

IMPACTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL SERVICE PROGRAM  
AT UNIVERSITY OF OREGON: A MIXED METHODS  
PROGRAM EVALUATION

by

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## THESIS ABSTRACT

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Title: Impacts of the International Cultural Service Program at University of Oregon: A Mixed Methods Program Evaluation

In this study, I conduct a program evaluation of the International Cultural Service Program (ICSP), a scholarship program at University of Oregon which provides international students tuition remission in exchange for students giving presentations about their home country and culture in the local community and on campus. Through interviews, observations, and quantitative data, I assess ICSP's impact on the community as well as the international students who participate in the program. After highlighting the research-based impacts of ICSP, as well as the program's strengths and weaknesses, I provide recommendations for program improvement. This evaluation demonstrates that ICSP increases cultural awareness among ICSP students and community partners, positively impacts international student retention rates, and ultimately contributes to promoting peace across cultures—among a plethora of other benefits. This study incorporates best practices in program evaluation, and I conclude by providing a critique of the assessment process and suggestions for future studies.

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For the ICSP Family.

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION AND PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

This thesis explores and critiques a program evaluation of the International Cultural Service Program (ICSP), a scholarship program for international students at the University of Oregon (UO). Through ICSP, international undergraduate and graduate students receive tuition remission in exchange for giving presentations about their home country and culture to schools and organizations throughout the Eugene/Springfield community. Since its genesis more than 30 years ago, ICSP has served the dual purpose of sponsoring international students' academic pursuits at UO while offering international student presentations as a free resource to the surrounding community for promoting cultural awareness. The program currently comprises 35 students who represent 32 different countries among them.

**Researcher Context**

My involvement with ICSP began in Fall Term 2013, when I started my tenure as the ICSP Coordinator, a Graduate Teaching Fellow (GTF) position that complements my current pursuit of a Master's degree in International Studies and a Graduate Certificate in Nonprofit Management. As the ICSP Coordinator, I coordinate all the presentations ICSP students deliver in the community as part of their scholarship requirement.

Through my correspondence with community partner organizations and my observations of ICSP students, I began accumulating anecdotes of the program's impact. The

general consensus among stakeholders—myself included—was that ICSP provides invaluable service to the community and critical support to students in the program. Some made claims about ICSP's influence over the town-gown divide in Eugene, while others touted its contributions toward peace building across cultures; all applauded its efforts in fostering cultural understanding. Still, despite the program's database of 500 community partner contacts, I noticed the same few community partner names continuing to appear in emails requesting ICSP students.

While the program seemed to be doing good work in the community, I began to wonder just how well the program was being utilized. How else was the program impacting students in the program as well as community partners? How could ICSP grow its impact? What elements of the program currently act as hindrances to program expansion? These became important questions as I became more involved in the program—and hence more vested in the program's success.

To measure ICSP's impact on the community and its students, I decided to conduct a program evaluation of ICSP. I look to this evaluation as means of quantifying the program's impact through sheer numbers, and illustrating its impact through storytelling. These combined methods will demonstrate the program's impact and prove instructional for implementing recommendations for program improvement. Other factors contributed to the timeliness of this program evaluation, which are detailed in the following section.

### **Project Context**

In recent years, ICSP has dwindled in scope in terms of the number of students awarded scholarships. With the ever-rising cost of tuition and the static pool of funding, ICSP has tended toward giving larger financial awards to a smaller number of students. This has resulted in shrinking the overall number of ICSP students active in the program at any

given time; what was once a program of more than 50 students is currently a more modest collection of 35 students.

In an effort to measure the impact of the program and determine whether the program is worthy of advocating further funding to expand ICSP's reach, I have conducted a program evaluation of ICSP—an initiative that simultaneously serves my professional life in ICSP and acts as my Master's thesis project. The purpose of any program evaluation is to find value in the program; this particular program evaluation will examine the extent to which ICSP achieves its intended impact on the Eugene/Springfield community as well as ICSP students. The ultimate goals of ICSP are (1) to promote cultural awareness in the Eugene/Springfield community and (2) support international students in their pursuit of higher education in the United States.

In general, Eugene and Springfield are not communities that are overwhelmingly wealthy or privileged. The University of Oregon plays a unique role in drawing faculty, staff, and students to the university who generally represent higher levels of education and socioeconomic status than the average resident of Eugene/Springfield (US Census, 2013). This dichotomy represents what is commonly known as the "town-gown divide", which refers to the discrepancy or socioeconomic divide felt between the residents of the town in which a major university is located and the well-off students who attend and graduate (hence, graduation *gown*) from the university.

ICSP is one of the ways UO seeks to improve relations between local residents and the university. By offering the valuable resource of international students who are professionally trained to deliver presentations about their home country and culture—all at no cost to the community—the university is able to promote cultural awareness in its surrounding community while also demonstrating goodwill to its neighbors.

This resource of international students is especially valuable and unique in the setting of the Eugene/Springfield community because the average socioeconomic status of residents potentially precludes them from attending a 4-year university or spending extensive time travelling abroad. In 2013, Eugene’s median household income was \$42,167, and Springfield’s median household income was \$39,273, compared to the national average of \$53,046 (US Census, 2013). Therefore, ICSP students present a unique and rare opportunity for the majority of the Eugene/Springfield community to meet individuals from all over the world and experience some of the benefits of travel—including meeting people of different backgrounds, gaining new perspectives—without the financial burden of visas and international airfare.

ICSP’s ability to impact all corners of the Eugene/Springfield community in significant ways also decreases as the number of students in the program decreases. Therefore, the overarching goal of this program evaluation is to (1) assess the impact ICSP has on the surrounding Eugene/Springfield community (2) demonstrate the benefits, if any, ICSP students gain from participation in the program, and (3) identify areas for improvement in the program structure. With this information, I will make recommendations for structural improvements to the program while also providing evidence of the program’s achievements, which may be used in the future for garnering financial support for the program.

### **Research Objective**

My research objective is to conduct a program evaluation of ICSP which will:

- Identify impacts of ICSP:
  - On the Eugene/Springfield community

- On the University of Oregon’s campus
- On ICSP scholarship recipients (international students at University of Oregon)
- Identify areas for improvement in the program in terms of:
  - Community partner experience, both in Eugene/Springfield and on University of Oregon’s campus
  - International students’ experience

My research question is *What are the impacts of ICSP on its program participants and the local community?*

### **Thesis Statement**

Through this program evaluation, I will demonstrate that ICSP produces a wide range of positive impacts on students and community partners of the program, from increasing international student retention to promoting cultural awareness and ultimately building towards peaceful interactions between people of different cultures on a global scale. This evaluation will also reveal weaknesses of the program, but the presented challenges and subsequent recommendations for improvement will illustrate the program’s malleability, and potential for growth and even greater impact—contingent on the program’s effectiveness in addressing these challenges. I will argue ICSP provides a valuable and transformative service to the ICSP scholarship recipients, Eugene/Springfield community, University of Oregon’s campus, and international community at large. However, to realize its full potential and achieve the greatest possible impact, ICSP requires additional funding and staffing resources. This program evaluation will serve as evidence of the program’s deservedness of these additional resources.

### **Theoretical Context: Need for Intercultural Competence**

In today's globalized society, there is a growing emphasis on intercultural competence and the ability to appreciate, and excel in, a diverse environment (Ashwill, 2004). This skill set of cultural sensitivity is highly valued and relevant in daily social interactions as well as in the workplace. Higher education institutions across the country are responding to this developing need by promoting study abroad, marketing it as the optimal means of acquiring intercultural competence.

While travel is undoubtedly a strong learning tool, it is a relatively small percentage of Americans who pursue continued education, and an even smaller percentage of Americans who have the means and opportunity to study abroad (Pedersen 2009). Beyond that, where does this leave the remaining two-thirds of the population who have already passed the age of university, but are still living in the ever-diversifying United States? How can we train our young and old of every socio-economic status to develop the cross-cultural awareness necessary to thrive in an increasingly diverse country, let alone increasingly globalized world?

A NAFSA Strategic Task Force on Education Abroad report argues that it is essential for educators today to respond to the growing need of students to "live and work in the interconnected world"(2003). One of the best practice suggestions for developing intercultural competence is to include cross-cultural content in general education courses, even before the university level (Ashwill, 2004). The article depicts the urgent need for developing intercultural competence, calling on educators to "use every opportunity and means at their disposal" to foster a greater global awareness among students.

An opportunity for this exchange can be found in the higher education system. Colleges and universities across the United States are heavily recruiting international students for their financial benefit to institutions in terms of tuition, but also for their

contribution to the diversity of campus. These students represent an invaluable resource of knowledge and understanding, but are often under-utilized by host institutions and their surrounding communities. ICSP is one example of engaging international college students to enrich American communities' cross-cultural competence.

The articles referenced in this section illustrate a need for increased cultural competence in American communities and the opportunity for partnership that exists within the higher education system. This program evaluation will examine ICSP as the missing link between these two realms—a link which addresses the need for cultural awareness while also producing additional benefits to both the community and students in the program. The impacts of ICSP include fostering cultural awareness and understanding in American audiences, but they are not limited to this single benefit. I will first describe the program in greater detail and lay the framework of this program evaluation. Then, I will explore further academic literature in the Theoretical Linkage & Literature Review section, which will delve into the many researched benefits of program structures akin to ICSP.

## **Program Description**

### *Demographics*

At the beginning of the 2014-2015 Academic Year, ICSP was made up of 39 students from 33 countries; after two terms of a few students graduating, program participants currently (in Spring Term 2015) total 35 students from 32 countries. At the beginning of 2013-2014 Academic Year, ICSP was made up of 43 students from 36 countries; but Spring Term 2014, this number was reduced to 40 students from 35 countries.

### *Program Selection*

The ICSP selection process for the following Academic Year begins in January, with an average of 200 students who apply to receive the scholarship. Both undergraduate and

graduate students are eligible to apply for ICSP. The ICSP Selection Committee—which includes the Director of ICSP, the ICSP Coordinator, a current ICSP student, and several other faculty and staff members from departments across campus—reviews all the applications, and selects approximately thirty students to be interviewed. The top 8-12 students from the interview pool are selected to receive the scholarship, and 2-3 students are put on a wait list in the event another awardee declines the offer.

Scholarships are awarded in the form of tuition waivers; the scholarship does not offer any hard cash which can be used for living expenses, purchasing textbooks, etc. Each student receives a tuition waiver for a designated number of credits for every term (excluding Summer Term) until the student completes their degree. For example, a student could receive an ICSP award of 12 credits, which indicates that ICSP will cover the cost of tuition for 12 credits per term, every term (again, excluding Summer Term) until the student completes their degree. Once students are accepted into ICSP, they remain in ICSP until they graduate; there is no annual re-application process for funding. The size of each student's award depends on the student's financial need, so not all students receive the same amount of tuition assistance. Regardless of the student's scholarship amount, the same program requirements apply to all ICSP students.

#### *Program Requirements*

In exchange for their tuition waivers, ICSP students are expected to maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 and complete a certain amount of cultural service in the local community. This cultural service commonly takes the form of ICSP presentations, which are delivered in schools and organizations throughout the Eugene/Springfield community, as well as on the University of Oregon's campus. ICSP presentations can include, but are not limited to: lectures about the student's home country/culture, student panels, foreign language conversation, traditional dance or music performance, cultural clothing fashion

show, storytelling, and personal interviews. ICSP students present both individually and in groups.

Undergraduate students are required to complete 80 hours of cultural service, while graduate students are required to complete 66 hours of cultural service.

### *Requesting Process*

Anyone can request an ICSP student presentation. To do so, individuals must contact the ICSP Coordinator to explain the details of the presentation. The ICSP Coordinator then reviews ICSP students' schedules to find which student(s) fit the requester's needs and are available during the requested time. The ICSP Coordinator then relays information about the presentation to the selected ICSP student(s), and the student(s) in turn contact the requesters to confirm their participation.

The ICSP Coordinator maintains records of all ICSP student requests in a database. Once the requests have been completed, the ICSP Coordinator sends an electronic form to the requesters, where they can submit feedback about the ICSP presentation. The feedback is then sent back to the ICSP Coordinator, who forwards any feedback received to the appropriate ICSP students. If the feedback forms contain negative comments, the ICSP Coordinator will follow up directly with the requester to address any concerns.

### *Other Program Components*

#### i. Fall Seminar

Once students are admitted to ICSP, they must participate in the Fall Seminar, which is a 10-week course during Fall Term designed to orient the new cohort of ICSP students to the program structure and requirements, best practices in public speaking, and techniques for connecting with and understanding the wide variety of American audiences ICSP students will present to throughout their tenure in the program. The Director of ICSP and the ICSP Coordinator co-instruct this class.

ICSP students have the opportunity to practice their presentation skills in this class, and their peers provide feedback. The new cohort also observes model presentations of current ICSP students, who visit the class to present and share about themselves. As much as it is instructional, the Fall Seminar also provides a space for new and continuing ICSP students to connect with one another on a personal level.

Throughout the term, we also invite regular requesters to speak to the Fall Seminar class about their experience with ICSP. These community partners share helpful tips and pointers for connecting with their respective populations, and ICSP students are free to ask questions. These visits are typically followed by larger class discussions of this population's place in American society. For example, we discuss the American practice of housing the elderly in nursing homes, which can be shocking and even culturally disturbing for some students. A major component of the Fall Seminar is orienting ICSP students to American culture, and processing the differences and culture shocks that arise from this introduction.

#### ii. Mentor Program

During the first few weeks of Fall Term, new ICSP students are assigned a continuing ICSP student to serve as their mentor. Mentors and mentees are asked to meet in-person at least once during the term to get to know one another, and then mentees are asked to attend and observe one of their mentor's presentations. Mentors are also asked to attend their mentee's final presentation in the Fall Seminar, and provide support and feedback throughout the preparation process for that presentation.

#### iii. Saturday Meetings

Near the beginning and end of each term, all students and staff in ICSP gather for a two-hour meeting on campus. Lunch is provided for the first half hour of the meeting, and then the ICSP Coordinator and Director of ICSP use the remaining hour and a half to facilitate a variety of ice-breakers, group activities, important program announcements,

small- and large-group discussions, and recognition of graduating students. These meetings are meant to facilitate a relaxed environment where ICSP students can come together as a large group and connect with one another. Attendance at Saturday Meetings is mandatory for all ICSP students, and this time counts towards their annual hours requirement for the program.

#### iv. Winter Retreat

During Winter Term, ICSP staff and students participate in an all-day retreat. The retreat is planned by the ICSP Administrative Assistant & Publicity Coordinator, a paid work-study position which is held by a current ICSP student. The purpose of the Winter Retreat is to foster group cohesion and bonding, so the day is filled with team-building exercises, fun group activities, and a potluck lunch. The retreat usually takes place on campus, but in a different setting from the Saturday Meetings. As with Saturday Meetings, Winter Retreat attendance is mandatory for all ICSP students, and this time counts towards their annual hours requirement for the program.

## CHAPTER II

### PROGRAM EVALUATION

#### **Evaluation Assessment**

In order to assess ICSP's impact on the community and students, I will rely on adaptations of three program evaluation models: (1) SWOT analysis, (2) storytelling, and (3) quantitative analysis. To inform my assessment, I will use a combination of interviews with ICSP students and community partners; observations of interactions, presentations, and communication with ICSP students as well as community partners; and quantitative data regarding ICSP students' presentations and requesting community partner organizations. I will describe my program evaluation methods in greater detail in the Methods section.

As the ICSP Coordinator since Fall 2013, I have had in-depth exposure to many aspects of this program, as well as established working relationships with ICSP students and community partners alike. From these interactions with ICSP's stakeholders, I have conducted interviews with students and community partners, as well as gathered first-hand observations of the program's functions. I also have access to all the data pertaining to the number and nature of ICSP requests and corresponding community partner organizations. These combined data sources provide ample material to assess the program's impact during the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 Academic Years. Given these circumstances, it is appropriate that I conduct a program evaluation of ICSP.

A more desirable option would involve a longitudinal study of the program's impacts. This could involve assessing audience members' cultural competence before and after attending ICSP presentations; the same assessment could be done of ICSP students before entering the program and upon graduation. Surveys of community partner organizations could show trends of town-gown relations over time. Interviews with alumni of the program would also bring insights into the program's long term effects on individuals' career paths and life choices. However, given time constraints and available resources for this project, this evaluation will focus on the two Academic Years previously mentioned, during which time I have served as the ICSP Coordinator. I will include recommendations for future studies later in my discussion of the Critique of Program Evaluation Process section.

### **Logic Model**

In a program evaluation, a Logic Model is a measure used to identify all the components of the program being evaluated (McDavid et al, 2013). *Inputs* are the first aspect of a Logic Model; this is a list of all the resources that are allocated and contribute to the program. *Outputs*, the second component of a Logic Model, numerate the aspects of the program which can be measured quantitatively. The program's *outcomes* define the desired results of the program's combined *inputs* and *outputs*. *Outcomes* are divided into short-term, intermediate-term, and long-term outcomes. For the purposes of this thesis, *short-term outcomes* will be defined as results the program produces roughly within the first 3 months; *intermediate-term outcomes* will be defined as results the program produces from 6 months to 3 years; *long-term outcomes* will be defined as results the program produces after 5 or more years.

### *Inputs*

The inputs, or resources that are allocated and contribute to the program, in this evaluation include the staff members who support this program; ICSP students, themselves; the University of Oregon at large; structural elements of ICSP, such as the Fall Seminar; and the local community.

The staff members associated with ICSP are the first of many inputs. The Director of ICSP and myself, the ICSP Coordinator, are the primary staff members affiliated with ICSP. The ICSP Administrative Assistant & Publicity Coordinator is a student worker position held by a current ICSP scholarship recipient. As international students, ICSP students are also supported by all the staff members in International Student & Scholar Services in the Office of International Affairs.

The ICSP students themselves are an input as they make the program possible through the cultural service they perform throughout the community. Without the students, ICSP would cease to exist.

The University of Oregon at large acts as an input, as it provides students the opportunity and resources necessary to pursue the academic subject of their choice while also designating annual fixed amounts of tuition remission for ICSP scholarship recipients. UO is a source of knowledge for ICSP, and also for collaboration in a wide range of fields. Not to mention, UO provides the budget that makes ICSP possible.

During Fall Term, the ICSP Fall Seminar serves as an input, as it orients ICSP students to best practices in public speaking and affords ICSP students the chance to practice and prepare for the interactions they will have with community partners in their ICSP presentations.

Other inputs include the community partners in the surrounding areas who provide ICSP students the opportunity to share their culture through presentations with a wide

range of audiences. These community partners vary in nature from traditional K-12 public schools, to alternative schools, to senior homes, to community groups, to campus organizations, to college classrooms, to major festivals or events.

### *Outputs*

The out puts, or aspects of the program which can be measured quantitatively, include student demographics; students' attendance at Saturday Meetings and the Winter Retreats; the total number of presentations delivered in the community, as well as the total number of hours students spend preparing and delivering these presentations; and the number of ICSP's community partner organizations, as well as the total of those who actively request ICSP presentations.

Collecting data on student demographics, such as the number of students in ICSP and the number of countries they represent, can serve as outputs. Students' GPAs may also count as an indication of students' academic success.

ICSP Fall Seminar attendance can count as a measure of first-year student participation and engagement in presentation preparation; it can also be a measure of students' access to close mentoring and guidance from ICSP staff members, who offer support in personal and academic challenges. The same can be said of measuring Saturday Meeting attendance.

Looking towards the community impact, outputs include the total number of presentations given by ICSP students in an academic year, as well as the total number of hours ICSP students spend preparing for and delivering ICSP presentations.

The number of requesters is an indication of how many community partners take advantage of ICSP's services; the categorization of each community partner and their

frequency of request (K-12 school, senior home, UO-affiliated class/organization, or other) is also telling of which audiences ICSP reaches most frequently.

### *Outcomes*

Through implementing the listed inputs and outputs, certain outcomes can be expected as a result of ICSP. While short-term and medium-term outcomes may be more tangible, the long-term outcomes of ISO will be more theoretical in nature and increasingly difficult to quantify.

The short-term outcomes (0-3 months) of ICSP include the successful completion of presentations in the local community. From these presentations, we can also expect an increase in knowledge of different cultures and countries among ICSP presentation audience members.

For intermediate-term outcomes (6 months – 3 years), we can expect to move from increased knowledge of other cultures to actually developing intercultural competence among all stakeholders of ICSP, but particularly among students in the program who are continually learning from their diverse group of peers.

We can expect ICSP students to strengthen their public speaking skills and confidence presenting before large groups—as well as increase their comfort interacting with a variety of audiences—through presentations.

Due to the presence of close mentoring and guidance from ICSP staff members, as well as peer support from other ICSP students in the program, we can also expect to see increased retention rates among students in the program. Students' participation in ICSP should also result in a sense of community and belonging for students.

