&sd=true)

RESOURCES



TRAINING & CAREER

- Internship Training Sites Directory (AAPA) — <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1a4e5Z52f15e7plqKzD9Cb0iuh78JCx1asQ4Qs8IAfGY/edit?gid=278813288#gid=278813288>
- Travel Tips for Int'l Students/Professionals (Div 35) — https://drive.google.com/file/d/1W3TaSx7pbSTQKydlkDXDUw30tdnkJhG_/view?usp=sharing

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Div 17 International Section — <https://www.div17.org/international-section>
- Div 52 Student Page — <https://div52.net/members/students/>
- APAGS International Student Listserv — <https://www.apa.org/apags/resources/listservs/>
- APA Office of International Affairs — <https://www.apa.org/international>
- Global Psychology Alliance — <https://www.apa.org/international/networks/global-psychology-alliance>
- African Psychological Network — <https://www.africanpsycnet.com/>
- Korean Psychology Network — <https://koreanpsyc.wordpress.com/>
- Taiwan Psychology Network — <https://taiwanpsy.wordpress.com/>
- ACHPPI — <https://achppi.org/>

STEM-DESIGNATED PROGRAMS

- [List of STEM-designated programs](#)

RESOURCES



ARTICLES

- Ekanoye, A. (2020). Multicultural issues in supervision – supervising international counseling students. *Psychology and Behavioral Sciences*, 9(2), 12–26. <http://doi.org/10.11648/j.pbs.20200902.12>
- Knox, S., Sokol, J. T., Inman, A. G., Schlosser, L. Z., Nilsson, J., & Wang, Y.-W. (2013). International advisees' perspectives on the advising relationship in counseling psychology doctoral programs. *International Perspectives in Psychology: Research, Practice, Consultation*, 2(1), 45–61. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ipp0000001>
- Lau, J., & Ng, K.-M. (2012). Effectiveness and relevance of training for international counseling graduates: A qualitative inquiry. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, 34(1), 87–105. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10447-0119128-2>
- Lee, A. (2018). Clinical supervision of international supervisees: Suggestions for multicultural supervision. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counseling*, 40(1), 60–71. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10447-017-9312-0>

RESOURCES



ARTICLES

- Lee, H.-S., Knutson, D., Koch, J. M., Brown, C., & Keyes, C. (2022). The cross-cultural practicum training experiences of Asian international counseling students. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 50(6), 845-873.
<https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1177/00110000221100825>
- Garrison, Y., Yeung, C. W., Ho, Y. C. S., Hong, J. E., Son, Y., Lin, C.-L. R., & Bermingham, C. (2022). Linguistic minority international counseling psychology trainees' experiences in clinical supervision. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 50(6), 813-844.
<https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1177/00110000221094324>
- Xu, H., & Flores, L. Y. (2022). Facilitating the professional development of international counseling psychology students: Introduction to special issue. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 50(6), 754-763.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/00110000221092684>

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07 **APPENDIX**

+ 2025 Needs Assessment

APPENDIX A STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS



Appendix A

Student-Level Participant Demographics (n = 39)

Demographic	n (%)
Mean age (Standard deviation)	29.98 (5.11)
Region of Origin	
East Asia	12 (52.2%)
Southeast Asia	4 (17.4%)
South Asia	4 (17.4%)
Africa	2 (5.1%)
North America	1 (2.6%)
Gender	
Woman	21 (91.3%)
Man	2 (8.7%)
Program Type	
Counseling Psychology PhD	21 (84.0%)
Clinical Psychology PhD	3 (12.0%)
Counseling Psychology PsyD	1 (4.0%)
Region of Program	
Midwest	9 (36.0%)
Northeast	8 (32.0%)
South	7 (28.0%)
West	1 (4.0%)
Year of Training	
1 st year	4 (17.0%)
2 nd year	1 (4.0%)
3 rd year	4 (17.0%)
4 th year	7 (29.0%)
5 th year	3 (13.0%)
6 th year or above	3 (13.0%)
Completed training	2 (8.0%)
Current Visa Status	
F-1 Student Visa	22 (92.0%)
Permanent Residency (Green Card)	2 (8.0%)

APPENDIX B PROGRAM DEMOGRAPHICS



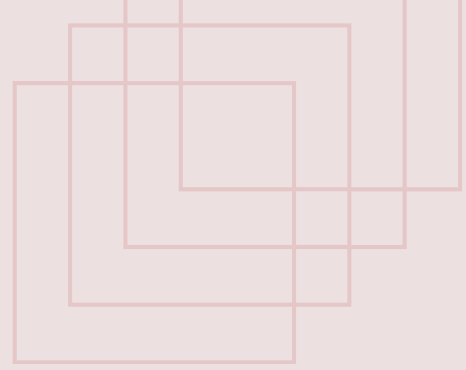
Appendix B

Program-Level Participant Demographics (n = 31)

Demographic	n (%)
Program Type	
Clinical Psychology PhD	10 (38.5%)
Counseling Psychology PhD	8 (30.7%)
Clinical Psychology PsyD	4 (15.4%)
Combined Clinical-Counseling Psychology PhD	2 (7.7%)
Counseling Psychology PsyD	1 (3.8%)
Clinical and Community Psychology PhD	1 (3.8%)
Region of Program	
South	9 (36.0%)
Midwest	8 (32.0%)
West	5 (20.0%)
Northeast	3 (12.0%)
Program Position	
Training Director/DCT	25 (96.0%)
Department Chair	1 (4.0%)
Length in Current Position	
Less than 1 year	4 (15.4%)
1-3 years	15 (57.7%)
4-6 years	3 (11.5%)
6 years or more	4 (15.4%)
International Students Currently Enrolled	
0	1 (3.8%)
1-10	22 (84.6%)
11-20	1 (3.8%)
21+	1 (3.8%)
Unsure	1 (3.8%)



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THANK YOU



For inquiries, contact
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