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## The Asia-California connection: The web site to help Asian students find success when studying English abroad

Ying-Mei Chien

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THE ASIA-CALIFORNIA CONNECTION: THE WEB SITE TO  
HELP ASIAN STUDENTS FIND SUCCESS WHEN  
STUDYING ENGLISH ABROAD

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A Project  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in  
Education:  
Instructional Technology

---

by  
Ying-Mei Chien  
September 2007

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## ABSTRACT

According to the Institute of International Education (IIE), a half million international students enrolled in US higher education institutions in 2005. During this period, students from India, China, South Korea and other Asian countries were enrolling in record numbers in US universities, while the number of Latin American and Caribbean students were showing a decline.

The purpose of this design and development project is to create a unique resource web site for Asian students coming to America to study. This project titled, *Asia-California Connection*, is conceived as an informational online resource for Asia students. It addresses the special needs associated with their living and study experiences in Southern California. Uniquely crafted surveys and interviews provided guidance for the selection of relevant online content. The design plan features a site layout that emphasizes useful content, informative links, contemporary visual design and suggestions and advice topics especially suited to the needs of new Asian students seeking to further their studies in America.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank the outstanding professors at CSUSB for their expertise, support, patience and understanding during my entire study time at the University.

Without their help, this project and my development as a future teacher would not have been possible. I am very grateful.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### BACKGROUND

#### Introduction

There are over 500,000 international students enrolled in higher education institutions in the United States (US) today, according to the Institute of International Education (IIE) and the US Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) (IIE, 2005, ¶ 1).

These international students have different ambitions. Some wish to improve their English speaking skills while others may have a goal of earning a Bachelor (B.A.), a Master (M.A.) or a Doctorate (Ph.D.) degree. These international students, from every continent in the world, choose to study in the US because they believe a US education would afford them the best preparation for their future (Naidu, 2005). No matter what their long-term goal, all international students coming study will face new cultural, living and study experiences and challenges. With a little luck, the transition can be easy. In many cases, however it can be a trying time, making adaptation to the new circumstances a rocky road at best.

## Statement of the Problem

When I arrived from Taiwan to begin my English studies, the college brochure said I would have a 40-minute drive to the place I would be staying. The drive lasted three hours. I was told I would be living in Riverside. I could not wait to see the river. Instead, I saw a lot of desert.

It took quite some time for me to reach that point when I could feel comfortable with the inland area, my place of study, my teachers and surroundings. Before I made these plans, I wish now, I had accurate information about travel times and distances, descriptions of surroundings or best places to live and study.

Significant problems exist for international students who are making plans to study English in America. They do not know what to expect, how to prepare for their journey, where to live, study, make friends, or increase opportunities to practice or master the English language. These conclusions are based on many interviews, research and analysis conducted with fellow international students. This collective experience among students regarding the problems they commonly face provided further information for deciding on this project's purpose—a resource web site to address the needs of the new international student

planning to further their education in America by making that educational experience more productive and enjoyable.

#### Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to create a unique informational web site, with content, information and suggestions especially suited for the Asian student coming to America to study specifically, in Southern California. Since the Asian student has a unique educational background and needs, this project focused on addressing these special concerns.

#### Project Description

This project entailed the development of a web site with contemporary design features, uniquely crafted to provide new Asian students with information and guidance based on information actually collected from other Asian students, who had already experienced the American study system. Within the site's architecture and design is not only useful content for making effective living and study more achievable, but also ample opportunity for questions, answers and student feedback.

#### Project Focus

While all international students experience similar living and learning problems while studying in various

locations in the United States, this project addressed the needs of Asia students seeking to further their education in Southern California, in particular. This decision was made in part because Southern California appeared to be the one of most popular destinations for international students and students were readily available to participate in this project's survey activities.

While initial efforts of the project have focused on the Asian student experience, future endeavors may well address the special needs and issues of students arriving from other international countries. Chapter Four further discusses those possibilities and opportunities.

Regarding the decision to focus attention on the needs of the Asian student, it is interesting to note that the Institute of International Education (IIE) (2005) recent study indicates that students from Asia are enrolling in record numbers in US universities, while the number of students from other international countries remains unchanged or is declining. Thus, in terms of sheer numbers, this research is a compelling.

### Research Questions

In an effort to direct efforts to make this project most beneficial to Asian learners, three main questions for research and examination were developed through

preliminary discussions with education experts and Asian students already living in the United States. By using these three research areas as guides for fact-finding and analysis, a clear direction was established in order to effectively chart the project's course. The three questions posed examined the following essential issues: First, the kinds of unique problems faced by new Asian students due to their education backgrounds in their native countries. Second, the degree to which Asian students' cultural backgrounds affect their learning experiences in the United States, specifically Southern California. Third, how technology, specifically a dedicated web site, may enhance the overall learning experience for new Asian students in America.