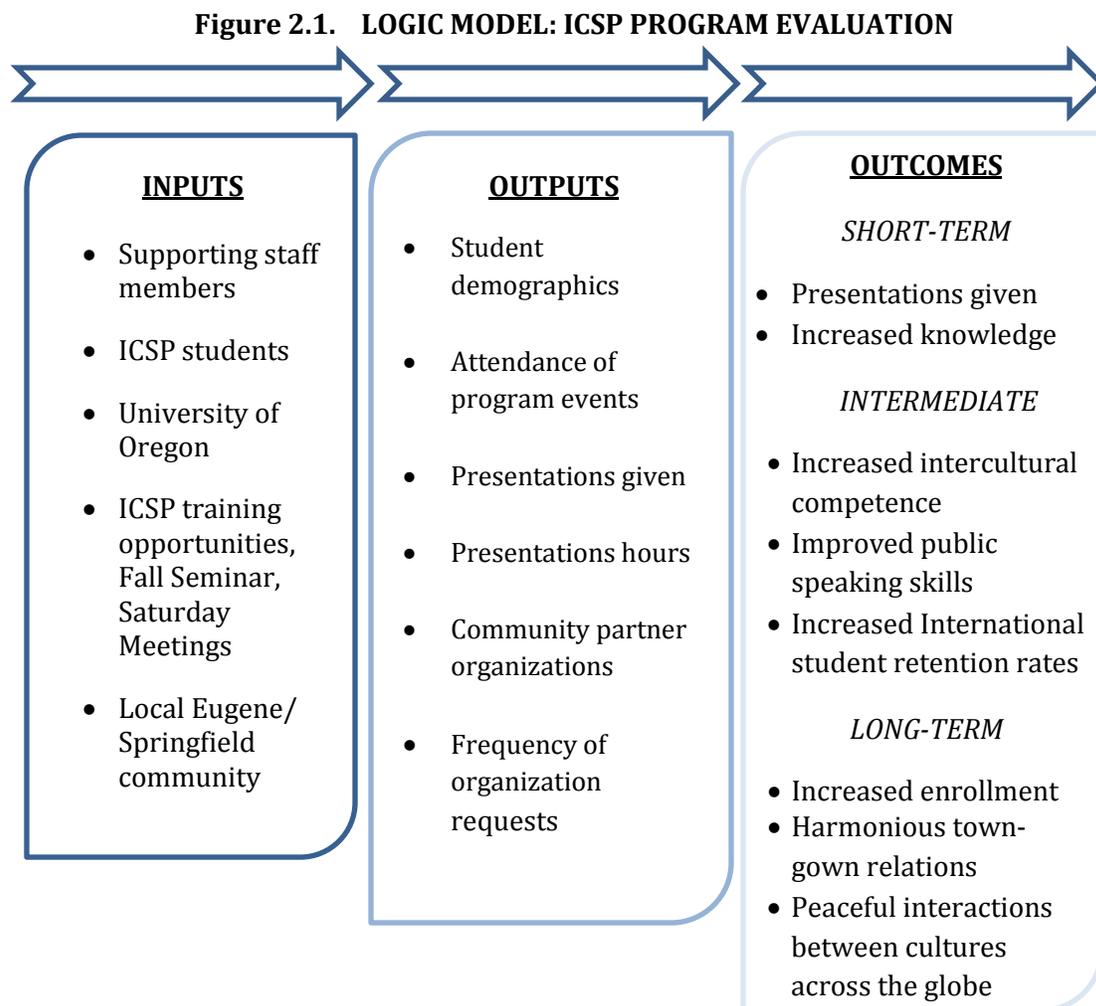
In the long-term (5+ years), the work of ICSP should strengthen the town-gown relations between Eugene/Springfield and the University of Oregon. In addition to those

improved relations, there should also be greater cultural understanding among the local community.

Positive experiences with ICSP students as University of Oregon affiliates may also result in increased university enrollment over time, among both local students and international students. Alumni donations to the university may also increase as a result of students' positive experiences in and/or with ICSP.

Moving to a more global scale, through ICSP fostering cultural understanding and further educating young adults who are motivated to return to their country and make a difference, ICSP can build the foundation for a world without conflict.

The logic mode described above is displayed visually in Figure 2.1.



## **Theoretical Linkage & Literature Review**

The purpose of this section is to provide theoretical backing for the claims made in the Logic Model. While ICSP can claim responsibility for many outcomes, the following articles will act as supporting evidence that these claims are reasonable and legitimate.

### *Student Retention*

In a study of an Australian university's student support services for Chinese students, research upheld the notion that the issues international students face in a foreign cultural and academic environment are complex and difficult to solve (Brydon & Liddell, 2012). The study concluded that international students are best assisted in these challenges by meeting with academic staff face-to-face and in a variety of formal and informal settings. These interactions are believed to foster feelings of trust and belonging for international students in a foreign environment; this allows them to perform better and gain access to resources, which ultimately lead to solutions to the students' challenges (Brydon & Liddell, 2012).

According to this study, ICSP is positive in that it establishes an opportunity for every single student in the program to be closely mentored by the Director of ICSP as well as the ICSP Coordinator, who both provide guidance in personal and academic issues, thus creating that sought-after face-to-face interaction with academic staff (Brydon & Liddell, 2012). This provides support for the logic model's claim that the output of students' Fall Seminar and Saturday Meeting attendance will result in the long-term outcomes of international students feeling more integrated and comfortable on campus, as well as improved GPAs and graduation rates among international students.

In another study regarding lower retention rates among Latino/a students in urban universities, research indicated that students receiving support from significant people in their lives had a higher likelihood of graduating (Torres, 2006). Particularly, having a

significant role model of the same ethnic background proved especially impactful for Latino/a students (Torres, 2006). This research greatly supports ICSP's model of establishing a mentor program, as well as generally promoting a group dynamic where ICSP students rely on their peers in the program for support, even calling them "family." While not every ICSP student can have a role model in the program that is from their same country or ethnic background, at least they share the similar circumstance of being an international student. According to the research, this support network should have positive impacts on ICSP students' retention rates.

A study exploring the factors at play in academic success among minority students of traditionally lower graduation rates showed the great impact of involvement in campus organizations. Among African-Americans and Latino/as, students who participated in clubs on campus were six times more likely to stay enrolled in classes than those who did not participate in clubs (Baker & Robnett, 2012). These statistics are staggeringly in favor of ICSP's model as a type of university-initiated group that provides a sense of belonging for students.

It is also important to note here that the previous two articles involved studies of domestic minority students, and not international students. While it is inappropriate to consider ethnic minority students akin to international students, domestic minority students and international students do share the common experience of being a minority population in the US higher education system. Acknowledging that each group faces different sets of challenges, there is still room for certain principles to be applied to both populations. Studies specific to international students should also be consulted to confirm these claims.

### *Intercultural Competence*

There are two prominent levels of cultural awareness recognized in the field of international education. Intercultural sensitivity is known as “the ability to recognize, respect, and discriminate cultural differences and different points of view” (Bennett 1993). In other words, Intercultural Sensitivity marks the beginning stages of awareness and appreciation of cultures and perspectives different from one’s own. Intercultural competence is defined as “the ability to interact with people from other cultures, acting intercultural appropriate ways” (Hammer et al., 2003). This moves the needle a bit farther, indicating an individual’s ability not only to recognize different cultures, but to effectively interact and exist within the boundaries of other cultural norms.

In order to develop both intercultural sensitivity and intercultural competence, experts agree that it does not suffice to simply send individuals abroad (Janeiro et al, 2011). In the book *Developing Intercultural Competence and Transformation*, the author emphasizes the importance of meaningful interactions between study abroad students and host nationals in developing intercultural competence (Savicki, 2008). The same principle can be applied to American audiences interacting with members of ICSP; it is not enough to simply see photos of another culture, but audience members need to have meaningful interactions with ICSP students in order to increase their ability to relate to other cultures. Given the kinds of interactions both community partners and students describe experiencing through ICSP presentations, these two groups can confidently claim to engage in meaningful interactions. Therefore, this literature supports the claim that ICSP students, through their presentations, engage in meaningful interactions with community members, and thus foster intercultural competence in their audience members.

Other experts in the field state that in order to foster intercultural competence, programs must “contribute to the development of five global cultural competencies: cultural

consciousness, cultural self-awareness, global mindset, and the abilities to lead and negotiate in multicultural teams” (Ashwill, 2004; Cant, 2004). As is evidenced in ICSP student interview responses below, ICSP students claim to foster *cultural consciousness*, *cultural self-awareness*, and *global mindsets* through their presentations in ICSP; community partner testimonies support these claims, as well. By these standards, research and interview responses combine to legitimize the assertion that ICSP fosters intercultural competence in audience members.

Scholars from Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla (UPAEP University) stake their claim as advocates of developing intercultural competence as a form of peace building. They state, “The development of intercultural competences in undergraduate students and faculty members will prepare them to respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as promoting the understanding, acceptance and friendship among all nations” (Janiero et al., 2014). In this quote, scholars directly link the facilitation of intercultural competence with *friendship among all nations*. This supports the long-term projected outcome that the work of ICSP will ultimately contribute to the making of a world with peaceful interactions across cultures.

### *Town-Gown*

An article on best practices in town-gown relations states that campus leaders should focus on a “psychologically significant set of issues that can impact effort and comfort levels in ways that build agreeable partnerships over time” (Gavazzi et al, 2014). The university provides a valuable service—individually-tailored presentations from international student speakers— to schools and organizations around the community, free of charge. This contribution to the education and enrichment of the surrounding community qualifies as a *psychologically significant* initiative, thus aligning with the town-gown

relations best practices described in this article. Since ICSP has been in existence for more than 30 years, it also serves as a long-standing partnership between the university and the Eugene/Springfield.

The article goes on to explain the optimal circumstances for developing positive town-gown relations: “More harmonious town-gown relationships become possible when leaders balance the pursuit of shared goals with a healthy respect for those individual objectives that are uniquely important to each partner” (Gavazzi et al, 2014). Best practices for town-gown relation do not involve the university dictating what they presume to be the needs of the community; instead, the university should offer resources, but respect the priorities of the community. By this assertion, ICSP is also in line with best practices of positive town-gown relations as it offers a free service that can be easily adjusted to fit the needs of each community partner; it is not a program of students with a pre-programmed, university-set agenda, and community members can choose whether they want to partake in this free service without the threat of negative repercussions from the university.

The best practices listed above provide clear indications that ICSP fosters positive relations on the *town* end of the spectrum, but research also provides evidence for ICSP’s structure building positive rapport on the *gown* end of things, as well. A university in Ohio conducted a study of an urban engagement course which brought college students to visit sites and organizations around the community, as well as interact with at-risk high school students through an afterschool program—not unlike ICSP’s structure of sending students to different organizations to interact with members of the community.

The article acknowledged that in general “college students’ contact with the community often is minimal and typically is limited to their own academic discipline” (Dardig, 2004). Yet, after students had regular engagement with the community and its citizens through this course, students expressed increased positive feelings towards the

community, “deeper understanding of community resources” and new interest in ideas or causes they previously had not explored (Dardig, 2004). The article also mentioned that students from out of state or international students enjoyed learning about the community through these interactions. ICSP student responses, which will be discussed in greater detail below in the Results section, reflect learning outcomes similar to those found in this study. This supports the projected outcome that ICSP’s structure promotes harmonious town-gown relations—in this case, ICSP is particularly well-suited for improving college students’ perceptions of the local community.

The structure of ICSP falls in line with research-based best practices for building positive town-gown relations. Not only does ICSP cater to the needs of the local community on behalf of the university, it also brings university students out into the local community and fosters positive interactions between the two groups.

### *Summary*

The literature reviewed in this section supports the projected outcomes outlined in the Logic Model above, including ICSP’s fostering of intercultural competence, improving town-gown relations, strengthening international student retention, and ultimately promoting peaceful interactions between cultures around the globe. While others’ research provides theoretical evidence linking these positive outcomes to ICSP, I will now turn to my own research to demonstrate the positive outcomes of ICSP. In the sections that follow, I will describe my research methodology and then explore the themes that emerged through my interviews with ICSP students and community partners.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

In this section, I will explain the details of my research methodology. My research draws on my own observations in the program as well as interviews with ICSP students and community partners. I admit a larger study encompassing data from the entire program's history would provide for a more holistic program evaluation. Seeking feedback from alumni of the program would also provide important insights into the program's long-term impacts on ICSP participants. However, those initiatives are beyond the scope of this project. There is also missing data on the program's structure before the requesting process moved to an electronic system in the early 2000s, making it increasingly difficult to evaluate the program prior to that transition. Hence, for the purposes of this thesis, I will focus on ICSP's impact on students and community partners between Fall Term 2013 and Spring Term 2015.

#### **Observations**

As the ICSP Coordinator since Fall 2013, I have had intimate exposure to many aspects of the program. This repeated exposure has informed my understanding of the program's impact on students and on the community.

Through the ICSP Fall Seminar, I observed how ICSP students began to form bonds with their peers in the class, and began to rely on one another for support and help navigating the challenges that come with being an international on University of Oregon's

campus. I also observed how returning ICSP students, who visited the class to give model presentations, acted as mentors and role models for the new cohort of ICSP students.

In the Fall Seminar's guest lectures from regular requesters, I observed how ICSP's community partners value the work of ICSP and the cultural diversity and awareness ICSP students bring to their classrooms and organizations. This appreciation was also reinforced through feedback forms submitted by requesters following ICSP students' presentations.

I regularly have short conversations with ICSP students about everything from personal issues to school work to ICSP-related questions. In these conversations, I have noticed a pattern of students' struggles to balance the demands of university life with ICSP requirements, as well as making ends meet financially.

I have also attended a wide range of ICSP presentations throughout my time as the ICSP Coordinator. I observed the powerful connection that can be made between ICSP students and their audiences; I witnessed high school students reflecting on the ICSP student's message and perspective in the halls following the ICSP presentation; I also observed certain mechanical elements of ICSP students' presentations that detract from their effectiveness as presenters.

Through all of these interactions and observations, I began to have a sense of the program's strengths, weaknesses, and impacts on both ICSP students and community partner organizations. While I maintained my own observations of the program, I wanted to further explore these observations by conducting interviews with ICSP students and community partners to measure their observations and experiences against my own perceptions. Therefore, I will use my observations as the ICSP Coordinator to inform this program evaluation, but I will also rely heavily on interviews conducted with ICSP students and community partners.

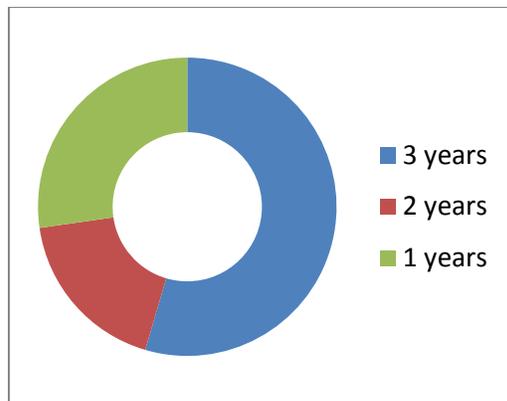
## **Interviews**

### *Students*

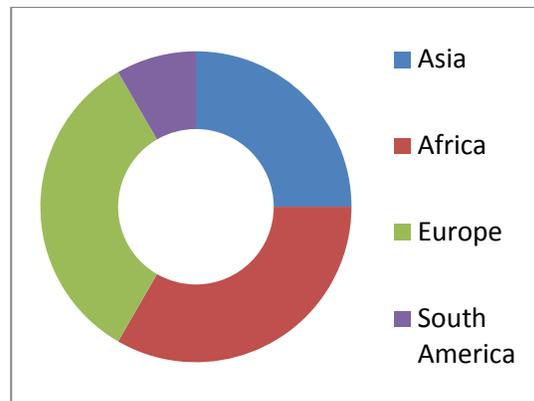
A total of 14 current ICSP students were invited to reflect on their experience with ICSP in an in-person interview and offer any feedback to improve the program. Of the 14 students contacted, 11 students responded and participated in in-person interviews.

Of the 14 students solicited for interviews, I selected a variety in terms of the geographic areas the students represented and their length of time in the program. Of the 11 students who participated in interviews, six (6) students have been in the program since Fall 2011, two (2) students since Fall 2012, and three (3) students since Fall 2013 (see Figure 3.1). I interviewed three (3) students from Asia, three (3) students from Europe, four (4) students from Africa, and one (1) student from South America (see Figure 3.2).

**Figure 3.1. STUDENTS' NUMBER OF YEARS IN ICSP**



**Figure 3.2. STUDENTS' GEOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION**



I contacted students by email and provided context for my thesis, while also inviting them to participate in an interview. Although the emails were sent from the ICSP Coordinator email account—which students typically associate with assignments for their scholarship requirements—I emphasized this was optional and had no impact on the students' scholarship or general participation in ICSP. I was careful not to be coercive, again,

because I wanted students to feel comfortable speaking openly about their experience with the program—its good and bad aspects alike. In the initial email invitation, I also included the list of interview questions in an attachment so students could preview and prepare for the content of the interview.

All interviews were conducted in-person at coffee shops on the outskirts of campus. These locations were selected for student convenience and also for their casual and non-work-related environment. I wanted to encourage students to feel at ease and to speak openly about their experience in the program.

All interviews were recorded with my iPhone, which was placed casually on the table between us. The interviews were semi-structured in that I had a set list of questions I worked from and took notes on throughout the conversation. However, I adjusted the order of the questions for each interview, based on the direction of the conversation. Occasionally, I also omitted certain questions if I felt the student had already spoken to its content in their response to another question. I also asked follow-up questions as needed, but generally tried not to interrupt students' responses. Below is the list of questions for ICSP student interviews:

*What's your name, where are you from, and how long have you been in ICSP?*

*Describe your life in your home country before coming to the US. How and why did you come to pursue a degree at an American university?*

*If you were not here at UO in ICSP, where would you be? What would you be doing?*

*How has ICSP impacted you – professionally, academically, personally?*

*Can you talk about one experience you've had in ICSP that really sticks out as being profound, meaningful, or memorable?*

*Why do you think the work of ICSP is important?*

*What do you think your impact has been?*

*What have you learned from ICSP? What can you do now that you couldn't do before you were in ICSP?*

*What are the strengths of ICSP?*

*What are the challenges of ICSP, or what has been the most challenging aspect of ICSP for you?*

*What would you recommend be changed in the program?*

*How could ICSP have a greater impact – both on the community and on its students?*

*Where do you see yourself in 10 years? What will you be doing? What are your career and life goals?*

Interviews ranged in length from 16 minutes to 80 minutes, depending on the student's depth of answer and discussion. The average student interview length was 35 minutes. I developed these interview questions based on a combination of program evaluation methods: storytelling and SWOT analysis.

Storytelling is a form of program assessment that “accommodates diverse voices and perspectives” and serves as a “sophisticated form of ‘meaning-making’” (Sukop, 2007). Given the diversity of both ICSP students and community partners—the latter of which will be further described below—I chose this method for its effectiveness in communicating the impact of ICSP across different experiences.

The article *Storytelling Approaches to Program Evaluation: An Introduction* suggests conducting an interview with open-ended questions about the individual's background, involvement with the program, and how the program is impacting them—all as means of helping the individual tell their story (Sukop, 2007). The article also suggests recording interviews and transcribing them later. I adhered closely to these principles as I designed and implemented the first three-quarters of the interview questions provided above.

I adapted the last quarter of the interview questions from a more traditional program evaluation method of SWOT analysis. A SWOT analysis involves asking program stakeholders the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the program (Bryson,

2011). This form of program evaluation is helpful in identifying a program's *distinctive competencies*, which are those services or impacts which the program produces and which are not easily replicated by other programs (Bryson, 2011). SWOT analysis helps to identify the program's value, in terms of what the program has to offer stakeholder, and it also clarifies the implications for program strategies for the future. As Bryson explains, "Being clear about what *is* can be an extraordinarily helpful prelude to discerning what *ought* to be" (2007). I incorporated elements of the SWOT analysis methodology to further identify program impacts and develop recommendations for program improvement.

These methods combine to provide a compelling narrative of ICSP's impact, while also spelling out the program's strongest points and areas for improvement. Regardless of the slight variation in order and content of questions, all students who participated in interviews were given the opportunity to speak to their experience with ICSP, what they have both contributed and gained from participating in the program, and what how the program can be altered for greater impact.

### *Community Partners*

Given my experience working with community partners as the ICSP Coordinator, I personally selected 10 requesters who I felt were representative of the variety of requests ICSP receives. Of the 10 requesters I contacted through email, eight (8) responded to my invitation to participate in an interview and provide feedback; I received replies from all respondents within three days. The response rate and time both speak to the positive rapport ICSP holds with its community partners; I took these individuals' eagerness to take time out of their busy schedules as a strong indication of their appreciation of ICSP and the services it provides to these community partner organizations.

I chose a variety of requesters in terms of relatively new requesters (1 year) all the way to long term requesters (12 years), and several who fall somewhere in between those two extremes. Although the eight organizations represented in these case studies are not representative of ICSP's requesters in terms of proportions, they are representative in the sense they span the gamut of the different kinds of community partners with whom ICSP works. Among the organization types represented in the case studies are senior homes, at-risk youth facilities, K-12 schools, early childhood care facilities, UO classrooms, and community colleges.

In-person interviews were conducted for 20-40 minutes with each of the eight community partners, and the interviews were recorded with my iPhone. The average community partner interview was 25 minutes. Below is the list of questions for community partner interviews:

*Describe your experience with ICSP.*

*What have you gained or learned from experiencing ICSP presentations?*

*What was your most profound or meaningful ICSP experience? What did you take away from this?*

*What is the impact of ICSP?*

*What are the strengths of ICSP?*

*What are the weaknesses or challenges of ICSP?*

*How could ICSP have a greater community impact?*

*What is cultural competence/diversity awareness—the work of ICSP—important?*

*Any final thoughts or feedback you wanted to share?*

These interview questions were adapted from storytelling and SWOT analysis program evaluation methodologies, as described in the previous section. Some interviews were conducted in coffee shops around campus, while other interviews were conducted on-

site at the community partner organization. The on-site interviews provided a great deal of insight as to the populations served at these organizations as well as the nature of the neighborhood in which the organization was located. Some observations from these on-site visits will also help construct the analysis of each community partner site and the perceived impact ICSP has at this facility, as well as in the given geographic area at large. It is important to state here that it may have been a disadvantage for some organizations *not* to include a site visit as part of the impact assessment. Please account for these factors when considering the following discussion.

### **Data Processing**

I applied best practices in conventional content analysis to process the data collected from interviews. In conventional content analysis, themes are derived directly from the text data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). It is with this framework that I will further describe my methodology for deriving results from the qualitative data collected.

For both ICSP students and community partners, I took notes of the conversation on a printed list of questions during the interviews. I also went back and listened to each interview a second time and took notes, bullet-pointing the conversation and transcribing significant quotes verbatim.

After typing up an outline and note-worthy quotes from each interview in a Word document, I reviewed the responses to each question and eliminated bullet points of details that I determined to be irrelevant. I coded each bullet point and quote with the initials of the corresponding interviewee, and then cut and paste all the relevant data into one master document. Interview participants' responses were organized by question.

After compiling all the relevant data, I went through each question and listed my initial impressions of the recurring themes for each questions. I then organized each bullet

point and quote into thematic categories, and created new categories beyond the initial themes that stood out to me, as needed. Using the identifying initials in front of each bullet point, I was able to list how many individuals spoke to a particular theme.

As I continued compiling data, there were certain themes that rose to the surface as recurrent and significant. For the purpose of this thesis, I will focus on these themes which were most prominent throughout all the interviews; I will also briefly make mention of certain less prominent themes which I found to be surprising, intriguing, or noteworthy.

### *Statistical Data Collection*

To quantify the impact of ICSP, I collected data from the program's records, which help illustrate the impact of ICSP on the community. I referred to the program roster and records of students' graduation dates to in order to compile data on how many students were in the program at a given point and how many countries were represented among them. Students' service hours are tracked every year through their completion of timecards; I accessed this data as well to include in my evaluation. I also referred to records kept of all the requests that were sent during both 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 Academic Years; I used my knowledge of each community partner to classify each community partner as a K-12 school, UO-affiliated organization, senior facility, or other requester. With these classifications, I compiled data regarding which types of requesters work with ICSP, and which organizations request ICSP students most frequently. All of these numbers will be reflected in the Program Statistics section below, as quantitative evidence of ICSP's impact on the community.

## *Reliability & Validity*

When employing different methods in program evaluation, it is important to consider the reliability and validity of each method. A method's reliability refers to the fact that it measures the same thing over time (Gelmon et al., 2005). A method's validity refers to the fact that it actually measures what it claims to measure (Gelmon et al., 2005). I discuss the reliability and validity of my methods below.

### i. Reliability

There are several factors which support the reliability of my interview methods. For both ICSP student and community partner interviews, I used the same set of questions, so all interview participants had the opportunity to speak to the same set of issues. I was also the only person conducting the interviews, so there was no danger of student responses being interpreted differently by different individuals. I recorded all interviews and deduced my findings by comparing notes I took during the original interview with notes I took while listening to the interview recording at a later date, thus reducing the risk of interpreting answers differently over time, or somehow altering responses through faulty memory. I also contacted all interview participants by email and attached the interview questions at the same time so that they had time to prepare and reflect on their answers in advance; this reduces the risk of responses being influenced by individuals' mood on the day of their interview.

My observations act in a supporting role in this program evaluation. This observation method is reliable because I primarily identified themes or outcomes of the program based on interview responses, and then used my observations to further develop the themes already identified. I recorded my observations in writing prior to conducting interviews, so my observations are not influenced by the interview responses.

My method of quantitative data collection is reliable because data such as the number of students present in the program and number of requests per year are indisputable facts that were all recorded throughout each academic year. This data cannot be altered in any way, and it accurately reflects the program's quantitative outcomes.

## ii. Validity

In terms of the interview methods, I designed the interview questions specifically to address validity. Questions about students' personal growth and improvement, as well as impact on the community, were asked directly as they pertain to ICSP. This reduced the risk of falsely correlating outcomes with program inputs. Furthermore, the literature explored in the Theoretical Linkage & Literature Review section above supports many of the findings that emerged from student and community partner interviews. Through interview responses, there is also ample "evidence of clear association between program activities and outcomes", which is another indicator of a method's validity (Gelmon et al., 2005).

The same measures of validity can be applied to my methods of observation and quantitative data collection. Both means are directly linked to ICSP and cannot produce outcomes that could be linked to other programs because ICSP is the only program of its kind on the University of Oregon's campus, in terms of the program's structure for tuition remission, financial support, mandatory community service and public speaking training. My observations and data collections are only associated with ICSP, so it is not possible to link these outcomes to another program. My role as the ICSP Coordinator and subsequent knowledge of the program also provide face validity, an added layer of expertise.

Given the explanations above, I assert that my research methods are both reliable and valid, thus legitimizing the findings of this program evaluation. My research findings will be explored in the following sections.

CHAPTER IV  
RESULTS: ICSP STUDENTS

**Interview Questions: Storytelling**

*Student Backgrounds*

When asked about life in their home country and their decision to pursue their studies in the United States, ICSP students' responses revealed several surprising themes.

i. Social Networks

Six students of the 11 students interviewed (54%) mentioned having some connection to the United States within their social network—be it family in the US, contact with Americans living the student's home country, or friends who have studied or had knowledge of studying in the US—as a primary factor in students' decision to pursue their studies in the US. In terms of international student recruitment for universities in the US, this theme has major implications; in this small sampling of ICSP students, the majority mentioned that having a personal friend or family connection to the United States was a driving factor in their decision to study in the United States. This speaks to the power of personal connections, familial ties, and word of mouth in university recruitment. From an insider perspective, I can also attest to the fact that the ICSP Selection Committee views familial ties in the US as an asset to a student's application, as it provides an extra level of security should the student struggle emotionally or financially while in ICSP at the University of Oregon. While certainly not all ICSP students have this connection, it is worth acknowledging that this is a factor on both sides of the decision-making process—for the

ICSP student and ICSP Selection Committee alike—to attend university in the US and participate in ICSP.

#### ii. Previous Study in US

Five of the 11 students interviewed (45%) made note of their previous study in the United States—prior to coming to the University of Oregon—as another important piece in their journey to becoming part of ICSP at the University of Oregon. Several students attended community colleges in the region, while others attended high school or participated in a high school exchange program in the United States. This theme is telling in two ways: from the data, it is clear that ICSP students with previous study in the US are inclined to continue their education in the US. From an insider’s perspective, I also know that the Selection Committee for ICSP views previous experience studying in the US as a good indicator of the applicant’s ability to successfully adapt to the rigor of American university life while also meeting the demands of the ICSP scholarship. Either way, it is important to mention that ICSP students represent a mixture of students (1) who come directly from their home country and (2) who have been studying in the US for a while since leaving their home country.

#### iii. Freedom of Choice

Six of the 11 students interviewed (54%) also listed the freedom to study their subject of choice as a major reason for coming to the United States for higher education. Several of these students described the education system in their home country as “extremely competitive” or “corrupt”; others explained regulations in their home country’s education system that dictated their field of study or made it difficult to switch subjects at an older age. One student said of her original field of study in her home country, “I knew could achieve something good... but not in this [field of] study.” Some students also

mentioned an admiration for the “dynamic” and “unconventional” learning environment in American classrooms, and an appreciation for the uninhibited freedom to pursue the education of one’s choice as their reason for pursuing higher education in the US.

Perhaps most surprisingly, when asked what they would be doing if they had not been selected to participate in ICSP at the University of Oregon, eight students (72%) said they would be studying at another university in another country. This was a shocking statistic since the mantra among the ICSP Selection Committee members when choosing the following year’s ICSP participants is always “We are giving access to higher education to those who would otherwise not be able to afford it.” The data from this study indicates that many ICSP students would still have access to higher education; the caveat is that they would not have access to higher education *in the United States* without financial support from ICSP.

Many of the eight students who said they would still pursue higher education elsewhere also mentioned they would be unhappy or dissatisfied with the education they would receive in another country, either because of their disinterest in the field of study or because of the quality of education. This was a surprising and important distinction to realize that for the students interviewed, ICSP is not the yes-or-no answer to whether the students have access to higher education; instead, ICSP is the yes-or-no answer to whether students have access to *meaningful, quality* higher education *in their subject of choice*.

Although this background on students’ home countries and decision-making processes are not directly related to the structure of ICSP, these themes are noteworthy because they provide context for the opportunity ICSP creates for international students; these themes also begin to paint the picture of the type of international students that make up ICSP.

### *Impact on Students*

Two questions regarding (1) what ICSP students learned from ICSP and (2) how ICSP impacted them produced similar themes. I will explore the most prominent themes that rose to the top with these questions, but I will also delve into certain themes that were mentioned by a smaller number of students, but still marked a pattern of interesting and inspiring outcomes. Students' responses reveal that ICSP students experience the following impacts from their involvement with ICSP: increased intercultural competence & sensitivity, personal growth, professional development, academic support, improved public speaking, confidence, ability to interact with diverse populations, and the opportunity to celebrate individuality.

#### i. Increased Intercultural Competence & Sensitivity

Of the 11 students interviewed, nine students (81%) indicated they have grown in cultural competence and sensitivity as a direct result of their participation in ICSP. While the terms *intercultural competence and sensitivity* were not necessarily mentioned in every interview, students used phrasing such as “more understanding”, “more aware of different perspectives”, “more interest in getting to know people of other cultures”, and “having this open mind”—all of which I have placed under the umbrella of developing intercultural sensitivity and competence, which scholars define as a curiosity about other cultures coupled with an ability to understand, appreciate, and even adopt perspectives different from one's own perspective (Bennett, 1993; Deardorff, 2009). One student summarized ICSP's impact by saying, “You become a global citizen really, it just opens your mind to new ideas and new concepts.”

There are several layers to developing this intercultural competence and sensitivity. First, many ICSP students pointed to their interactions with American audiences in ICSP

presentations as being transformative experiences in terms of learning to appreciate different perspectives. One student described previously getting upset when audience members would ask ignorant questions, but now after two years in ICSP she sees those awkward moments as opportunities to share her culture shed light on misconceptions. Another student described this similar transformation from before ICSP to now: “Having this open mind to share my culture and learn from other people – it’s amazing.” From students’ responses, the opportunity to interact with audiences of different backgrounds in ICSP presentations has proven to be fertile ground for developing intercultural competence and sensitivity, as scholarly research would also support. As one student summed up, “Being in the community, being in the ICSP, as the overall one thing I would say is it helps you understand to always look at the other side.”

Secondly, ICSP students also look to their peer participants in the program as sources for fostering intercultural competence and sensitivity. In addition to learning from American audience members, many of the ICSP students interviewed spoke to the enriching impact of being part of a group of their peers from all over the world. Throughout the program, everyone from the Director of ICSP down to the students try to ingrain this sense of ICSP students as a family. One student spoke to this notion of ICSP as a family and his experience as a member of that family: “It trains you to look at things differently, do things differently, or to appreciate different things.... it helps you to become a better person just being in this family.”

Another student volunteered that being in ICSP has helped her to look beyond the surface of different cultures and dig for deeper understanding. She describes how ICSP has emboldened her:

*Daring to ask certain questions like “Why do you wear the hijab? Why do you cover? What does that mean for women? Why is fetching water [...] why is that a proud thing for women in your country?” I feel comfortable asking that [...] I don’t feel I could ask that to any other person in a non-embarrassing way.*

In this quote, the student also describes ICSP as a safe place for learning and asking uncomfortable but important questions about other cultures. This again speaks to the impact of ICSP being a powerful agent for spreading intercultural competence and sensitivity among the program’s members. I will explore later how this impact is experienced by ICSP’s community partners as well as by ICSP students.

As a bi-product of developing intercultural competence and sensitivity, three students (27%) in particular expressed that being in ICSP has helped them examine their own culture and learn more about their home country. Although only three students brought this up in the interviews, this is a theme I hear in conversation with students over and over again—in preparing for presentations, ICSP students are forced to learn about specific aspects of their culture that they might not otherwise have explored. Scholars agree examining one’s own culture is a major part of developing understanding of other cultures (Deardorff, 2009), so this, too, falls under the umbrella of developing intercultural competence and sensitivity.

## ii. Personal Growth

Seven students (63%) described experiencing various forms of personal growth as a result of being in ICSP. This personal growth meant different things for each individual. Several students described their personal growth in broad terms “developing in all around way” or generally becoming a more well-rounded person. Others described more specific attributes, “From my peers, learning about kindness and humility and compassion.” One student said, “I am so mature I feel like compared with my age of my peers – I feel I am a

mature person – this is what ICSP did to me”. Another student stated, “I take ICSP[...] as a life education, not just getting a degree.”

All of these anecdotes share the common thread of personal growth. ICSP students largely represent college-aged individuals, but also include nontraditionally-aged students. ICSP students’ responses reflect that involvement in ICSP promotes personal growth in a variety of ways, regardless of the individual’s stage in life.

### iii. Professional Development

In addition to personal growth, seven students (63%) also labeled ICSP as a great source of professional development. Many students mentioned through organizing and delivering presentation in public to a wide range of audiences—representing themselves, their university, and their country—they have learned “commitment”, “respect”, “how to be responsible”, and “the importance of preparing”. One student described ICSP as an important supplement to his studies in preparing him for the professional world:

*It's a great program to complement university experience just because of how you interact with other people, other communities... it really is a leadership position, and I think that's what's more important. It helps guide you through the process of becoming a leader and it does so in a holistic way; it teaches you how to talk to different people, how to interact with different environments, and how to present yourself and your ideas in a politically correct manner and something that people can understand.*

All of these skills—the ability to work effectively with different people, thrive in a variety of environments, and carefully articulate oneself—are key attributes that employer looks for in a candidate. ICSP students claim the honing of these skills for ICSP.

### iv. Academic support

Seven of the 11 students interviewed (63%) pointed to ICSP as being a source of academic support. One student mentioned of the scholarship requirements for a minimum GPA of 3.0 “It keeps me goin’”, while another student mentioned the positive impact of

being surrounded by high-achieving, academically strong peers in ICSP. Several students in the interviews and also in my observations have alluded to the fact that as an ICSP student, they take pride in being associated with such an impressive group of international students. One student explained, “It’s a thing of pride to say ‘I belong to the ICSP program’” while another student said, “I get to learn every single day when I’m with other ICSPers.” This positive peer pressure acts as a motivator for students to continue achieving in their academic pursuits.

Two other students (18%) spoke of the important role ICSP and its staff members play in helping students “navigate the academic system”, “guide you”, and serve as “a good counselor” who “cares about international students”. Having special access and personal connections to support staff in International Student & Scholar Services in the Office of International Affairs—through the ICSP Fall Seminar, regular check-ins, and bi-quarterly meetings—has proven especially beneficial to students as they adjust to university life.

Three of the eleven students interviewed (27%) boldly stated, “I wouldn’t be here without ICSP.” ICSP students are given the chance to pursue the degree of their choice at the University of Oregon—an opportunity that, for the majority of students in the program, would not be possible without the tuition waivers provided by ICSP. In this sense, ICSP provides academic support in that it allows students the freedom and ability to study the field they want.

ICSP’s tuition waivers not only provide the possibility of study, but they can also provide relief from the mental and emotional stress of students’ financial difficulties. One student expressed, “First, It solved my financial situation – it’s like a huge burden is gone off your shoulder and then I can focus on my study.” For this student, ICSP’s financial support enabled her focus to her energies on school, and not on her financial situation.

However, it should be noted that this is not the case for all ICSP students. Since each ICSP student receives a different amount of tuition remission based on their personal finances, many students still undergo significant stress due to their financial situation since ICSP currently does not offer cash support for cost of textbooks, student fees, or living expenses. Therefore, while the program does provide significant financial support, many students still struggle to make ends meet. ICSP offers financial relief for some, while it can also lead to several years of prolonged financial stress for others. I will further explore this phenomenon in the Challenges section, as well as and its implications for program improvement in the Recommendation section.

#### v. Improved Public Speaking

Naturally, improved public speaking skills was also a common theme among perceived impacts of ICSP. Six students of the 11 students interviewed (54%) testified that their public speaking and presentation skills have improved since being in ICSP. This should come as no surprise considering most students in the program deliver a public presentation at least once a week. Perhaps the only surprising aspect of this theme is that more students did not mention it as something they have learned or experienced as an impact of their involvement in ICSP. During the interviews, if public speaking came up at all, it was usually the first thing students mentioned, almost an the easy, low-hanging fruit; many students tended towards the more profound and perhaps less concrete impacts of the program, which may account for the smaller number of students who mentioned improved public speaking as an impact of ICSP.

#### vi. Confidence

While students mentioned specifically feeling more comfortable speaking in front of large groups, six students (54%) spoke more generally of how ICSP helped build their

confidence at large. Two students (18%) spoke of how shy they were prior to ICSP, and how much their confidence has grown in their two years in the program; both students have since taken on prominent leadership roles in major student organizations on campus. These students attribute their confidence to become increasingly involved on campus to ICSP, and one of the students made mention of how ICSP has acted as “an example of how to access resources.” Students’ earlier testimonies spoke to the leadership training and professional development skills students gain from ICSP; these recent testimonies illustrate that ICSP not only teaches students how to be leaders, but it also empowers students to seek out leadership roles.

Of lessons learned from ICSP, one student said ICSP taught her to, “believe in myself... that you can actually do much more than you think you can.” A major takeaway for another student was this: “ICSP told me you can always be great...whatever you do in life, if you do it with your heart...You should not give up on your dreams.” These quotes reflect a great sense of self-confidence and belief in oneself, which the speakers claim ICSP played a major role in fostering.

#### vii. Ability to Interact with Diverse Populations

Six students of the 11 students interviewed (54%) addressed their increased ability to interact with diverse populations. The implications for this theme are two-fold: students explained they had greater opportunities to interact with a wide range of people, thanks to their ICSP presentations; perhaps because of this repeated exposure, students also expressed they felt an increased level of comfort interacting with people of different backgrounds. So, ICSP makes it possible for students to interact with people of different backgrounds, and it also makes students more proficient at gracefully fielding these interactions.

Several students admitted they would likely not have had such wide exposure to different groups of people in the community were it not for ICSP. One student said, “ICSP is not just a project for me, it’s also kind of a learning opportunity. I learn from my peers, I learn from the programs, I learn from the community. Without ICSP, I wouldn’t be able to engage with the community.” In this quote, the student points out the value of having exposure to the community, while also looking at these interactions for their potential as a learning opportunity.

From this regular engagement with the community—in schools and organizations serving populations from mentally and physically disabled seniors to at-risk youth—ICSP students claim to have become comfortable “approaching people outside of the university”, “interacting with people with a wide range of knowledge”, “learn[ing] to be with other cultures”, and “sens[ing] individuals, reading the audience”. All of these abilities are incredibly valuable in one’s personal and professional life; on a much grander scale, these abilities are also the makings of peaceful interactions between cultures and countries of different beliefs. From these testimonies, ICSP certainly develops these abilities in its students; I will explore later how it develops these abilities in its community partners, too.