#### Significance of the Project

Crafting a web site which provides information for students by students was the significant focus of this project. It could provide new students with a survival kit of information, which they would value as valid advice, in that it came from students who have already lived the experience.

School literature is intended to be helpful, but not always the kind of information the new foreign student

needs, in order to maximize learning opportunities and become successful in their American studies. Of course, time is always required to adjust to new surroundings; however, this problem needed to be addressed in order to make the students' foreign study experience most valuable, both in pre-planning and actually living and studying in a new country, like the USA.

#### Limitations

During the development of the project a few limitations became evident, which should be mentioned. Of the 50 interviews scheduled, only 35 surveys were completed due to student timing and scheduling problems. Also, surveys were primarily conducted in the Riverside area, where student groups seemed to be most available, again due to scheduling issues. Furthermore, there was some difficulty in garnering responses due to limited English capability among very new students.

Other than these few limitations, students seemed anxious to provide participation.

## Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as they apply to the project.

ADDIE Model: The most used methodology for developing new training programs is called Instructional Systems Design (ISD). There are more than 100 different ISD models, but almost all are based on the generic "ADDIE" model, which stands for Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation (Kruse, n.d.).

Graphic Interchange Format (GIF): A common format for image files, especially suitable for images containing large areas of the same color. GIF format files of simple images are often smaller than a file that would be if stored in JPEG format, but GIF format does not store photographic images as well as JPEG.

Links: The words or graphics areas in an HTML document that cause another document to be loaded when the user clicks on them.

Site: A group of computers under a single administrative control.

Universal Resource Locator (URL): Used to specify the name and location of a World Wide Web (WWW) document. It



can also specify other Internet services available  
from WWW browsers. For example: <http://www.google.com>

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

Adapting to a new country's environment, culture and educational environment presents many challenges for foreign students. The extent to which these challenges present themselves can be difficult to anticipate, unless foreign students received some kind of advance coaching or guidance that will aid them in their future educational pursuits. Research in this project has attempted to determine what is and what is not known about this topic and attempted to formulate questions that required further research and examination. The literature review has attempted to discover knowledge, issues and ideas that would aid in developing a useful and effective web site to help Asian learners preparing to study in the US. While the literature review has addressed general Asian background information, it has concentrated, for the most part, on Taiwan and China, since students from these countries were the main focus in the initial phase of this web project.

In deciding to focus attention on the Asian student experience, it was interesting to note the writing from Open Doors (2005), an annual survey by the New York-based

Institute of International Education (IIE). The study gives a sense of the degree to which Asian students pursue higher education goals in the United States. Specifically, the study indicated that Asian countries send 325,000 students to US colleges, including 80,000 from India, 63,000 from China and Taiwan, 53,000 from South Korea and 42,000 from Japan.

On the other hand, combining Latin American and Caribbean countries, there are 68,000 students in US colleges, including 13,000 from Mexico, 7,500 from Colombia, 7,300 from Brazil, 3,600 from Peru and 3,300 from Argentina and Chile.

What Problems do Asian Students Studying in  
America Encounter as a Result of the  
Education they Received in their  
Native Country?

Beginning with educational differences, there appeared to be a gap between how US students and students from Asian countries experienced education in their schools. This point was well addressed in the article, *Academics* (Althen, 2003):

In many countries, including China, students are taught to view education as a receptive activity. Education is seen as a process of absorbing information and ideas from scholars who know a great

deal. In the US educational system, by contrast, education is viewed more as a productive activity. It is a process of acquiring and interpreting information about and a better understanding of things no one completely knows or understands. (p. 1)

This point was also well emphasized in the article,

*Staring at the Walls* by Li and Martin (2004):

Chinese and American educational methods often diverge with regard to structure and respect in teacher-student relationships. According to traditional Chinese culture, students are to respect their teachers and appreciate their lessons. Such respect, however creates some distance between students and teachers. Chinese students are often reluctant to ask questions during class, though they may answer their teachers' questions when called on. Though students are passive during class, they like to conduct out-of-class discussions among themselves regarding their teachers' questions. In contrast to the typical Chinese student-teacher relationship, the American classroom often encourages student to question their teachers. While the Chinese teacher calls on a student for answers, the American teacher prefers volunteered answers from their pupils. (¶ 6)

Althen (2003) continued by stating:

In China, students have traditionally excelled by memorizing large quantities of material provided by professors, authors, or other experts. In the United States, by contrast, being able to memorize material is less important than being able to analyze and synthesize material from many sources and to develop ones own ideas and viewpoints. (p. 2)

This observation seems particularly relevant to Asian students who were studying at the college or graduate level in America. Being expected to produce original ideas was often a new concept that was difficult for them to comprehend. Asian students must be aware of these differences and make efforts to prepare for them prior to coming to America.

In the article *Bright future-American education or Taiwanese education* by Chen (2004) educational differences between Asian and American students are also well described:

I find out that there are two kinds of education, conventional education and progressive education. Conventional education pays attention to basic education. Usually, the teachers teach the lecture in a big class room with many students. The students

receive all the materials that the teachers give them. Since it is the basics, the best way to learn it is to memorize it. Students with this type of learning style do not do as much critical thinking; they practice more. They only know what the teachers give them. (p. 3)

Hughes (2004) pointed out that progressive education is a responsive, child-centered process. It focuses on the more creative and collaborative aspects of learning and children are doing more critical thinking. Unlike conventional education, "A teacher's role is to be guide on the side not the sage on the stage" (Failure, 1999, p. 3).

In the Asian educational system, students got by as long as they followed instructions. This practice still continues in Taiwan, even at the college level. Classroom discussion is not encouraged nor is individual or creative thinking. Even if a student graduates at top of his class with high GPA (Grade Point Average), they find it hard to prosper when they go to United States to continue their studies. If an Asian student is not trained to be an active learner, or an original thinker, as described above, they may find great difficulty being successful in the American college classroom.

There are other challenges Asian students' encounter in American education due to their unique background and training. Often foreign students come to America with only basic English skills. Asian students who have problems with basic listening, speaking, comprehension and writing skills have double the difficulty when they try to develop a more creative approach to learning. In America, teachers often expect students to participate in classroom discussion and independent outside learning activities for the learner to be successful. Lacking effective English skills while trying to participate in a different learning environment can cause significant difficulty for foreign learners as they begin their studies.

Godley, Park, Rather, and Swiderski (2003) provided a good overview of schooling in Taiwan. In the following writings they described the differences in learning styles when compared to American education, where students were encouraged to think and study in a more creative and independent fashion:

Taiwan (People's Republic of China)

Learning Customs and Classroom Dynamics:

- Generally good at memorizing facts, following lectures, and solving set problems.

- Not generally used to group, interactive, or student-centered teaching techniques.
- Great respect for the teacher, and discipline problems are rare. Students will rarely challenge the teacher, even if invited to discuss their opinions.
- Taiwanese students generally have little training in analytical or creative work.
- Often heavily focused on tests and examinations.
- Students who are not doing well may seem depressed or ashamed and lose interest.
- High motivation to succeed, sometimes expressed in a very competitive manner. (¶ 1)

While the above issues should be of concern, they do not have to prevent Asian students from being successful in the American educational system. If one works hard and concentrates, a student can still be successful and benefit from the America system.

#### How do Asian Students' Cultural Backgrounds Affect their Learning Experiences in America?

Findings from the literature suggested that students from different cultures seem to learn in different ways.



Heikinheimo and Shute (1986) did a qualitative study and found that language skills, academic issues, and social interaction were the most difficult adjustment areas for international students. These students were more likely to have positive academic and nonacademic experiences if they could adapt to and enjoy contact with the host community, and their successful achievement of academic goals is more likely if the emotional and social atmosphere is pleasant and the environment congenial.

Althen (1990) looked at the problem from a counselor's perspective. He suggested that the orientation programs for international students should include practical information about housing and communication, information about the US academic system, and tips on how to adjust to a new culture. Literatures seemed to show that a foreign student's ability to adapt to a new environment is complicated in the absence of adequate pre-preparation. Suzuki (1983) raised another important issue noting that many Asian and Pacific American students, who undergo dramatic family and school discontinuities, and suffer from low self-esteem, were overly conforming and had their academic and social development narrowly circumscribed.

In an overall sense, the literature indicated that it would take quite some time for foreign students to reach the point when they could feel comfortable in a new learning and living environment. Something as simple as an accurate map, correct information, suggestions for places to see, to visit, to live or study can make a tremendous difference in a new student's educational experience. The Research showed that it could make for success or failure if the orientation program did not do its job.

Feng (1991) examined the nature of Chinese students' adaptation to US culture so that student organizations and student service professionals may become more sensitive to and conscious of their needs. The four areas of concern identified were financial difficulties, cultural differences, academic concerns, and language ability.