#### viii. Opportunity to Celebrate Individuality

One less-frequently mentioned—but still significant—theme was the idea that ICSP makes students feel they are special... simply by being themselves. Three students (27%) talked about ICSP giving them the opportunity to feel special, share about themselves, and celebrate their culture. While this may seem hokey and cliché at first glance, the students’ testimonies about this notion were, on the contrary, quite moving and insightful:

*Sometimes for example, [audiences] are not looking for outstanding presentations skills [...] they are looking for who we are. Then I realize who we are is special already [...] They want to learn who I am; they don't want to see PowerPoint slide show, flashy – they are not looking for that. They are looking for who we are in our country, what is all about us—we all are special, but we just need to learn [about] each other.*

In this quote, the student highlighted the earnest nature and pure human exchange that mark his presentations. This speaks to the core of ICSP's mission to promote understanding across cultures; ICSP students are agents of change and understanding simply by sharing their personal stories with audiences. Another student described the impact on her personally of being given the opportunity to celebrate and share her culture with audiences:

*I had this cultural background, but I never had the chance to emphasize it, to let the world hear about it, but ICSP... gave me a stage to dance! I loved it.*

ICSP provides a structure—a *stage to dance*—for individuals from all over the world to publicly share and celebrate their cultures with American audience members. This is diversity appreciation in its purest form, and students have attested to its powerful and genuine impact on the presenters and audience members alike.

### *Students' Impact on Program*

Moving beyond the perceived impacts of the program on students, I also asked ICSP students what impact they believed they had, as members of ICSP. Of all the questions asked in the interviews, this was consistently the question that was the most difficult for students to answer.

When asked “What do you think your impact has been?” nearly every student paused and clearly stumped, said “I don't know” as their initial reaction. This indicated many students had not given much thought to their impact, but this question elicited much

introspection in that regard. After some thinking, students were able to name several impacts, but it is noteworthy that it took every student some time to come up with something. This is not to say that students have no impact; on the contrary, this holds implications for the administration of the program that students need to be reminded of the value of their presentations—not simply for their own financial and academic benefit, but for the benefit of the local and campus community at large. I will discuss these implications for program improvement in the Recommendations section.

As for the themes that emerged from student responses, these are the impacts that students believe they initiate as members of ICSP: spread knowledge & positive feelings, provide new perspectives, send a unifying message, build friendships, and encourage & inspire.

#### i. Spread Knowledge & Positive Feelings

Four of the 11 students interviewed (36%) noted their impact was simply spreading knowledge about their country. Several students mentioned they believed most audience members were not aware of their country's existence, so at a very basic level, students spread awareness of their country's existence and geographic location. Two students (18%) took this a step further and said they believed they helped spread positive feelings about their country and its people. One student said, "I make sure the community feels comfortable about me." This impact reflects the very beginning stages of ICSP's goals to foster greater understanding—the first step is to spread awareness of different cultures through ambassadors the community can relate to and "feel comfortable about".

#### ii. Provide New Perspectives

Five students (45%) spoke more broadly about their impact of providing the community with a new perspective. Students mentioned they felt they had "change[d]"

minds or present[ed] other perspectives”, “gave [the audience] something to think about,” and provided “exposure to something [the audience] otherwise wouldn’t be able to experience.” A couple students alluded to the importance of providing this new perspective particularly to dispel media-inspired misrepresentations of their country. One student speaks of her impact, “When someone tells you ‘I grew up there, I lived there’ it makes you question what you saw on TV.” These quotes indicate students feel they provide a unique service to the community because their voice, their perspective, is one most audience members have never heard before—and would likely not have access to in another context.

### iii. Unifying Message

Three students (27%) pointed to their impact as “making people aware that the world outside of the US is not as different as they think” helping audience members “realize we’re all the same.” While students spoke of sharing knowledge of their culture and providing new perspective to audience members, how powerful that their final takeaway from these exchange—for several students—was a message of unity, and not division. One student shared about her experience connecting with audiences:

*My impact would be educating the people here, but then I learned a lot from them as well. For example, in the nursing home I learned how they would share, how they would relate my stories to them like having a grandkid in [my country] doing an internship or having a girlfriend [from my country]... they would share these cute stories with me and I was like, ‘Hey, even though we are so far away, the world is still so small, you can relate to people internationally.’*

These students’ reflections speak volumes to the important work they do in the community in terms of fostering understanding across cultures. From the last student’s quote, it is also clear that ICSP presentations encourage learning for both ICSP students and audience members alike; it is a mutually beneficial exchange.

#### iv. Build Friendships

Four students of the 11 interviewed (36%) spoke of their impact in the program as building friendships, both with members of the community and with fellow ICSP students. Of his presentations, one student stated, “It’s not about the PowerPoint, it’s about the connection you make with people, how you make them feel.” For this student, the primary focus of his presentations is to go out into the community and make personal connections with his audience members.

Another student stated his clear goal with his peers in the program, “I try to build friendship.” Two other students (18%) essentially said the same thing, speaking to ICSP’s role as a support network for all students in the program. Be it in presentations or interactions with their peers, ICSP students are relationship-oriented in their interactions with others. This is an important trait for cultural ambassadors seeking to build understanding across cultures; students’ identification of relationship building as a significant aspect of their involvement in ICSP is a positive indicator of students’ effectiveness in spreading peace and promoting understanding.

#### v. Encourage & Inspire

Finally, two students (18%) mentioned that their impact in ICSP has been to encourage and inspire the people with whom they come into contact. One student spoke of the impact of his presentations. He shared that in telling his story, “it will motivate [the audience] to be curious to know about that country.” In this sense, this ICSP student believes his initial presentation will inspire future learning in his audience members, acting as a catalyst for further exploration.

Another student said she likes to encourage “people to learn a language when they’re young” and “do a lot of things that I always wanted to do.” Some ICSP students come

from poorer backgrounds than others, and I have noticed through observation and conversation that some ICSP students like to share their personal story as a source of inspiration to audiences—particularly with students in alternative schools for at-risk or low-income youth. One student spoke particularly of the importance of “being aware of barriers that some people face” and then having someone in their life “who tell[s] you you should get engaged.” That is to say, this particular student uses her presentations as a platform to encourage audience members—who may not regularly receive the same encouragement from other sources—to dream big and reach for goals they may not have otherwise drawn out for themselves.

Both of these reflections indicate that ICSP presentations go beyond simply exposing audiences to the traditional dishes and dances of a country. Through their presentations, ICSP students also seek to foster a curiosity which leads to greater learning; they provide encouragement and inspiration to promote further exploration and personal growth.

### *Memorable Moments*

As part of the interview, I asked students if they could point to one moment in ICSP that was particularly profound, memorable, or meaningful. In this section, I will explore the two themes that arose from students’ responses to this question: connecting with audiences and hope.

#### i. Connecting with Audiences

Nine of the eleven students interviewed (81%) shared memories that somehow involved them connecting with audience members in a meaningful way during a presentation. Students’ stories ranged from a time when an ICSP student found unexpected

or creative means of relaying their culture to audience members, to ICSP students observing audience members taking action in response to something they learned in the ICSP presentation. One student could not point to one particular instance, but instead spoke of the consistently moving experience of giving presentations in schools:

*Going in and interacting with the kids – seeing their faces and hearing their questions and talking to them – realizing in the space of 45 minutes you can help them find out so much about themselves and so much about what they can do or want to do... that is incredible.*

Clearly, ICSP students' presentations in the community have an equally profound impact on ICSP students and audience members alike.

Three of these students (27%) also shared that their most memorable moment came from a token of appreciation they received from an audience member following their presentation. One student searched for words to articulate the feeling she had after a presentation at an alternative school for at-risk youth:

*I can't even explain it, the way they said thank you was... I didn't think anyone would ever say that to me. And then talking to the requester who said that this is so rare for them and it's so important to them because they're... they grew up in an environment where that [meeting a person from another country, seeing cultures from around the world] was not possible, just like I never thought I would be able to you know, come study here... and without ICSP [my studies] would have never been possible.... And then, for them, without ICSP [interacting with someone from my country, learning about other cultures] wouldn't be possible for them either so it's really incredible.*

This quote, again, speaks to the rare and valuable service ICSP provides to members of the local community; it also speaks to profound impact this exchange had on both the ICSP student and the audience members.

One ICSP student received a thank you note from a teenager in reaction to the ICSP student sharing his personal tragic experience of civil war in his home country. The teenager told the ICSP student in a letter, "I have nothing to relate to [your experience], but it made me really appreciate you." Receiving this letter moved the ICSP student to tears.

Another student received a letter from a senior citizen who was so struck by the ICSP student's presentation and personal story that they paid the remaining cost of the student's tuition for the year –the student estimated about \$6,000 - \$8,000!

All of these moments, big and small, give just a glimpse into the hundreds of ICSP presentations that happen each year, and the countless special interactions that transpire between ICSP students and their audience members.

## ii. Hope

The other theme that rose to the surface from students' reflections on their most memorable moment was the notion of ICSP bringing hope. Throughout the interviews, I was struck by the powerful implications of this small word that continued to appear in my conversations with students. Three students (27%) used the word *hope* in describing their feelings both in ICSP presentations and especially while in the presence of other ICSP students.

One student described the euphoric feeling she experienced during her first ICSP presentation, when she performed a traditional dance from her country on a stage in front of a large audience:

*When you ask me about ICSP let's say 10 years, 20 years from now – the first thing, the first image that will come to my mind is that moment, the first dance ever in such a chaos moment—that I can still feel the passion inside me of seeing hope, you know, and also performing this beautiful culture, sharing it for other audience[s] and getting recognition out of it... it's... it's amazing.*

This student's emotive portrayal of the mix of hope, pride, and gratitude she felt with the opportunity to share her culture with a captive, appreciative audience speaks to the incredible impact of ICSP. This quote is a testament to the extraordinary effect that literally just giving someone the stage can have on an individual.

Another student spoke to the powerful impact of being part of the larger group of ICSP students in sharing this as her most memorable moment:

*When I first came into the room with all the ICSPers because that was kind of a dream coming true for me [...] I think that kind of gave me hope or gave me an impression that it is possible that you have all these people from over the world in one room, and I just felt this is a different atmosphere [...] every time we come together I kind of get emotional, really.*

For this student, seeing the way members of ICSP come together in harmony is representative of the hope that all countries and cultures across the globe can live at peace with one another. For this student, ICSP is proof that a world with peaceful interactions between different cultures and countries is possible. Similarly, another student said of ICSP, “It gives you hope – there are people who really want to do good things.”

For students coming from countries all over the world—many wrapped in government corruption and poverty—ICSP restores hope and instills the reassurance that there are intelligent, capable people who are dedicated to making positive changes in this world. It is clear that for those involved in ICSP, the program’s impact goes beyond cultural exchange; the experienced effects of ICSP are far-reaching and profound, providing hope from an individual level all the way to a global scale.

### *Why It Matters*

After gathering from ICSP students what they both gained and contributed as members of ICSP, I asked students to go a step further and explain why the work of ICSP is important. While most everyone would agree that it’s good to be aware of other cultures and gain new perspectives, this section will delve into the deeper explanation of *why* those things are important. Students’ explanations of the importance of ICSP included that the program: promotes understanding, acts as a nonconventional news source, fosters self-awareness & self-discovery, and is essential for survival in a globalized society.

i. Promote Understanding

Four of the 11 students interviewed (36%) claimed the work of ICSP is important because it promotes understanding. Three students (27%) mentioned in a previous section that they perceived their impact in ICSP to be spreading a unifying message, helping audience members understand that 'we are all the same'. Several other students later underlined the importance of this message. One student explained:

*As human beings, we essentially gravitate to... anything different is bad, or anything different is scary it's dangerous... the fact that I'm able to be among them.. among Americans, or people who are not from [my country] and eventually they realize 'Oh, he's from [his country], and he's not that different from us.' My experiences are different and my upbringing is a little different, but just knowing that on a basic level as a human being we are essentially the same.*

In this quote, the student explains the importance of realizing that on a basic level, humans *are essentially the same*. Earlier in the quote, he points out how people often view differences to be negative or threatening. Learning to look past initial cultural differences and emphasize instead the many aspects between humans which are the same could help erase, or at least undermine, fear. In this sense, if ICSP presentations send the message of oneness among humans and across cultures, ICSP students promote peace as much as they promote understanding. Another student described the unifying impact ICSP presentations have on audiences:

*Any little moment you have with another culture is just humanizing this culture for you personally so that you have some image of someone or some feeling that you can connect to a culture, and I mean, you might be more interested about it, but yeah, you might also be just more understanding and kind of patient.*

Here, again, another ICSP student points out how *humanizing* ICSP presentations are in terms of putting a face to a preciously unfamiliar culture. As the student said, having these humanizing interactions in the end can help audience members *be just more*

*understanding and kind of patient.* These are incredible important outcomes in a world which is wrought with war largely due to a *lack* of these very things—patience and understanding. The work of ICSP is important because it humanizes other cultures, above all spreads a sense of unity among humanity, and promotes understanding and patience for the differences that remain between us.

#### ii. Nonconventional News Source

According to four students (36%), another reason the work of ICSP is important is that it presents perspectives different from those popularly portrayed in American media. Unfortunately much of American media works to uphold certain stereotypes of different cultures and countries around the world. One student stated poignantly of ICSP students' duty to dispel Americans' commonly held misconceptions, "unless we do something about it, people will not know." In this sense, the work of ICSP is important because it provides a truthful news source that is otherwise not readily available to most audience members. One student described the impact he has on audiences compared to other news sources:

*Instead of going off what they get to see in the TV or in the media, [the audience members] actually get to have something real—someone they can touch, someone they can feel, someone they can talk to, someone who can share something with them.*

This goes back to the notion of ICSP presentations being humanizing. Having a real person give a personal perspective on the headlines bombarding audience members can help combat empathy, and also make those 30-second-newsflashes on TV become tangible or even relevant for audience members. Hearing these personal stories appeals to the sympathy of audience members; it becomes much more difficult for audience members to ignore what is going on in the world once they have met and interacted with someone whose life is personally impacted by the stories on the nightly news. In a word, ICSP

presentations make people aware of what is going on in the world; they also make people *care* about what is going on in the world.

Building on that, ICSP presentations also act as an interactive source of information that audience members can question, engage with, and ultimately relate to. This increases audience members' ability to gain access to information uninhibited by the biases of American media sources. As one student said, this type of interaction "clears out ignorance from people and misperceptions." This clearing of ignorance and misconceptions goes both ways, as one ICSP student explained that his presentations and interactions with American audiences have helped him "learn about American cultures beyond Hollywood, beyond military, Las Vegas, politics, big buildings & skyscrapers." ICSP presentations allow stakeholders on both sides of the coin the opportunity to learn for themselves the truth behind the other stories or perspectives they have heard through the media. The work of ICSP is important because it provides a unique opportunity for ICSP students and audience members alike to question the stories they have been told, and seek the truth—or at least a different perspective—from a nonconventional yet reliable news source.

### iii. Self-Awareness & Self-Discovery

Going along with the theme of truth-seeking, the work of ICSP is also important because it encourages introspection among audience members, which may ultimately lead to self-improvement. Six of the eleven ICSP students interviewed (54%) alluded to this fact in their responses. One ICSP student described the transformative impact of interacting with someone of a different culture, as in the case of audience members in ICSP presentations:

*When you interact with different people in different cultures I feel like it kind of leads you to figuring out who you really are and what your view points are as separate from what society has shaped you to believe and think. And so that's why I think [ICSP] is very important... it makes you kind of question what has been accepted in certain societies that are completely not accepted or very differently viewed in other societies. And so then you get to kind of make your view point after analyzing and thinking.*

This student points to ICSP as playing an important role in developing individuals' personal philosophies and seeking knowledge and understanding outside of what information society feeds to individuals. Another student goes on to further explain the impact this process can have on a person:

*Life is just a big school where everybody is always learning; it's a learning process. And I think if someone can have a different perspective of life, a different way of looking at things because they had a few chances to interact with someone from somewhere else, I think it can impact them in some way. It can change the way they look at life, it can change the way they see minorities, it change the way they see themselves.*

By this statement, interactions fostered by ICSP can inspire individuals to move past their previously-held notions about themselves and others to a more enlightened, informed, and ideally positive perspective. The work of ICSP helps people question the status quo, seek truth, and form opinions about themselves and other through a lens of greater awareness and compassion.

#### iv. Survival in Globalized Society

All of these arguments as to why fostering cultural awareness and understanding—the work of ICSP—is important can be boiled down to this single point: in our increasingly globalized world, building understanding between different perspectives is imperative to survival. While this may initially seem to be a dramatic statement, it is not too far-fetched to say that many of the world's major conflicts today stem from a lack of understanding or lack of compassion for another perspective. By this logic, the work of fostering understanding

across cultures is really the work of building peace on in our societies. Six of the 11 ICSP students interviewed (54%) supported this notion through statements in their interview responses.

One student claimed the work of ICSP is important because “it helps us to be open-minded.” When prompted to further explain why it is important to be open-minded, the student replied, “It’s important to be able to live in peace together. We don’t have to feel superior, above others—just acceptance, respect, to love [others] the way they are, for who they are.” This student directly linked being open-minded to living in peace—further supporting the notion that the work of ICSP is peace-building, as much as it is anything else.

Another student, when asked why the work of ICSP is important, drew parallels back to fostering understanding and peaceful interactions on a global scale: “The world is becoming such a global village, such a small place. As small as the world is getting, we need to be able to communicate the differences in us, in our cultures.” This student spoke in general terms about the state of the world being increasingly interconnected as a result of globalization, and hence the need for greater understanding in order to maintain effective and peaceful exchanges. Another student reflected more specifically on the impact this type of exercise would have in his home country:

*By looking at the ICSP, by being a member, by going to the community, it helps me understand [...] imagine, [if] I can do this type of program in my country—there would not be any conflict.*

This quote coming from a student who is a 4-year veteran of the program and was an influential grass-roots leader in his country prior to studying at the University of Oregon, this is a powerful statement about ICSP’s potential for widespread impact. Growing awareness, encouraging others to examine their beliefs, providing alternative news sources, shedding light on misconceptions—this is the work of ICSP. All of these eventually point to

the same end-game, which is fostering understanding of different perspectives to ensure peace between cultures—this is *why* the work of ICSP is important.

### **Interview Questions: SWOT Analysis**

#### *Strengths*

As an adaptation of a SWOT (Strength – Weakness – Opportunity – Threat) analysis, I asked students their views on the strengths and weaknesses or challenges of ICSP. Understandably, many of the strengths students listed overlapped with what students claimed to have gained from their involvement in ICSP. Some of the students’ answers, however, were unique to this particular set of questions. In this section, I will explore the recurrent themes of students’ responses to my query about ICSP’s strengths, adjusting the depth of my exploration of the theme accordingly for those themes which have previously been described. Students listed the following themes as ICSP’s greatest strengths: program logistics, support system, exposure to other cultures, and access to education.

#### i. Program Logistics

Five students of the 11 interviewed (45%) pointed to the structure of the program as being a strength of ICSP. Some students pointed to specific aspects of the program that they appreciate in particular, while others spoke in more general terms about their appreciation for the mission of the program.

Two students (18%) applauded the design of the program in general in terms of its creating an opportunity for international students to receive tuition support in exchange for providing a free, culturally-enriching service to the community. When asked the strengths of ICSP, these students said “what the program does” and “how the program is set up to

serve the community.” For some the overall purpose and mission of the program—the very fact that this type of program exists—is a strength in and of itself.

Four students (36%) noted they appreciate the way in which requests for presentations are processed—community partners submit requests to the ICSP Coordinator, who then relays information to ICSP students, and ICSP students contact the community partners directly to confirm their participation. There is also an ICSP website where students can track their requests and record their hours. One student called the process “smooth, organized, simple” while another student appreciated that “everything is arranged for you, you show just up.” Two students interjected that they especially liked receiving feedback from requesters after their presentations—a result of the final step in the administrative processing of ICSP requests, which involves the ICSP Coordinator sending a feedback form for community partners to fill out, and then forwarding the completed feedback form to the appropriate students.

Two students (18%) commented on the content of the Fall Seminar as being one of ICSP’s strengths. One student liked that the Fall Seminar helps new ICSP students “anticipate problems” , “prepare for public speaking”, and “connect new students with old students” while another student added that the class “prepares you for presentations”.

Two students (18%) highlighted the Saturday Meetings and Winter Retreat as strengths of ICSP. In general, I have gathered through conversation, observation, and interviews that ICSP students really enjoy the opportunity to get together as a group, and students would like to have more opportunities to do so. This was a mixed strength because the general consensus was “we like getting together, but we don’t do it enough—we want more.” Of all the constructive criticism that could be given, I take this to be a major positive stroke.

## ii. Support System

Five students said one of ICSP's strengths is the program's role in their lives as a support system; in fact, several students said this was the single best aspect of the program. In terms of the support students receive from being in ICSP, one student proclaimed of the program, "The best thing I would say is they never give you up!" Another student said of ICSP that it "makes you lead to a way where you can only succeed". Both of these quotes refer to the administrative side of the program, and how ICSP is designed to set students on a path to graduation, seeing both personal and academic success.

Another type of support comes from the peer aspect of the program, as students belong to a larger group of international students in ICSP. As is evidenced by students' testimonies, ICSP students draw a great deal of support and comfort from their peers in the program. One student summarized with resounding enthusiasm, "The best thing—except money—the thing ICSP gives students is the emotional support – it's really, really, really good! That's the best strength, except the money part." One student, a several-year veteran of the program, went a bit further to explain the rationale behind why students feel so supported by their peers in ICSP:

*It's actually a family, not in the cheesy sense, but we all go in there and feel connected. And I think it's cause we all have generally—not the same experiences from our country, but the same experiences when we get here so we connect on a level that we don't connect with the average person we see outside in class or on the street [...] Even though we've never met the new people [in ICSP], we know what their experiences are already –we can feel what they're feeling, we can understand where they're coming from. So ICSP definitely does that [...] you feel like a family on a real level.*

Another student adds to speak of the the unique character of ICSP students in their willingness to help their peers—a support that is not easily found even among other international students in the university:

*How people help each other, no matter who you are, no matter where you're from... if you even know each other at all [...] if you just say I'm an ICSPer and I need help, people will flock to help you... and that's really rare and it makes you feel valuable as a person.*

All of these quotes speak to the incredible support students experience on all levels as members of ICSP. Not only do students receive guidance and financial support for academic success from the ICSP staff, students also receive emotional support from their international student peers who share similar struggles of adjusting to American culture in both social and academic spheres.

### iii. Exposure to Other Cultures

Six students (54%) said one of ICSP's strengths is that it exposes people—audiences and ICSP students alike—to other cultures.

In terms of the community, three students also highlighted the fact that ICSP provides access to cultural enrichment that certain audiences in Eugene might not otherwise be able to access. These students said ICSP “is helping Eugene to be able to have these cultural exchanges” and that ICSP “get[s] other people to understand our cultures.”

Another student spoke of the benefit she personally receives from giving presentations in the community through ICSP:

*For ICSPers it's great because we get to also learn from Eugene and from Springfield, and in all honesty we could be cooped up on the university and never learn anything... and again, I might have been one of those people if I didn't have ICSP.*

By this statement, this student points out that ICSP presentations act as important vessels for learning about American culture. Interacting with different American populations in schools and organizations around the community is a valuable learning experience that most other international students at the University of Oregon do not get to experience—if at all, but almost certainly not to the extent of ICSP students' experience.

#### iv. Access to Education

I discussed earlier that ICSP affords students the opportunity to study the subject of their choice while many students in the program would still have access to some form of higher education in another country—though not necessarily in their field of choice—were it not for ICSP. Four students (36%) supported this notion in stating that one of the strengths of ICSP is that the program grants international students access to American higher education. One student articulated the significance of this, “I’m relatively certain that a lot of us would not be here otherwise, and I feel like in that sense you would lose potential to create world leaders.” This strong statement illustrates the impressive nature of the international students who make up ICSP. The overwhelming notion about ICSP students is that these are not simply individuals who are going to earn their Bachelor’s degree and go home to work any average-paying job; these are individuals who are motivated to make a difference in their communities, home countries, and the world. In this sense, ICSP invests in educating and shaping young leaders from across the globe—that shows the significance of ICSP providing access to higher education in the States.

#### *Challenges*

Again, as part of my adaptation of a SWOT analysis, I asked students what they perceived to be the weaknesses or challenges of the program—or, what challenges they faced while in the program. The following section will explore the themes of students’ responses to this question, which include: financial struggles, balancing commitments, lack of transitional support, and presentation discomfort.

#### i. Financial Struggles

While many students also marked a strength of ICSP as the fact that ICSP makes higher education in the US financially feasible for many students, that is not to say it renders

students' financial lives completely carefree. Four students (36%) said that one of the weaknesses of ICSP is that it only provides tuition remission; no financial assistance is available for living expenses, textbooks, health insurance, etc. One student said, "It can impact you going to classes and presentations when you're worried about your financial situation."

Another student described the difficulties that come with receiving only a partial financial award from ICSP. Some students receive "full awards" or tuition waivers that cover the entire cost of tuition for the student to earn their degree; others receive a "partial award", which only covers a portion of the students' tuition costs, leaving the student to make up the difference. This has proven challenging for many students as the cost of tuition has continued to rise over the past few years, while the ICSP financial award remains stagnant. Luckily, at the beginning of the 2014-15 Academic Year, ICSP made the switch to awarding tuition waivers in terms of credit hours to combat the diminishing purchasing power of a scholarship awarded in fixed dollar amounts while tuition continues to rise. Even with this better change, many students still struggle to make ends meet. One student described this difficulty:

*Partial funding is really difficult for students to manage getting the money they need every term to take your minimum number of credits. It's hard to focus on your studies because you have to choose your classes carefully based on the credits you want to take, and it can be limiting.*

This goes to show that while ICSP does provide a rare opportunity for some students to study in the United States, one of the limitations of ICSP is its lack of financial support for living expenses and other costs outside of tuition. Even with a full award, many students in the program continue to scrape by, and this can inhibit students' ability to focus on their studies and their responsibilities with regard to ICSP.

## ii. Balancing Commitments

Along that same vein, three students (27%) mentioned that they struggle to find a good work-life balance while in ICSP. For several students, one of the challenges of being in ICSP is managing to juggle school, work, ICSP presentations, and extracurricular activities. One student described the unfortunate cycle of being awarded the ICSP scholarship, but then being forced to work the maximum allotted 20 hours per week for international students just to pay all the extenuating bills. On top of work and classes, students continue to be stretched thin with weekly presentation assignments for ICSP. All of these commitments then detract time and energy from the original purpose of this entire endeavor, which is studying. This is a common story for many ICSP students, and undeniably a major challenge of the program.

## iii. Lack of Transitional Support

Three of the 11 students interviewed (27%) mentioned that one of the challenges of ICSP is that it does not adequately prepare students for life after graduation. While ICSP does provide valuable skill development that will help students excel in the professional world, students still feel ill-equipped to launch into their careers—or more immediately, the job search process. One student expressed this feeling as follows: “Once you’re about to graduate, you’re lost.” She emphasized the need for “connection with alumni” and direction for “next steps after graduation.”

Other students in interviews and observations have made mention of ICSP’s largely underutilized alumni network. While this is a weakness of the program, it does provide constructive criticism which can lend to programmatic improvements. In other words: the bad thing is the lack of alumni network is indeed a problem; the good thing is, there are lots

of ways the program can act immediately to fix this problem. I will explore possible solutions to address this weakness later in the Recommendations section.

#### iv. Presentation Discomfort

Three students (27%) also listed instances where they were made to feel uncomfortable due to interactions with audience members as a weakness or challenge of ICSP. One student mentioned that sometimes requesters' visions for what they would like the ICSP students to present are too narrow. This student brought up an example of a requester who had some previous exposure to the student's home country, and the requester began questioning the validity of the student's presentation on their own country, and correcting the student when it was inappropriate to do so. In this instance, the requester acted as though they knew more about the country than the student who was native to the country. This same student also expressed frustration at some requesters' expectations that an ICSP student can speak for their entire home country, when really the student has only had exposure and can personally speak to a small part of their country.

Another ICSP student shared the challenges she faced when high school students at a presentation asked her uncomfortable questions about the alcohol and drug habits of teenagers in her home country. She felt torn between wanting to honestly portray her country while also wanting to speak appropriately and professionally as a representative of ICSP and the University of Oregon.

While interactions like these are uncomfortable and unfortunate, they are somewhat inevitable when it comes to the work of spreading cultural awareness. ICSP students are trained to approach these situations as opportunities for learning—"teachable moments" instead of intentionally hurtful gestures. That being said, another ICSP student pointed out the root weakness in this situation, which is that there is no follow-up

procedure “to address uncomfortable situations that happen in presentations.” Despite the program’s best efforts to prepare students to field uncomfortable questions, there is no additional support structure for processing misunderstandings or hurtful interactions between students and requesters. This weakness also holds implications for recommendations for improvement, which I will later explore in the Recommendations section.

### *Suggestions for Improvement*

Instead of asking about the opportunities and threats of ICSP, as per a usual SWOT analysis, I asked students how they thought ICSP could have a greater impact, and what students would recommend be changed in the program. The follow section will explore the highlights of students’ responses, which were: increased visibility, program growth, diversify community partners, and more opportunities for student bonding.

#### i. Increased Visibility

Seven of the eleven students interviewed (63%) recommended ICSP increase its visibility as a means of having a greater impact on the community. Five of those seven students (54% of all students, 71% of this group) said something to the effect of “people don’t know about the program” and “lots of people don’t know we exist.” One student said he was not aware of what publicity the program does; if students in the program are hardly aware of their own program’s publicity campaign, how can we expect people outside the program to be that much more tuned in? That says a lot about the program’s visibility—in town and even around campus.

As part of this campaign for visibility, three students (27%) suggested having “ICSP Day”—an ICSP-sponsored and self-featuring event. Students had a variety of suggestions for

implementing this event, whether it be open only to campus or for all of the Eugene/Springfield community, but the general idea is to have a showcase of ICSP students to promote the program and spread awareness among existing and potential community partners. This idea will be further explored in the Recommendations section below.

#### ii. Program Growth

Four students (36%) suggested ICSP increase the amount of students in the program as a means of expanding program impact. While only four students mentioned this in the interviews, I can attest to the fact that this is a growing concern among both students and staff in the program as the number of students in the program has shrunk over the last three years from about 50 students to its current size of 35 students. This is due to the rising cost of tuition and the stagnant pool of tuition remission funds available. The general consensus is that the more students there are in the program, the more people the program impact. With each student having 80 hours of cultural service required of them annually, one can easily see how hundreds of hours of impact in the community are being lost with every student the program forfeits due to lack of funding.

#### iii. Diversify Community Partners

Seven students (63%) came to the table with ideas of new populations ICSP could connect with to expand the program's impact. On campus, students pointed to more intentional programming with all of the language departments as well as Residence Life. Around Eugene, students thought of everything from music festivals in town to the Saturday Farmer's Market. Two students suggested simply expanding on the existing community partners, and setting a goal of presenting in *every* elementary school and senior home in Eugene—not just the majority.

One student suggested ICSP students do community service projects together, serving the dual purpose of promoting bonding between ICSP students while also spreading the reach of the program. On a similar note, one student suggested targeted work with people who struggle with mental illness or patients who “need healing.” She stated, “Most of ICSP students, they are so positive, you know, they have this thing inside them—when they talk, they just bring different perspectives... it might bring hope.”

I was shocked first by the number of students who came up with diversifying our community partners as a suggestion, and second by the number of new populations the students suggested the program could be serve. It’s clear that ICSP students cumulatively have an abundance of knowledge about the community, and that the program should harness this knowledge and entrepreneurial mentality to the benefit of the program. Once again, I will address the implications for these suggestions later in the Recommendations section.

#### iv. More Opportunities for Student Bonding

Five students (45%) mentioned that they would like to have more opportunities to bond with their peers in ICSP. As it stands, ICSP students gather as a whole group twice per term for two-hour Saturday Meetings—for a total of six meetings per year—and once for an all-day retreat during Winter Term. Several students stated this is too little. Suggestions for increased meeting frequency ranged from once a week to once a month, with activities ranging from student-led check-ins to social outings such as picnics or service projects. Two students made mention of the importance of simply “spending a night together” as being “a bonding experience”. One student even suggested a 2-3 day retreat spanning over a long weekend. Whatever the case may be, there is clear interest among students in increasing the time ICSP students spend together as a group.

## **Interview Questions: Looking Ahead**

### *Future Plans*

As a closing question, I asked students where they saw themselves in ten years. I would also like to close this section on student interviews with a discussion of these responses—a look into the future of current ICSP students. This section has already described what changes are being fostered by and within students in the program here in Eugene; this closing section will provide a peek into what these students intend to do with their degrees when they disperse throughout the world following graduation. The themes that emerged among their responses were: continue education, work in a multicultural environment, take on leadership role in community, helping, and replicate ICSP elsewhere.

#### i. Continue Education

When asked of their future plans, five students of the 11 interviewed (45%) said they plan to continue their education after receiving their Bachelor's Degree from University of Oregon; all five students mentioned graduate school, particularly in a Master's program. This goes to show ICSP not only provides students the chance to get a degree in their field of interest, but it also paves the way to a lifetime of learning with the potential for higher academic achievement.

#### ii. Work in Multicultural Environment

Four students (36%) expressed interest in working in a multicultural or international environment. Responses ranged from students wanting to “work with international students”, “work in a community of global citizens”, and “work in an international environment—something that involves people of different cultures”. While some students may have been predisposed to this love of cultures, it can undoubtedly be claimed that ICSP had a hand in developing this global mindedness in its students.

### iii. Leadership Role in Community

Three students (27%) stated they envisioned themselves taking on major leadership roles in their home countries and communities. These leadership roles varied in nature from making a “big contribution to an aspect of science”, to promoting “education for women” to “starting a university” to “running for a seat in Congress” or serving “on the advisory council for the president” in the student’s home country. These aspirations are high, but far from unrealistic considering the incredible accomplishments of so many ICSP students already. This goes back to one student’s earlier quote of ICSP’s important role in “developing world leaders.” ICSP students’ long-term aspirations clearly confirm this previous assessment.

### iv. Helping

Most impressively of all, six students (54%) described their life’s work 10 years down the road to involve “helping” people or communities in some capacity. Three students mentioned an interest in being involved with charitable organizations or nonprofits, while other students spoke in more general terms. One student said, “As long as I am helping people, I don’t care – Chinese, American, Europeans, Asian...” Another student described her hopes for her life in 10 years, “I hope that I’m doing something meaningful for the community around me. I don’t expect to be making much money, but... definitely do things that are meaningful... just like being part of ICSP.” ICSP helps instill this desire to give back, help people, and serve the community. After years of doing these very things in ICSP, more than half the students interviewed expressed they would like to continue doing similar work after graduation.

#### v. Replicate ICSP

Even beyond the desire to continue giving back to the community, four ICSP students (36%) explicitly stated they would like to recreate ICSP in their home countries or in other parts of the world. The plans for this ranged from a “coffee shop or restaurant” where “young & old, different cultures [can gather] together”, to opening “a school that will run a bit like ICSP” where students “do service to the community and learn from each other”. On a grander scale, one student mentioned wanting to implement a cultural competency course as part of his country’s national education plan.

Having already read pages of positive impacts this program has on students and audience members alike, it is awe-inspiring to imagine the incredible repercussions of multiplying this program and its impacts worldwide. ICSP first brings ambassadors of the world to Eugene; then, it sends ambassadors of ICSP out to the world. Of all this program evaluation’s findings, I found this single trend to be one of the most inspiring and encouraging themes that arose from the interview process.

CHAPTER V  
RESULTS: COMMUNITY PARTNERS

**Community Partners: Context**

*Profiles*

Eight community partners were interviewed as part of this program evaluation. To provide a frame of reference for their interview responses, I will briefly describe each organization, the populations they serve, and their relationship with ICSP. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identities of each organization.

i. Highlands

Highlands is an alternative K-8 public school that promotes arts, hands-on learning, and multicultural themes (Eugene School District, 2015). Highlands is located in a neighborhood in Eugene in which the median household income is \$46,125, high school graduation rates are at 95%, and the median housing value is \$282,078 (Area Vibes, 2015).

I interviewed a parent volunteer from Highlands who has been requesting ICSP students for 6-7 years for Global Day. This is an annual event in which the entire school participates to present a day of learning about different cultures; ICSP students deliver 3-4 short interactive presentations to groups of 10-12 students, and Highlands students rotate between the ICSP students' presentations.

## ii. Eden Prairie

Eden Prairie Rehabilitation Center in Eugene offers long- and short-term care for adults with a variety of mental and physical disabilities. Eden Prairie is located in a wealthy neighborhood of Eugene in which the median household income is \$72,386, high school graduation rates are at 95%, and the median housing value is \$319,883 (Area Vibes, 2015).

The Activities Director at Eden Prairie has been requesting ICSP students for 12 years. Every term, he invites one student per week to give a general 1-hour presentation about the students' home country to a group of 2-10 residents. Once a term, he also asks three students to perform their musical and dance talents during a 1-hour Music Fair.

## iii. Apple Valley High School

Apple Valley High School is an alternative public high school serving at-risk youth or students who have struggled in traditional school settings (Bethel School District, 2015). Apple Valley is located in the Bethel neighborhood of Eugene in which the median household income is \$45,553, high school graduation rates are at 82%, and the median housing value is \$146,494 (Area Vibes, 2015).

I interviewed a teacher at Apple Valley High School who has been requesting ICSP students for about one year. Each term she invites one ICSP student every week to give a 1-hour presentation to two different high school classes studying issues related to the environment and structural inequities for people living in poverty. Her goal with ICSP presentations is to "introduce the world" to her students.

## iv. Normandale Community College

Normandale Community College is one of the largest community colleges in Oregon with more than 36,000 students enrolled in transfer credit programs, technical and business training programs, and ESL and GED programs. Located in Eugene, Normandale

feeds lots of students to the University of Oregon through their transfer program and ESL for international students program. It is located in an area where high school graduation rates are 90%, the median household income is \$41,525, and the median housing value is \$244,600 (Area Vibes, 2015).

One of the professors in the college's department for teaching international students American English has been inviting ICSP students to speak to her classes for the past 5-6 years. ICSP students share their experiences as international students adjusting to the rigors of college and adapting to American culture.

#### v. Wayzata Community Center

Wayzata Community Center is located in the Bethel district of Eugene. This particular part of Eugene is home to many retirement communities, so Wayzata offers a monthly luncheon for seniors. Attendance runs between 20 and 30 audience members, and ICSP students attend these luncheons to give a 1-hour presentations about themselves and their home country. According to the Activities Director, ICSP presentations have made for a very popular series that draws a faithful crowd of 15-20 "regulars"; it is also a personal favorite of Wayzata staff members.

Where Wayzata is located, the high school graduation rate is 82%, which is 9% lower than the total average for the City of Eugene. The median household income is \$45,553 and the median housing value is \$146,494, which is 40% lower than Eugene's overall average (Area Vibes, 2015).

#### vi. University of Oregon, English Language Institute (ELI)

Professors at the University of Oregon frequently request ICSP students to speak in English Language Institute classes. These classes are designed to prepare non-native English speakers for academic written and oral communication success in American

English. The particular professor I spoke with has been requesting ICSP students for 2 years. ICSP students attend the ELI 101 Oral Skills class and lead small group discussion, allowing ELI students to practice speaking in English by asking ICSP students questions about their home country.

vii. University of Oregon, Cross Cultural Studies Department

I also interviewed a University of Oregon professor who teaches a 400/500-level course on cross-cultural communication. Her class is comprised mostly of domestic students, with the occasional bunch of international students sprinkled in among them. She has been inviting ICSP students to speak in these classes for 2-3 years; she asks ICSP students to share about their own experience coming to the United States, adjusting to university life, and experiencing cross-cultural communication challenges.

viii. Funshine Childcare Center

Funshine is a childcare center serving children from 3 months to 12 years old. Most of the children served at this daycare center are children of faculty or staff from the University of Oregon. ICSP students typically present to children ages 1-5 years old in 30-minute increments, sharing songs, dances, or simple lessons from their home country. Funshine is located near campus where the high school graduation rate is 90%, the average median household income is \$41,525, and the median housing value is \$244,600 (Area Vibes, 2015).

*Notes on Community Partner Responses*

The following section will explore themes that arose from ICSP's community partner interviews. Again, an ICSP *community* partner is defined as any organization, either affiliated with the University of Oregon or with the greater Eugene/Springfield community,

who invites ICSP students to deliver some form of cultural service. The individual representative from the community partner organization who initiates the visit with ICSP students will be referred to as the *requester*. ICSP students' cultural service typically involves a formal presentation about the ICSP student's home country, but it is not limited to that format.

The community partners interviewed for this evaluation represent the wide variety of organizations that request ICSP students—from alternative schools to community centers to senior care facilities. Because each of these organizations serves vastly different populations, their means of engaging ICSP students—and thus their respective reflections on the benefits of ICSP—vary greatly. When seeing the response rate of each theme, bear in mind the value in diversity of themes as well as the popularity of themes. As each community partner uses ICSP in different ways, even the less-frequently reported responses are important. That being said, certain themes did reflect a high percentage of common experiences with ICSP despite the great diversity of community partner organizations, and those themes are particularly telling with regard to certain aspects of the program.

### **Interview Questions: Storytelling**

#### *Impact on Community Partners*

I asked community partners what they thought their audiences gained from interacting with ICSP students, and what they perceived to be the impact of ICSP. The four major response themes that arose from these questions were: generally positive, rare exposure to new cultures, perspective, and personalizing headlines.

i. Generally Positive

Starting off by speaking in general terms, four of the eight community partners interviewed (50%) began their response by noting the impact of ICSP is positive. Requesters called ICSP “positive”, “really good” and a “pretty strong program.” Another requester said of the program, “It’s been nothing but positive” and “there’s nothing that’s not beneficial about it.” One requester summed up all of these sentiments by generally labeling the program and its impact as “favorable.”

Thankfully for the sake of this evaluation, requesters did go into further detail about *why* the program is so favorable, but these initial comments are a good preface for the feedback to come.

ii. Rare Exposure to New Cultures

Six of the eight (75%) community partners interviewed discussed the importance of ICSP providing their populations the rare opportunity to learn about other cultures. In their responses, requesters focused both on the *rare* and the *cultural learning* aspects to varying degrees. The requester from Apple Valley High School, the alternative public high school serving at-risk youth, spoke to the town-gown divide that exists in Eugene, and the rare opportunity ICSP provides her students to learn about cultures outside the US:

*Our population is very isolated... we've brought some kids up to the University of Oregon and we've had some kids ask how they get back to Eugene 'cause it just doesn't compute that we live in the same town. Most of our kids don't leave Bethel area. And so our plan was to just try to introduce the world to them. And so it doesn't really matter what the people are talking about; it's that they're there and they're representing some places these kids have never even thought about or maybe sometimes even heard of... and so the students are fitting in really well with that.*

This statement puts into perspective the value of ICSP presentations—for young people who have hardly left their own neighborhood, ICSP gives them the opportunity to

virtually travel across the world and be introduced to people and cultures they will otherwise likely never experience first-hand.

This requester also speaks volumes to the hand ICSP has in diminishing the town-gown divide that exists between Eugene and the University of Oregon. When ICSP students spend time and share their personal story with Apple Valley students, it creates a direct connection to the University of Oregon for those students. Suddenly, Apple Valley students are on a first-name basis with students from a university that previously felt physically, socially, and mentally very far removed from their world. Not only do Apple Valley students have the rare opportunity to experience new cultures with ICSP, but they also have the rare opportunity to connect to the University of Oregon in a personal way.

Similarly, the requester from Highlands, the alternative K-8 public school, brought up the fact that ICSP provides Highlands students a unique opportunity to learn about different cultures, but also to relate to people of different backgrounds:

*Eugene is very white. We don't have a lot of different ethnicities. So for them to have that experience of meeting someone and learning about their country just helps them kinda get a bigger picture of the world outside of their own small, you know, box... but at the same time they also get to learn about the things that they have in common, or things that they share with each other.*

This quote asserts that Eugene, by itself, does not necessarily allow for a wealth of diversity and learning from other cultures. Instead, this is a gap that ICSP students are able to fill with their presentations to schools and organizations in the community. Again, this presents a rare opportunity to learn about different cultures in a personal setting.

The notion of building bonds and finding commonalities also goes back to what ICSP students claimed as one of their impacts in the program: spreading a *Unifying Message* that “we are all the same.” This requester confirms that as an impact of the program, and further endorses this as an important lesson for students at Highlands.

Another requester echoed this sentiment of appreciating ICSP's simultaneous messages of diversity and unity to the children at Funshine Childcare Center:

*What I really appreciate is for them to hear other people's experiences and just to broaden their idea of the world [...] just to even give them this experience of there are people that, you know, look and sound different than you and, you know, they have lives just like you [...] just to give them the idea, you know, the world is a big place.*

In all of the requesters' accounts, it is clear that ICSP students provide a unique learning opportunity that cannot otherwise be easily accessed by the populations served in these community partner organizations. Through this cultural learning, other objectives are also achieved such as promoting a sense of unity across cultures and lessening the town-gown divide between the University of Oregon and greater Eugene. Further overlap between the community partner and student responses regarding ICSP's impact will be discussed in the Data Analysis section that follows.

### iii. Perspective

In addition to learning about different cultures, three of the eight community partners interviewed (37%) said that ICSP students provide their populations new perspectives. Again, the requester from Apple Valley commented, "For that reason alone I think bringing your students in to my students, that's probably the best thing they get from it, is a different perspective." The requester went on to give an example of a new perspective an ICSP student gave her high school students: "Like the girl from Brazil talks about the street kids and the level of poverty that these kids can look at and say 'Wow... maybe I'm not as poor as I think I am.'" Another quote illustrating the perspective ICSP students provide holds implications for high school students' motivation in school and further academic achievement down the road:

*And it's really good for these guys to talk to people who value education.... Because they're very cavalier; they take education for granted, it's just there... you know you have to go to school... and here's people [ICSP students] who have gone through quite a bit to go to school [...] and sometimes we get frustrated that they're not more openly engaged, but I'll hear them talk about things later in the day or later in the week that I realize they've been listening.*

Both of these quotes can be correlated with ICSP students' perception of why the work of ICSP is important—because it fosters *Self-Awareness & Self-Discovery* among audience members. An ICSP student sharing about her experience with poverty in another country causes low-income individuals in the United States to reexamine their understanding and classification of their own poverty; another ICSP student's testimony of the lengths he went to in order to educate himself causes high school students to think twice the next time they want to complain about going to class. Both of these instances reflect a greater self-awareness within students as a reaction to ICSP presentation. Thus, these testimonies support the claim that in providing new perspectives, ICSP students also foster *Self-Awareness & Self-Discovery*. Here again, the experiences of community partners back the assertions of ICSP students, in terms of program impacts.

#### iv. Personalized Headlines

Another impact of the program, as stated by community partners of ICSP, is ICSP students' personalization of world news. Two out of eight community partners interviewed (25%) mentioned that they appreciated ICSP students' "personalizing those headlines" through their ICSP presentations. One requester from Normandale Community College referenced an ICSP student who shared her personal experience with the One Child Policy in China. The requester said of ICSP students:

*These are things you read about in the newspaper, but they're personalizing it [...] I think that is a really impactful piece, that you read about these things but here are these real people who have lived through it. [They are] taking these global issues and bringing it to a personal level that these people can hear and ask questions of—that's really meaningful.*

Here, the requester emphasizes the importance of ICSP students making news stories come to life, and stirring up interest and concern for world events in audience members. This can be linked back to two of ICSP students' perceived impacts: (1) that ICSP students *Encourage & Inspire* audiences to learn more about other countries and cultures, and (2) that ICSP students *Provide New Perspectives*, which dispel popularly portrayed misconceptions of other countries that are supported by the media. It is a testament to the universal impacts of the program that both ICSP student and community partner accounts of ICSP impacts complement one another in such a balanced way.

Another requester highlighted the value of ICSP students' personal accounts as a learning tool, compared to print sources of information:

*It's such a different way of learning instead of just looking in a book and you know reading about a place; it's still hard to get ... to actually see a person and hear their story, it's such a different perspective than ... reading it in book.*

This once again reinforces the power of ICSP presentations to personalize international news in a way that compels audience members to actually care, engage, and potentially take action—instead of feeling apathy and simply flipping to the next page. Personalizing headlines is a perceived impact by ICSP students, but an experienced impact by community partner organizations.

### *Memorable Moments*

For this section, I asked community partners to share their most memorable moments with ICSP. Similar to the vast majority of ICSP students, four of the eight

community partners interviewed (50%) listed students by name, and spoke of the way ICSP students made a memorable connection with audience members. One requester described how an ICSP student was able to relate her story to Apple Valley High School students:

*Your girl from [said country]... Grew up in the street... is here [at the University of Oregon] because somebody cared enough to get her here... I mean that's the story of my kids. [...] We could have a discussion after she left, "You know, this is someone who is very much like you and has taken advantage of every opportunity that was given to her and look where she is. And that can be you..." To me that was something that resonated.*

This example not only demonstrates a strong connection that was made between an ICSP student and audience members, but it also supports what ICSP students previously stated as one of their perceived impacts—that ICSP students *Encourage & Inspire* their audience members through sharing their personal stories of resilience and survival. In this sense, ICSP students act as role models for young audience members.

Other memorable moments that community partners mentioned included stories of meaningful connections that resulted in transformation among audience members. The requester from Eden Prairie, the rehabilitation center, described one resident who was notoriously “prejudice against Arabs” and had a history of walking out on those ICSP students’ presentations because he thought it was “B.S.” The requester described this resident and his transformation after sitting through another ICSP student’s presentation:

*He didn't like Muslims. And then we got a Muslim student that he didn't know was Muslim because she was [...] European looking. And something about that, and the way she was, [...] really made an impact on him because soon after he was... we had another [student from a Muslim country] come, and he went there and was very polite... and he used to walk out on Muslims, and then... he didn't do that anymore.*

This story illustrates the life-changing impact a single ICSP presentation can have on an audience member. Again, this speaks to the transformative power of ICSP students putting a face, a personal touch, to the stories Americans hear through the media—

*Personalized Headlines*, as I mentioned in the previous section. As the requester from

Highlands, the alternative K-8 school, summarized of these types of interactions: “Getting to know somebody as a person makes such a difference.” ICSP’s community partners have stories upon stories as evidence of just that.

### *Why It Matters*

The following section will discuss community partners’ perspectives on why the work of ICSP is important. Responses to this question revealed two major themes that rose to the surface—both of which were also themes in ICSP students’ responses to the same question: promoting understanding and survival in a globalized society.

#### i. Promote Understanding

Three of the eight community partners interviewed (37%) said the work of ICSP is important because it promotes understanding. While this was a theme ICSP students mentioned, as well, the community partners’ take on ICSP promoting understanding came with stronger tones of reflection on their own American views and biases, and how ICSP is important because it seeks to change those, or help audiences move past those biases. The requester from Funshine Childcare Center stated, of the relevancy of ICSP’s work:

*The world is such a big place and I think that....maybe this is true of lot of different people in a lot of different places, but I only have this American perspective, that we’re very narrow in terms of the way that we see the world and I think we very much view the world through American eyes that don’t really consider other perspectives a lot [...] seeing where other people are coming from, understanding other people’s experiences, and just getting that sort of... a more global view of the world [...] I think that’s important.*

By this statement, the community partner acknowledge the need for greater understanding among American audiences, and recognizes ICSP for the important service it provides in promoting understanding of new perspectives. Along those same lines, the requester from Apple Valley High School explained of their students:

*I think we live in a country that... they've never lived in a time when their country wasn't the biggest deal on the block. And it's good for them to see other countries that don't have that perspective of America, that maybe America's hurt them [...] I think it allows them to look at us, themselves, in a little different way.*

Also falling under the ICSP student-identified categories of ICSP *Providing New Perspective* and promoting *Self-Awareness & Self-Discovery*, this quote illustrates the multifaceted value of broadening American audiences' understanding of their own culture with respect to others around the world. As the requester from Highlands alternative K-8 school summarized of ICSP, "It definitely builds more understanding, even if it might be a small glimpse." All of these quotes act in support of the notion that ICSP is important because it promotes understanding, particularly of non-American perspectives.

#### ii. Survival in Globalized Society

Four of the eight community partners interviewed (50%) stated that the work of ICSP is important because it equips audiences with greater cross-cultural competence, which is essential for survival in today's increasingly globalized society. From simple social interactions in daily life to workplace scenarios, requesters highlighted the importance of being able to understand and effectively communicate with people of different backgrounds—ICSP helps audiences do just that.

The University of Oregon professor from the English Language Institute pointed to the need for intercultural competence as part of college students' professional development: "I think a lot of these students [...] the majority of them are business majors. A lot of them, they're going to be dealing with different people from different cultures." The requester later went on to say, of ICSP's impact on their students, "It's not only something that's enriching, it's something that I think will help them in their future career." In this

sense, ICSP is important because it prepares college audience members for having successful cross-cultural interactions in their professional lives.

The University of Oregon professor who teaches a class on cross-cultural communication described why ICSP's fostering understanding across cultures is important for audiences' personal interactions and beyond:

*In the US the demographics are totally changing and we've got lots of cultural shifts happening with large new populations of Spanish-speaking peoples and also immigrant communities are growing larger in different parts of the country and so we're bumping up against it right here at home, and also buzzword globalization... everyone is having more opportunity to kind of bump against peoples from other places so it's really critical that we do a better job of communicating... and I see a bigger goal here... I know it's gonna sound so trite but the whole world peace thing, and what is happening in the Middle East and in Paris... there's just issues all around the world and they're tied to culture.*

The UO professor touches on a lot of aspects in this quote. Initially, they begin by pointing to the need for intercultural competence and better communication for peaceful interactions as part of daily life in the melting pot that is the United States. Then, they tie this concept of cultural understanding to the bigger picture of having world peace, and that this dream begins with people of different backgrounds having compassion for each other's perspectives. No matter the scale, ICSP plays an important role in moving audience members towards greater understanding and compassion for people of different backgrounds.

The parent volunteer from Highlands, the K-8 alternative school, described how ICSP students are able to bridge this gap of cultural understanding in ways that other news sources fall short:

*It's so hard with the media—little bits about people, countries, reality TV—we don't really see people as people, or humans or humans—the more we can get that personal view of what the country is like, what the people are like—not everyone is able to travel, but having more interactions with different people will have more positive outcomes instead of going towards, you know... war.*

This requester speaks to the humanizing impact of ICSP students; they make personal connections with audience members, which in turn fosters greater care and understanding for the cultural background the ICSP student represents. The requester also labeled this as an important means of combating cultural misunderstandings and even avoiding war. On local and global scales, both ICSP students and community partners agree the work of ICSP is important because it fosters peace and understanding between cultures. I will discuss the overlap between ICSP student and community partner responses in greater detail in the Data Discussion section below.

### **Interview Questions: SWOT Analysis**

#### *Strengths*

As the continued adaptation of a SWOT analysis, I asked community partners what they perceived to be the strengths of ICSP. The themes that emerged from this question were: the program logistics, ICSP students, and exposure to other cultures.

##### i. Program Logistics

Five of the eight community partners interviewed (62%) said the process of requesting ICSP students was a strength of the program. Requesters complimented the requesting process by calling it “well-organized”, “easy” and “really positive”. Others went on to say of the process, “communication is great”, “very quick response with students & office”, and “no bureaucracy”. Overall, these responses indicate ICSP is a user-friendly, convenient service for these requesters.

## ii. ICSP Students

Four of the eight community partners interviewed (50%) called ICSP students themselves one of the strengths of the program. In particular, three requesters (37%) mentioned being impressed with the diversity of the countries represented by students. The requester from Wayzata Community Center commented “The variety is so amazing” while the requester from Highlands, the K-8 alternative school, appreciated that ICSP students “are so excited, enthusiastic, not rigid, and willing to take suggestions”. The requester from Eden Prairie, the rehabilitation center, added that he believes students & audiences are “learning from each other” in ICSP presentations. The overarching messages that can be gleaned from these comments are community partners’ appreciation for ICSP students and the mutually beneficial exchanges they foster; the diversity students represent; and the attitudes they bring to presentations.

## iii. Exposure to Other Cultures

Three of the eight community partners interviewed (37%) mentioned the exposure to cultures as one of ICSP’s strengths. Referring to ICSP students, the requester from Eden Prairie talked of the “different perspectives that they bring” and the “information and cultural things they have to show” as being strengths of the program. The requester from Funshine Childcare Center said of the program, “Just that it exists I think is incredible. I think it’s so wonderful that there are people who are available to share, you know, information about their lives and their cultures.” These quotes reflect community partners’ gratitude and appreciation for this service of students sharing their cultures. As one requester said of ICSP, *just that it exists* is a strength of the program—that says a lot about requesters’ sentiments toward ICSP.

## *Challenges*

In this section, I will delve into the weakness or challenges of ICSP, as prescribed by community partners. The prominent themes from these responses were: discrepancies between community partner expectations and actual outcomes, uncomfortable moments during presentations, and transportation.

### i. Discrepancies between Expectations & Outcomes

When listing the weaknesses or challenges of the program, four of the eight community partners interviewed (50%) described at one time or another experiencing some discrepancy between their expectations for ICSP students' presentation and the actual outcome. Three of these requesters (37% of total requesters, 75% of this group) claimed responsibility for not taking the time to appropriately communicate their vision to ICSP students. Two of these requesters (25% of total requesters, 50% of this group) said they did not feel comfortable giving explicit instructions or making specific requests of ICSP students. This holds implications for program improvements, which I will address in the Recommendations section.

### ii. Presentation Discomfort

Also a prominent theme that ICSP students listed among program challenges, two requesters (25%) mentioned uncomfortable situations during ICSP presentations as a challenge of the program. Both requesters referred to audiences' questions as the culprit for these uncomfortable moments. One requester described the Q&A time following presentations as "a crap shoot" while another highlighted the "potential for asking difficult questions." As both community partners and ICSP students brought up this issue, this underscores the need for some form of intervention or post-presentation processing facilitated by the program when uncomfortable situations arise. Again, I will develop this idea further in the Recommendations section.

### iii. Transportation

Two community partners (25%) mentioned the requirement of providing ICSP students transportation to and from their presentation was a challenge of the program. While these comments represent a small percentage of those interviewed, I have observed several interested potential community partners who have declined the opportunity to host ICSP students because providing transportation was too great of a barrier for them. I will expand on my thoughts regarding this issue in the Recommendations section.

#### *Suggestions for Improvement*

In this section, I will explore community partners' answers to my query regarding how ICSP could have a greater impact in the community. Three major themes emerged, the last two of which also emerged in ICSP students' responses: lack of knowledge, increased visibility, and diversify community partners.

#### i. Lack of Knowledge

When asked how ICSP could have a greater impact in the community, six out the eight community partners interviewed (a staggering 75%) said some variation of "I don't know what else you do." Community partner responses to this question included, "I don't know the scope of the program", "I don't know what else you do", "I don't know how many people you're working with or how many people are requesting", "I don't know where else you give presentations", and "I don't know that much about the program, the department, to be honest with you." Another requester took this a step further and pointed out, "I'm not sure what the mission is – what's behind those interactions – to touch as many people as possible or to have deeper relationships?"

All of these responses point out blaring shortcomings of the program—even ICSP's most dedicated requesters do not have an understanding of what the program does and

who the program serves. This is especially problematic from a public relations standpoint; if ICSP's biggest supporters cannot articulate to others how they may be able to engage the program, how can ICSP expect to grow their outreach in meaningful ways? This feedback provided tremendous fodder for recommendations for program improvement, which will be described in greater detail in the Recommendations section. In brief, this indicated a clear need for community partner education about ICSP's services and outreach activities.

#### ii. Increased Visibility

Building off the previous theme, four of the eight community partners interviewed (50%) mentioned that ICSP should increase its visibility to achieve greater community impact. Two community partners had nearly identical suggestions that ICSP "Put yourself out there more" and "Get yourselves more out there." Several requesters had suggestions for the best way to go about this, including "a good article in the Register Guard or Eugene Weekly" and "an ad on KLCC", the local NPR radio station. One requester explained she only heard of ICSP "through your pamphlet", referring to ICSP's annual mailing of a brochure to 500 community partners, featuring program information along with student photos and short biographies. Another requester stated that their colleagues "hadn't heard of it", which—through my observations—seems to be a common trend among ICSP requesters. At large, community partner responses reflected a lack of awareness about the program within the wider Eugene/Springfield community; they recommended ICSP invest in publicity efforts to expand its base of community partners and ultimately achieve a greater impact.

#### iii. Diversify Community Partners

Four of the eight community partners interviewed (50%) had suggestions for how ICSP could diversify its pool of community partners. One of the requesters identified "community groups and churches" as major untapped resources for ICSP presentations. Another requester demonstrated skepticism about ICSP's current partnerships with a

number of elderly homes, “Why just senior citizens? Is that just a filler?” This requester believed ICSP could have a greater impact by reaching younger audiences, who they believe have more potential to go out and apply the lessons learned from ICSP in society—perhaps more so than someone who will likely spend the rest of their days in a nursing home.

Other requesters suggested bolstering ICSP’s impact on UO’s campus by partnering with sororities and fraternities, and connecting ICSP students with more staff meetings and classrooms on campus. Another requester suggested modifying the kinds of interactions ICSP students have with audiences—instead of giving a one-time presentation, this requester suggested a model of relationship building in which an ICSP student would repeatedly visit the same classroom overtime and serve as a mentor to the students.

All of these suggestions go to show that ICSP has plenty of opportunity for expansion; it is simply a matter of strategizing which relationships the program would like to focus on cultivating. This feedback also holds implications for recommendations of how ICSP can encourage its community partners to recruit other community partners; this will be explored at greater lengths in the Recommendations section.

CHAPTER VI  
RESULTS: QUANTITATIVE MEASURES

**Program Statistics**

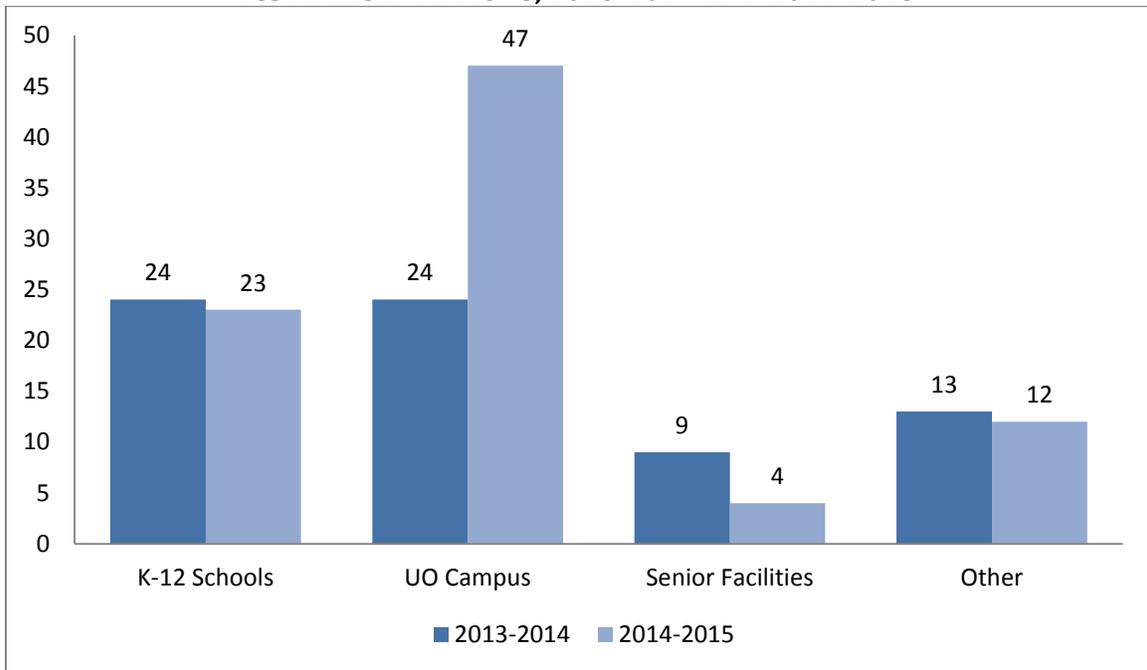
During the 2013-2014 Academic Year, 70 organizations requested ICSP students to deliver some form of cultural presentation or service. Of those organizations, 24 requesters (34%) were K-12 schools; this included elementary schools, high schools, charter schools, and alternative schools. Another 24 requesters (34%) were from UO campus; these requesters included undergraduate- and graduate-level courses, departmental staff meetings, English Language Institute (ELI) courses, and student organizations on campus. Nine requesters (13%) were senior facilities; this included assisted living facilities, nursing homes, and rehabilitation centers. The remaining 13 requesters (19%) were a conglomerate of other organizations; this category included community colleges, community centers, and other community groups such as Rotary or the Lion's Club.

At the time of writing, as of mid-May 2015, the number of requesters during the 2014-2015 Academic Year only increased by two from the previous year. Of the total 72 community partner organizations who submitted requests in 2014-2015, 23 requesters (32%) were K-12 schools, 34 requesters (47%) were UO-affiliated, 4 requesters were senior facilities (5%), and 12 requesters (16%) were other organizations. Over the course of a year, these numbers indicate a noticeable decrease in senior facility community partners, but also a considerable increase—almost double—in UO campus organizations. This is a good indicator that campus organizations and classrooms are taking advantage of

ICSP at higher rates. The decreased rate of senior facilities, from my observations, is due to staff turnover in those organizations, as well as difficulties providing transportation. The number of K-12 school requesters and other requesters (e.g. libraries, community colleges, etc.) remained approximately the same.

Figure 6.1 reflects the change in actively requesting community partner organizations between the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 Academic Years.

**Figure 6.1. NUMBER OF COMMUNITY PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS WHO REQUESTED ICSP PRESENTATIONS, 2013-2014 AND 2014-2015**

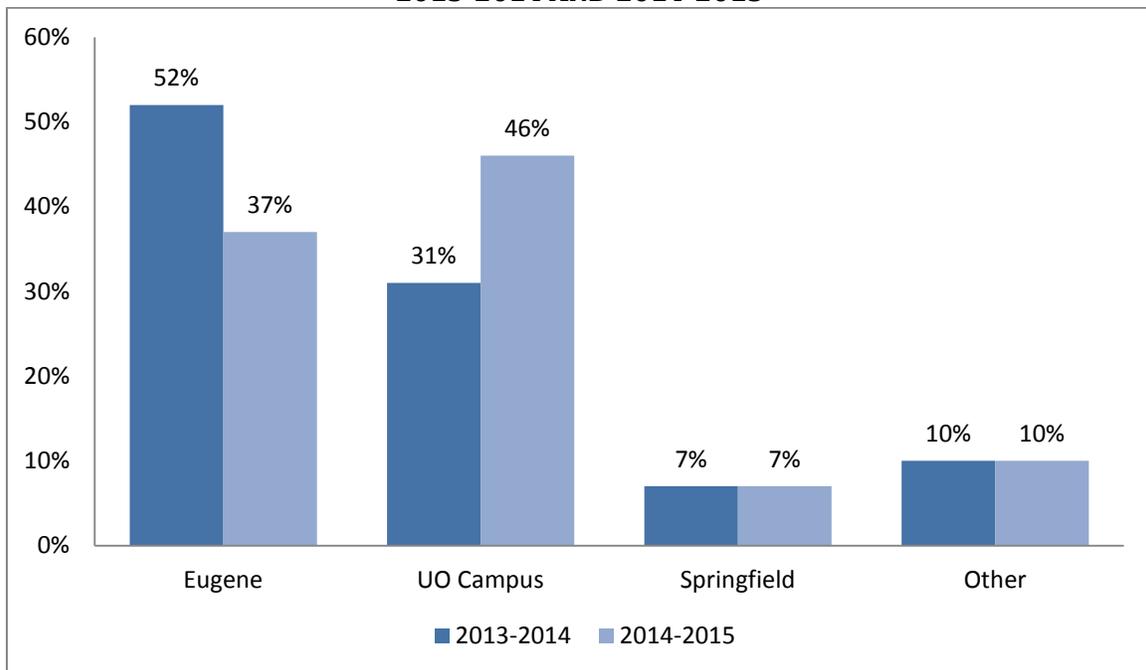


In terms of the geographic location of community partner organizations during the 2013-2014 Academic Year, 51% of requesting organizations were located in Eugene; 31% of all requesting organizations were on UO's campus; only 7% of requesting organizations were located in Springfield; and 10% of requesting organizations were located in areas outside of Eugene/Springfield, such as Salem, Junction City, Coburg, Cottage Grove, and Jasper.

In terms of the geographic location of community partner organizations during the 2014-2015 Academic Year, 37% of requesting organizations were located in Eugene; 46% of all requesting organizations were on UO's campus; only 7% of requesting organizations were located in Springfield; and 10% of requesting organizations were located in areas outside of Eugene/Springfield, such as Salem, Junction City, Coburg, Cottage Grove, and Jasper.

Figure 6.2 illustrates the changes in the geographic distribution of community partners between the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 Academic Years.

**Figure 6.2. GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNITY PARTNERS, 2013-2014 AND 2014-2015**



While data in Figure 6.2 illustrate an increase in UO-affiliated community partners from 2013-2014 to 2014-2015, this explains why the percentage of requests taking place in

the Eugene local community (and non-UO campus) has decreased between 2013-2014 and 2014-2015.

In 2013-2014, ICSP students filled a total of 417 requests for cultural presentations in the local community. This number is lower than the annual program average of 600 presentations because, for the purpose of this program evaluation, I did not include the ICSP requests for students' attendance of Saturday Meetings. ICSP students are required to attend two Saturday Meetings per term, and they receive credit towards their ICSP hours requirement for their attendance. Considering ICSP averaged a total of 45 students in the program throughout the year, this accounts for about 180 requests (which would bring the annual grand total of ICSP requests to about 600). Typically, I include these requests in ICSP's annual program report totals to demonstrate the greatest possible impact, and to follow the protocol established by previous ICSP Coordinators. However, I did not include these requests in the total for this evaluation because I feel they reflect a fulfillment of program requirements more so than outreach to the community, and would thus not be relevant to this assessment of ICSP's impact on the community.

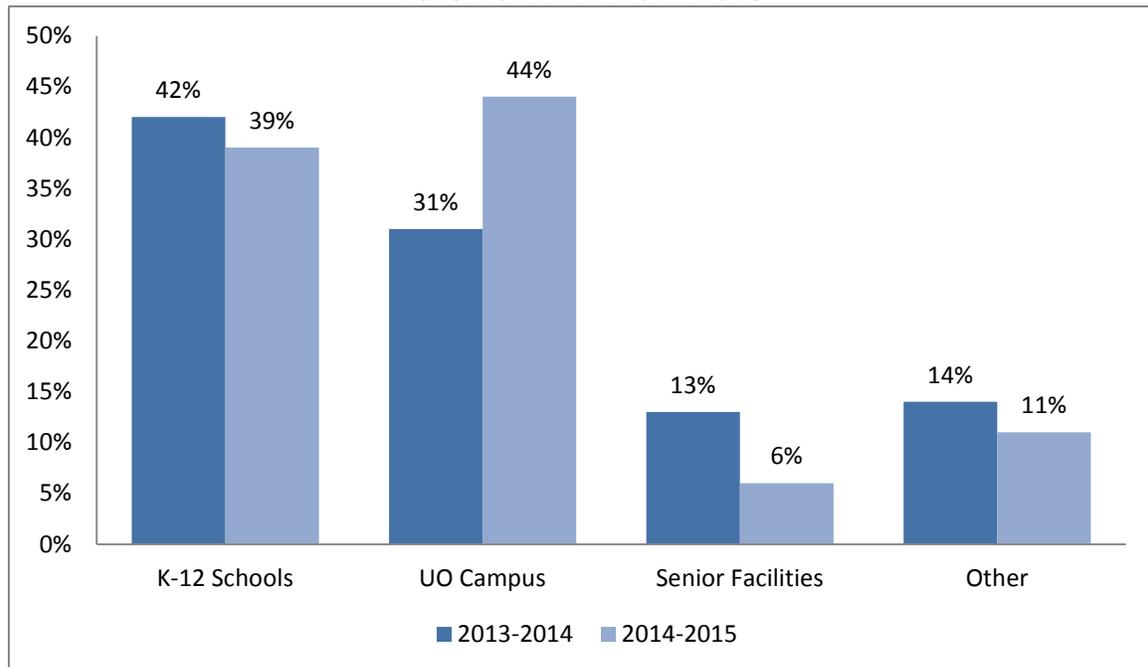
Requests are defined as one ICSP student delivering a presentation. For example, a school teacher could host a 1-hour panel discussion in her classroom, but this could count as four requests if the teacher invited four ICSP students to sit on the panel. As the ICSP Coordinator, I keep a log of every request that is filled throughout the year. I went through the Request Log for 2013-2014, and coded each request as one of four categories described in the above paragraphs: (1) K-12 schools, (2) University of Oregon campus, (3) senior facilities, and (4) other organizations.

Of the 417 requests completed in 2013-2014, 176 requests (42%) took place in K-12 schools; 131 requests (31%) took place on UO's campus; 52 requests (12%) took place in senior facilities; 58 requests (14%) took place in other organizations.

In 2014-2015, ICSP students filled a total of 527 requests for cultural presentations in the local community – an increase of more than 100 presentations from the previous year. Of those 527 requests, 207 requests (39%) took place in K-12 schools; 229 requests (43%) took place on UO's campus; 33 requests (6%) took place in senior facilities; 58 requests (11%) took place in other organizations.

Figure 6.3 depicts this dichotomy of the type of organizations at which ICSP students delivered presentations in 2013-2014 and 2014-2015.

**Figure 6.3. ORGANIZATIONAL CATEGORY DISTRIBUTION OF REQUESTS COMPLETED, 2013-2014 AND 2014-2015**



This discrepancy in annual requests may be due, in part, to ICSP Coordinator turnover and the fact that the ICSP Brochure—the program's current sole marketing campaign—was sent out two weeks later than usual during the 2013-2014 academic year, which then delayed the scheduling of some Fall Term requests.

In response to this dip in requests, I initiated a more targeted marketing strategy in 2014-2015, by researching more K-12 schools and sending them information about the program; I also enlisted the help of the ICSP Administrative Assistant & Publicity Coordinator to update the community partner database with new contact information. All of these factors may account for the increase in ICSP requests between 2013-2014 and 2014-2015.

## CHAPTER VII

### DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

In this section, I will discuss similarities and contradictions among ICSP student and community partner interview responses. I will also provide further explanation for certain trends in themes.

#### **Common Themes**

ICSP students and community partners both represent different perspectives in ICSP, and therefore some of their responses reflected upon elements of the program unique to their respective interests. However, there were certain themes that emerged in both ICSP student and community partner interviews; these themes represent the distinctive competencies of ICSP—those services or impacts unique to this program. I will explore the common themes that emerged by the corresponding question headings.

#### *Program Impact*

There was overlap in interview responses between what ICSP students perceived to be their impact in the community, and what community partners experienced as ICSP's impact. In terms of the ICSP students interviewed, 36% said their impact was spreading knowledge and positive feelings about their home country/culture, and 45% said they provide the community new perspectives. Community partners supported these claims with 50% of the community partners interviewed calling their interactions with ICSP “generally positive”; 75% attesting to ICSP's impact of providing rare exposure to new

cultures; and 37% claiming the impact of ICSP is providing audience members with perspective.

While both groups' responses alluded to similar impacts, their respective definitions of these impacts differed slightly. ICSP students highlighted that in spreading knowledge of their country, they also promoted positive feelings about their country. Although community partner responses did not discount that claim, their responses focused more on the fact that this cultural learning is a rare opportunity for their populations.

Both groups also mentioned providing perspective as being an impact of ICSP. ICSP students described this as looking at a single issue in a different light, while community partners mostly described this as providing comparison for examining their own lives (e.g. not seeing oneself as poor compared to others). As America is typically categorized as a more individualistic society, this may account for community members' greater focus on themselves over others. There is not enough evidence to correlate this discrepancy with cultural background, but it does provide an interesting contrast worthy of further exploration.

These slight variations reflect the lenses of each group, while also unifying the responses from each side to illustrate common impacts experienced from engagement with ICSP.

### *Memorable Moments*

When describing their most memorable, meaningful, or profound moments in ICSP, 81% of ICSP students mentioned instance of presenters connecting with audiences, while 50% of community partners mentioned the same. Because these connections are largely initiated by the ICSP student, their sense of ownership in this process may account for the greater percentage of ICSP students who claimed this as their most memorable moment.

Among ICSP students, 27% also mentioned the word *hope* in their responses to this question—that being in ICSP, and particularly in large group gatherings of ICSP students, gives them a sense of hope. While no community partners mentioned *hope* in their responses, this speaks to the powerful impact of ICSP students as a group. Though ICSP students foster cultural understanding in the community as individuals, as a group, they represent much more—a sense of hope for good, for change, and for peace in the world. ICSP students have the unique opportunity to sense that through their experience as members of such an international group.

### *Why it Matters*

When considering why the work of ICSP is important, ICSP students and community partners were almost identical in their responses—both in terms of reasoning and response rate. Overall, 36% of ICSP students and 37% of community partners stated ICSP is important because it promotes understanding. In addition, 54% of ICSP students and 50% of community partners said the work of ICSP is important for survival in our globalized society.

The remaining two responses of ICSP students included the value of ICSP as a nonconventional news source (36%) and means of fostering self-awareness and self-discovery (54%). These responses can actually be linked back to community partners' responses for the impacts of ICSP—that 37% of community partners say ICSP provides perspective in the sense it helps audience members examine their place in the world with respect to others. In other words, as stated by ICSP students, ICSP promotes self-awareness.

Community partners' (25%) other stated impact of the program is that ICSP students personalize headlines. This can also be linked to 36% of ICSP students' notion that ICSP serves as a nonconventional news source.

In both cases, ICSP students and community partners agree about the program outcomes; they simply assign different meanings to these outcomes, as being either impacts of the program or explanations for the value of the program. There is much overlap between these two designations, which can cloud understanding of their distinctions. Again, the most important takeaway from this is that students and community partners observe the same program impacts; the existence of those impacts is more relevant than their classification.

### *Strengths*

ICSP students and community partners both agreed on two strengths of the program: program logistics and exposure to other cultures. For ICSP students, 45% listed program logistics as a strength of the program, as did 62% of community partners. In terms of ICSP providing exposure to other cultures, 54% of students listed this as a strength compared to 37% of community partners.

The fact that both ICSP students and community partners listed program logistics—particularly the requesting process—as a strength of the program is a strong indicator of ICSP’s effectiveness in coordinating presentations. This provides important feedback about the program’s accessibility to the community, which is essential for program expansion.

Stakeholders of ICSP identifying the program as a source for exposure to other cultures also highlights one of the trademarks or distinctive competencies of ICSP. This program provides an invaluable service to the community in terms of cultural education, and that is evidenced by student and community partner responses. This is an important service to advertise when promoting the program and demonstrating its contributions to the community.

### *Challenges*

Many of the challenges ICSP students and community partners respectively listed pertained to each group's individual interests. For ICSP students, challenges included financial struggles, lack of transitional support and time management; for community partners, challenges included providing transportation for presentations and discrepancies between community partners' expectations and outcomes for ICSP presentations. These challenges reflect each group's individual experiences with ICSP. However, there was one common theme that emerged from both stakeholders' responses: presentation discomfort.

Through interview responses, 27% of ICSP students and 25% of community partners shared experiences of discomfort during ICSP presentations, largely due to inappropriate or insensitive questions that were asked during presentations. While it may be upsetting to hear these accounts, it is positive to learn that this is an issue both ICSP students and community partners are attuned to and concerned with addressing. Further implications for this challenge are explored in the Recommendations section below.

### *Suggestions for Improvement*

Remarkable, both student and community partner responses reflected similar suggestions for program improvement. Both parties agreed that ICSP could benefit from increased visibility, with 63% of students and 50% of community partners marking this as a suggestion for improvement. Attracting identical response rates, 63% of students and 50% of community partners also suggested ICSP diversify its base of community partners to expand the program's impact. These response rates send a strong message about the need for ICSP to bolster its marketing strategies and continue on a path to program expansion.

## **Summary**

The themes discussed in this section highlight the major overlap between ICSP student and community partner responses. While all themes discussed in the Results section hold meaning, I chose to highlight mainly the responses which drew the highest response rate among stakeholders to underscore their importance in the discussion of ICSP's impacts.

## CHAPTER VIII

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Given all the feedback provided through ICSP student and community partner interviews, observations, and statistics, I have developed a series of recommendations for program improvements. These improvements can be categorized under the following three themes: student support, presentation logistics, and community outreach.

#### **Student Support**

The recommendations in this section will focus on measures that will increase student support in the program. These recommendations include initiatives to address students' professional development, connection with alumni, financial struggles, and desire for greater connectedness among the group of ICSP students.

#### *Professional Development*

Students expressed feeling a lack of preparedness for their post-graduation endeavors, including searching and applying for jobs in the US. While ICSP provides valuable professional training in many areas, I have observed that ICSP students are not well versed in translating these impressive skills into resumes and cover letters. Because ICSP is so fervently dedicated to students' academic success, it seems only appropriate that the program provide structure for students' professional success following graduation. Again, because ICSP produces such impressive graduates, it is also to the benefit of the program's legacy that ICSP make every effort to help their students succeed professionally.

What a wasted opportunity if such talented students did not excel in their field for lack of knowledge of presenting themselves effectively on paper and in interviews.

Therefore, I recommend ICSP incorporate professional development into the scholarship program's hours requirements. ICSP students should be required to attend one professional development event per term, for which they will receive one hour of credit per term towards their hours requirement. This professional development could take the form of attending a resume workshop, career fair, or a multitude of professional development workshops sponsored by the UO Career Center; it could also mean contacting ICSP alumni for advice, or conducting an informational interview in the student's field of interest.

Due to the pertinence of this issue, this recommendation is already taking shape in ICSP. At the time of writing, the ICSP Coordinator and ICSP Administrative Assistant & Publicity Coordinator are in the process of writing the framework for this new initiative into the scholarship requirements. This programmatic change was announced to all ICSP staff and students at the first Spring Term Saturday Meeting, and this new policy will officially be implemented starting Fall Term 2015.

#### *Alumni Network*

Students' interview responses and my observations have reflected a need to take greater advantage of the network of ICSP alumni. Connecting with ICSP alumni may be a difficult and complicated process since the program only has email or phone contact information for ICSP students who graduated in the last three to four years. Thankfully, in this day and age of social networking, there are ample opportunities for reconnecting with long lost contacts.

#### i. Exit Survey & Database Maintenance

As the first step, I recommend instigating a system for recording and maintaining the contact information of students graduating from the program now, in an effort to break the cycle of missing contact information. This recommendation has also already been implemented, and I have worked with the ICSP Administrative Assistant & Publicity Coordinator to create an exit survey for graduating students, which includes collecting the students' non-UO email address, field of study, post-graduation plans, and joining ICSP's LinkedIn page. This information is input into an alumni database.

In the future, the ICSP Coordinator will be able to use this database to refer current ICSP students to alumni of the same country, region, or field of study. This option should be promoted as a viable fulfillment of the professional development requirement described in the previous recommendation.

#### ii. Alumni Blog

In an effort to reengage alumni who have previously been disconnected from the program, I also recommend maintaining a WordPress blog that is updated monthly with current program news, stories, and photos. Alumni can subscribe to the blog and receive monthly updates, similar to an alumni newsletter, but with the possibility to add comments and share widely, as well as browse through archives.

This recommendation has also already been implemented in ICSP. The ICSP Administrative Assistant & Publicity Coordinator created ICSP's alumni blog: [uoicsp.wordpress.com](http://uoicsp.wordpress.com) and the first installment with photos and program updates was posted in early May 2015. The blog was shared on ICSP's LinkedIn page, and has already received subscribers and visitors from alumni—including one alumna who recognized herself in an ICSP photo from 1991 that was scanned and posted on the blog!

### iii. Prioritizing Alumni Relations

As ICSP looks to its future in hopes of expansion and further program sustainability, it is critical that the program put significant time and energy into developing its alumni network and keeping graduates of the program engaged and up-to-date on program happenings. ICSP has an abundance of resources in its alumni—both in terms of professional networking and financial support. It would be unwise, risky, and wasteful *not* to invest time and resources into this initiative. This should be a top priority of the Director of ICSP in terms of program management and development.

The blog and database maintenance are small first steps, but ICSP leadership should think strategically about actively cultivating relationships with a wide base of alumni in the coming years. Hosting an alumni event and eventually launching a giving campaign should also be in the medium-term plans of the program. Again, the recommendations for the alumni blog and database make up the very early stages of building alumni relations, but ICSP leadership should take next steps in building upon this framework within the next 3 years to maintain momentum.

#### *Financial Support*

Garnering alumni support goes back to another recommendation for student support, which involves offering scholarship money that can be used for living expenses and cost of books. Donations from alumni could help kick-start these funds, which would offer increased financial support and relief for students who struggle financially even beyond the cost of tuition.

### *Student Bonding Opportunities*

Several students mentioned a desire for more opportunities to bond as a group. While the staff and financial resources of the program are already stretched thin, ICSP could still provide structure for ICSP students to take the lead in fostering greater social interaction and bonding as a group.

#### i. ICSP Listserv

I recommend having a listserv for ICSP students to email each other and coordinate social gatherings, similar to the graduate student listservs designated to each department. By ICSP establishing a forum for students to communicate with each other informally, this may increase students' feelings of connectedness and ability to organize social events. This could also serve as a helpful open forum for students to advertise other extracurricular events, offer praise or congratulations, and post openings for anything from campus jobs to roommate want ads.

#### ii. Cohort Representatives & Social Committee

Another solution for increasing social connectedness could be to elect a small Social Committee with two representatives from each cohort. A different cohort could be in charge of sponsoring a social event each term, with the two representatives taking the lead on organizing the event. For example, the 2014 cohort could sponsor a community service project during Fall Term, and the 2013 cohort could sponsor a movie night during Winter Term, etc. This would provide leadership and event planning opportunities for students, while also encouraging group bonding. Student representatives could receive a modest allowance of three hours to count towards their scholarship requirement. These events would be encouraged, but not mandatory. Importantly, this would also limit the ICSP staff's

responsibility in organizing more events, since their ICSP-designated FTE has already reached capacity.

### **Presentation Logistics**

The recommendations in this section will focus on improvements to ICSP students' presentations and the requesting process. Topics addressed in this section will include: transportation, processing uncomfortable presentation situations, encouraging community partner communication with ICSP students, and presentation content.

#### *Transportation*

Some community partners provided feedback that providing transportation for ICSP students to and from their presentation is a challenge in requesting ICSP students. I also have observed in several situations that transportation acts as a barrier for some community partners, so much so that they do not follow through with requesting ICSP students because they do not have the resources to provide transportation. Many requesters suggest students take public transportation as an alternative.

From a scheduling standpoint, the prospect of arranging public transportation for presentations provides a multitude of challenges. The ICSP Coordinator, as a .49 FTE graduate teaching fellow, only works 19.5 hours per week. This is barely enough time to accomplish the many responsibilities of this position as it is. The time it would take to look up each community partner's location, match it with a bus schedule, and relay that information to fit the students' class schedule, would create major inconveniences, time management challenges, and frustration for the ICSP Coordinator. In terms of program management, students taking public transportation also would be an inefficient use of resources since students include their transportation time in their reported hours of cultural service.

There are risks involved with moving to a public transportation model, as well. There is the possibility of students missing the bus or lacking familiarity with the local public transportation system, which could result in the student missing the presentation altogether. Students could also become lost more easily; for those students without Smartphones and GPS capabilities, this would also create an inequity and increased challenges for locating community partner organizations. That being said, it is also unfortunate that ICSP is limiting its potential for expansion due to this program requirement.

Taking all these factors into consideration, I stand by the current policy of requiring community partners to provide transportation. The only exception I would recommend in this situation, is to provide public transportation as an option for ICSP students presenting at Normandale Community College. Transportation has repeatedly come up as a challenge for this organization, and this is an institution with which ICSP, on behalf of the UO, would benefit from continuing to build and strengthen relations.

Otherwise, the ICSP Coordinator is not equipped to support offering public transportation as an option for all requesters. Should the ICSP Coordinator ever become a full-time position, or be designated additional FTE for support, this issue should be reexamined for consideration.

#### *Debrief Support for Presentation Discomfort*

ICSP students and community partners both mentioned a challenge of ICSP is the possibility for audience members to ask ICSP students uncomfortable questions during presentations. While this cannot be avoided altogether, ICSP should take steps to offer support in debriefing uncomfortable situations that arise.

Following every ICSP presentation, the ICSP Administrative Assistant & Publicity Coordinator sends requesters a feedback form regarding the presentation. In this feedback form, I recommend adding a field that asks, “Were there any challenging moments during the presentation (ex: an uncomfortable questions that was asked, inappropriate statement that was made by either ICSP student(s) or audience members) that you would like the ICSP Coordinator to follow up about?” This could be preceded by a question asking “What were the positive aspects of this presentation?” to offset the potentially off-putting presence of the question regarding presentation challenges.

A similar field could be added to ICSP student’s presentation timecards. Currently there is a field for students to submit comments about their presentation when they submit their timecard, but an additional field prompting students to share difficult situations may yield a higher rate of incidence reporting.

Alternatively, ICSP could also create a “Request for Follow Up” form, which could be used by students and community partners alike. This would be an electronic form available through the ICSP website (similar to the requesting and feedback forms) that would generate an email to the ICSP Coordinator anytime. The concerned individual could describe the situation and request follow up from the ICSP Coordinator. While this would be a reasonable option, the form would have to be appropriately publicized among community partners to spread awareness of this resource.

In any case, ICSP prides itself on preparing students to approach challenging questions as a learning opportunity; therefore, the program should offer support to its students and community partners in mitigating particularly challenging situations and encouraging understanding. The ICSP Coordinator could help facilitate a discussion and offer suggestions between the ICSP student and community partner, which would ultimately result in greater learning for all parties involved.

### *Encourage Pre-Presentation Communication*

Several community partners expressed that at one point or another, they experienced some discrepancy between their expectations for ICSP presentations and the actual outcomes. Two community partners also explicitly stated that they did not feel comfortable making specific requests of ICSP students. This was concerning because that communication of requesters' desires or vision is the very basis for successful ICSP presentations.

To address this issue, I recommend the ICSP Coordinator add instructional language in the request confirmation email template sent to requesters, which encourages requesters to take advantage of their communication with students. Currently, the confirmation email template informs requesters that ICSP students will contact requesters to confirm their participation. However, framing this interaction differently would empower and encourage requesters to state their needs and communicate openly with ICSP students about their vision for the presentation. Clearly communicating expectations in advance will result in greater community partner satisfaction, and it will also help the students to know how to prepare for each presentation.

### *Presentation Content*

Several requesters communicated that there were certain elements they wished every ICSP would include in their presentation. A map of the student's country, as well as an indication of the country's location on a world map were both high on requesters' list of suggestions. Basic statistics such as the country's population, relative size to a state in the US (example: my country is three times the size of Oregon), major industries, percentage of religions, etc. are also helpful facts for ICSP students to have prepared for presentations.

I recommend implementing a homework assignment in the Fall Seminar which requires new ICSP students to fill out a fact sheet with all of this information, as well as find two maps which show the student's country and its relative location on a world map. The Director of ICSP and ICSP Coordinator will preface this assignment with the importance of catering each presentation to fit the audience, but they will also underscore the importance of students knowing these facts and being able to incorporate them into presentations when appropriate.

This recommendation is also in the process of being implemented. The ICSP Coordinator and ICSP Administrative Assistant & Publicity Coordinator are collaborating to create this homework assignment, and this assignment will be implemented in the 2015 Fall Seminar.

### **Community Outreach**

This third and final section of recommendations will focus on community outreach. These recommendations address the following subjects: community partner education, platforms for expanding ICSP's community partner base, an ICSP showcase event, branding strategy, and final cautionary notes.

#### *Community Partner Education*

A majority of community partners admitted they do not know what ICSP does beyond the partnerships with their respective organizations. This indicates a need for improved communication with community partners.

I recommend the ICSP Coordinator emails all community partners in the program's database at the beginning and end of each term; currently email communication with community partners is sent out at the beginning and end of each academic year. These

emails should describe the demographics of ICSP's community partners (K-12 classrooms, community centers, senior facility activity centers, libraries, etc.) and give examples of how ICSP students can engage with audiences (panels at staff meetings, story times, dance lessons/demonstrations, fashion show, music performance or song teaching, speakers in classes or community meetings, resources for language learners, interviewed for class projects).

Currently, the ICSP Coordinator prepares annual reports on the total amount of cultural service hours, as well as the number of presentations delivered and community partners who made requests. I recommend the ICSP Coordinator prepare these reports on a quarterly basis, and also tally numbers of the types of organizations who request ICSP students (K-12 schools, UO campus, senior facilities, and other).

The data described above should be shared in emails with community partners on a quarterly basis; the ICSP Administrative Assistant and Publicity Coordinator should offer support in producing visual aids—photos and infographics—to illustrate the program's impact and achievements in email communication with community partners. The overall approach to community partner communication should shift to a more engaging, visual style, similar to the ICSP Administrative Assistant and Publicity Coordinator's weekly internal newsletter to ICSP students. Moving to a more engaging communication style would help educate community partners and spread awareness of ICSP's impact as well as the many diverse ways the program can be used to bring cultural enrichment.

The data described above should also be shared with ICSP students on a quarterly basis. This will begin to address the issue that some ICSP students are not confidently aware of their impact in the program; statistics on the many organizations students have served and different types of audience students have reached will help paint the picture of the students' impact.

### *Expanding Community Partner Portfolio*

ICSP students and community partners both shared ideas of new populations ICSP could partner with to expand the program's impact. Instead of assigning all recruiting efforts to the ICSP Coordinator, I recommend creating platforms for ICSP students and community partners to share and recommend the work of ICSP with new organizations and populations.

#### i. Training Students to Market ICSP

ICSP students themselves are the program's best marketing tools. Every ICSP presentation is an opportunity to share about the program, its connection to the University of Oregon, and how others can request ICSP students to speak at their own events. In my observations, few students take the time to explain their connection to ICSP and UO in their presentations—this is a missed opportunity to promote the program to audience members still unaware of this service.

During the Fall Seminar as well as in Saturday Meetings, I recommend the Director of ICSP and ICSP Coordinator train ICSP students to give an ICSP elevator speech. This 30-second or one-minute pitch should include the basic framework of the program and information on where interested parties should go to request ICSP students. Borrowing from Portland State University's ICSP practices, ICSP students at the University of Oregon should carry general business cards with the program's website and contact information for the ICSP Coordinator. These can be distributed to interested audience members following presentations, and this would be an easy, low-cost advertising option.

ICSP students should also be given hours for speaking about ICSP in their classes, mentioning the program to professors during office hours, or visiting other classes in relevant departments (History, Romance Languages, International Studies, etc.) to promote

the services of ICSP. Many students mentioned there is little awareness of ICSP on campus. If each student presented in even one of their classes of 30-50 students per term, awareness of the program would quickly expand exponentially.

#### ii. Provide Referral Resources

As ICSP students and community partners both had ideas of new partner organizations for ICSP, there should be encouragement—if not, a structure—for these stakeholders to refer potential new community partners to the program.

The Director of ICSP and ICSP Coordinator should get in the habit of encouraging ICSP students to self-advertise and seek out presentation opportunities within their own networks, while always referring requesters to the ICSP Coordinator to walk through the formal requesting process. ICSP students are ambassadors of their country as much as they are ambassadors of the program—students should be used as much as possible to market the program and recruit new community partners.

Community partners should also have a platform for referring ICSP to different organizations. I recommend creating a referral form on the ICSP homepage which community partners as well as students could access. This form would generate an email sent to the ICSP Coordinator with a suggestion of a certain organization for ICSP to contact. The ICSP Coordinator could reach out to the suggested organization with an email template including information about the program and next steps for requesting students. This would be another way of encouraging students and community partners to market the program, while putting limited strain or responsibility on the ICSP Coordinator.

### *ICSP Day*

As another means of promoting the program, multiple students and community partners suggested that ICSP sponsor its own event—“ICSP Day.” This would be an event open to the public that would showcase ICSP students and their many skills and talents to people on campus and in the local community. I recommend this be a student-organized event that would take place perhaps 1-2 years down the road once other smaller marketing initiatives are underway. This would be an excellent leadership and event planning professional development opportunity for students, and a fun way to drum up support, interest, and name recognition for the program.

### *Branding*

As ICSP moves forward in its process of expanding the program, identifying strategic community partners, and requesting funding for programmatic support, the program’s leadership needs to carefully consider the branding of the program. In the next 1-2 years, I strongly recommend that ICSP adopt a formal mission statement and create a logo for the program—the former being the most important of these two initiatives.

When seeking financial support for the program as well as advertising the program more widely, it will be essential for ICSP to succinctly explain what drives the program and what impact it ultimately hopes to achieve. As one requester asked, is the program’s ultimate goal to reach as many people as possible, or develop deep connections? These are questions that ICSP’s leadership needs to thoughtfully consider and outline in a mission statement; this will also help guide the direction of the program in its aims for expansion.

For the sake of this thesis, I have deemed ICSP’s mission to be “fostering understanding across cultures” and “supporting international students’ pursuit of higher

education” but these are only perceptions from my observations and experience working in the program—nowhere is this formally stated as the mission of the program.

The ICSP leadership should undergo the process of creating a mission statement to clarify the program’s goals, provide direction for future expansion, clearly communicate the program’s purpose through marketing initiatives, and serve as an attractive mantra that donors can identify with and be proud to support.

### *Cautionary Notes*

While all of these marketing initiatives—save ICSP Day—would be effective, efficient, and relatively low-cost in terms of implementation, I caution the staff against implementing all of these strategies at once without outside preparation, which will be described below. As it stands, the ICSP Coordinator juggles a lot of responsibilities and adding a new wave of requesters with the current system would be wonderful for the program, but overwhelming and unmanageable given the ICSP Coordinator’s designated .49 FTE.

The ICSP Coordinator should be a full-time position; the opportunity for program expansion and development would increase dramatically with a full-time employee. Creating funding for this full-time position should be one of the highest priorities of the Director of ICSP, as hiring a full-time ICSP Coordinator would produce a large return on investment considering the ICSP Coordinator’s ability to develop alumni relations and garner financial support from community partners and other stakeholders of the program.

Acknowledging that funding may not be available for a full-time position in the immediate future, there are steps ICSP can take to expand the program’s impact while not overwhelming the ICSP Coordinator. Streamlining the requesting process by creating a more detailed request form asking the exact details of each presentation would save the

ICSP Coordinator hours of correspondence with requesters. I have already designed this new and improved request form, and have met with the Design Team in the Office of International Affairs to seek their approval; the updated form is scheduled to be added to the ICSP homepage in early June 2015.

Conditional on the addition of this new form, I feel confident in recommending the ICSP leadership move forward with implementing the changes suggested in the previous section 2. *Expanding Community Partner Portfolio*. However, major marketing initiatives—as suggested by some community partners—such as an article in the local newspaper or advertisement on KLCC, the local NPR radio station, should *not* be pursued until there is a full-time ICSP Coordinator who can manage the subsequent influx of requests that will undoubtedly follow.

ICSP is an easily-accessible, educational, interesting, and *free* program. ICSP staff should proceed with caution in their marketing efforts, being careful not to advertise the program beyond their capacity to deliver services.

CHAPTER IX  
CRITIQUE OF PROGRAM EVALUATION PROCESS

This section will provide a critique of the evaluation process. I will first explore the impacts of the program evaluation process on both the researcher and the research subjects. Then, I will provide a critique of the program evaluation process and make recommendations for future studies.

**Impact of Process**

Gathering the data for this program evaluation gave me a new level of understanding of the program's functions and its community partners. Through site visits and in-person interviews, I got to meet and speak with requesters with whom I have only ever communicated via email over the past two years. Visiting Eden Prairie, the rehabilitation center for physically and mentally disabled individuals, and getting to shake hands with residents and listen to them talk about their favorite ICSP student made the impacts described in this program evaluation come alive for me in new ways.

Accompanying an ICSP student to their presentation at Apple Valley High School, an alternative school for at-risk youth, and listening to the high school students among their groups of friends process and share their favorite takeaways from the presentation in the halls after class—this experience also gave me greater insight into the experiences of both ICSP presenters and audience members. These interactions have informed my knowledge

of the program's functions and deepened my understanding of stakeholders' experience with ICSP.

As the ICSP Coordinator, the process of conducting this program evaluation also provided clarity in understanding the impacts of ICSP. As a staff member of this program, it also created a lot of meaning for the administrative work I do day in and day out. While I could say that a vast majority of my job entails replying to emails, this program evaluation would argue that a vast majority of my job is facilitating interactions for cultural understanding and peace-making. In that sense, this program evaluation provided greater context for the program's impact and why this impact is important. As I will share the program evaluation results with interested ICSP students and community partners in a presentation and open forum for questions & answers, I hope these stakeholders will gain a similar perspective and appreciation for the program's value.

For the students and community partners who participated in the interviews, I observed how the program evaluation process fostered introspection about this program and its role in the lives of these individuals. For ICSP students, this process especially gave them the chance to reflect on what impact they have made in this program. For community partners, this process especially forced them to reflect upon the significance of the program, and why spreading cultural awareness is not just good—but *important*. In many cases, it was evident that these interviews marked the first time these individuals had given serious thought to these deeper questions of the program's impact; it was an informative and telling exercise for everyone involved.

### **Critique of Process & Suggestions for Future Studies**

While the storytelling and SWOT analysis methodologies in the interview process produced a compelling narrative of ICSP's impact as perceived by students and community

partners, I began to question the importance of a program's measured impact versus perceived impact. Although community partners and ICSP students agree that they feel an increase in cultural competence and sensitivity as a result of this program, these testimonies do not provide concrete evidence of their evolution on a scale measuring intercultural competence and sensitivity. This debate of which is more important—that individuals *feel* more culturally competent or that they *test* as more culturally competent—is relevant to this thesis, but also far beyond its scope. Still, it is worth mentioning that this is a debate I grappled with during this program evaluation process. Given my choice of methodologies in this program evaluation, however, it is implicit that I place higher value on stakeholders' feelings than test results.

That being said, there is still value in quantitative methods of program evaluation. The data collected in this program evaluation can act as a springboard for more in-depth, longitudinal quantitative studies of ICSP's impact. For future studies, I recommend including a quantitative measure of intercultural competence and sensitivity (1) for students, before entering the program and after graduating, and (2) for community partner audiences, before and after observing ICSP presentations. These methods would produce quantitative evidence of the program's impacts, acting either in support of or in contrast to the program impacts identified through qualitative methods in this study.

Collecting more robust quantitative data on the community partner organizations ICSP serves would also be instructive in assessing ICSP's current impact and strategies for future impact. By measuring demographics of the populations served at each community partner organization, a future study could reveal which populations ICSP serves most frequently. This could also help ICSP think critically about which populations it would like to prioritize delivering services to, and develop a strategic plan for reaching those populations.

There are innumerable opportunities and implications for future program evaluations of ICSP, given its long program history and diversity of services to the community and international students. Ultimately, this program evaluation has provided an overview of the program's impacts on international student and community partners. With greater resources and more allocation of time, an entire new study could be developed for a more in-depth exploration of any one of those specific impacts; the long-term impacts on alumni of the program is also an area which has yet to be explored.

## CHAPTER X

### CONCLUSION

This program evaluation of ICSP produced a long list of program impacts. ICSP students receive personal, professional, and academic support from their peers in the program, as well as from staff. Yet as members of ICSP, students also provide an invaluable service to the local community by sharing their perspectives and culture with audiences of all backgrounds. These exchanges foster understanding and appreciation of differences among cultures for ICSP students and community partners alike. Community partners gain knowledge and new perspective from ICSP students, but they also provide an education for ICSP students of American culture—spreading an awareness of populations in this country that are less-commonly portrayed in international media. ICSP is a program which brings international students and community members together for a mutually beneficial exchange. At the local level, ICSP fosters friendship; with continued support and programmatic improvement, ICSP can continue to foster friendship, but on a global scale—uniting people of different cultures with understanding and compassion.

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