It appeared there was a need to analyze the situation from cross-cultural perspective. It was hoped that a cross-cultural analysis could help educators to learn more about these students and would assist the students in reflecting on their own cross-cultural learning experiences.

Cultural differences also played a significant role in classroom success. Many Asian students would not feel comfortable when required to argue a certain issue, since

they felt this showed disrespect for their teacher. This is well illustrated in article *Overcoming Cultural Differences in Writing Center Tutorials* (Lee, n.d.):

In many American collegiate assignments, professors assign analytical and argumentative essays. We have been taught that it is appropriate for us to understand the text and to challenge or defend what was written. On the contrary, many foreign countries teach their students to accept what they have read as the standard...Even if the assignment calls for the student to argue a specific issue, often the student will just simply summarize what he or she has read. This is another cultural issue where the student feels as if it is disrespectful to challenge what they have read, even if they disagree with the opinion of the author. (Introduction section, ¶ 6)

Lee (n.d.) further illustrated how cultural differences played a role in classroom success regarding writing assignments:

The fact of the matter is that each country has different systems for writing. Even countries that have based their writing styles on the American system are still different to some degree. When foreign students come to the United States to study,

they are going to write in their native country's rhetorical style. (Introduction section, ¶ 2)

Students from other cultures have "habits, behavior patterns, perspectives, ways of delivering information, and other cultural filters that can affect writing in ways we often do not sufficiently attend to-and indeed are in danger of ignoring" (Harris, 1986, p. 87).

Visiting a tutor was not always the right solution for foreign students either, again due to cultural backgrounds. Lee (n.d.) stated:

Although ESL students may have several problems in their writing, some problems are more prevalent than others. The most important issue that tutors may face is that in many societies, teachers/tutors are held in such high esteem that the tutees feel subservient. The student may be reluctant to receive any assistance because they may feel as if they are being disrespectful to the tutor. (Introduction section, ¶ 3)

Ronesi (1995) also addressed this issue regarding the use of tutors. In the US, a tutor's style is often informal, humorous, utilizing extensive eye contact, and the use of questions. While this can be an attempt to make a student more comfortable, in other cultures it may be

interpreted as rude or disrespectful behavior. While the tutor may not be familiar with the cultural background of a student, nevertheless, a non-productive tutorial session may result, with mixed-messages for the foreign student, or "bewildering collaboration or an unhappy student" (Ronesi, 1995, p. 3).

The observations by Lee (n.d.) and Ronesi (1995) above seemed particularly relevant for a Taiwan student coming to study in America. The need to show respect for the teacher is so important in the Asian culture, that it can become an obstacle for Asian students trying to adapt to American education style.

Godley, Park, Rather, and Swiderski (2003) listed some important cultural aspects of Taiwanese students and showed how background and beliefs caused difficulties in adapting to the US schools:

Taiwan (People's Republic of China)

Cultural and Educational Roots:

- The Taiwanese education system emphasizes memorization and drills.
- Frequent testing at all levels, so most teaching is oriented to one test or another.
- Taiwanese classroom set-up is very teacher-centered

- Confucianism encourages a formal, hierarchical, and reciprocal student-teacher relationship, with absolute respect for a teacher who works hard.
- Taiwanese culture views each individual as a representative of his/her whole family, sometimes leading to feelings of dishonor if students do not do well.
- For more in-depth information, see the Library of Congress resources page on Taiwan at <http://www.loc.gov/rr/international/asia/taiwan/taiwan.html> (§ 2).

Both research conducted along with this author's personal experience reinforced the position that there are real obstacles that the Asian student must overcome in order to find success in their American study experience. Cultural traditions weigh heavily and most certainly influenced the Asian student in their reluctance to question the authority of a teacher. The preparation literature, the sensitivity of the American teacher and the overall educational policy of how to introduce the Asian student to the US study system must be well thought through if the Asian student is to become acclimated to the new cultural and learning environment.

How can Technology, Specifically a Web Site, Best  
Enhance the Learning Process and Effectively  
Provide Asian Students with the Information  
they need to Study Successfully  
in America?

In the process of creating the AsiaCAConnection web site it appeared it was important to include information about web-enhanced learning in the literature review. There was no question that the Internet has changed how we learn and we are just beginning to realize the potential of the Internet as a teaching resource.

Fisher (2003) asserted "The fundamental value proposition for teaching and learning on the Web is human performance achievement. Productivity improvements and academic results have been demonstrated with technology-mediated instruction, and performance improvement is the goal we are after" (p. 14).

As envisioned, the AsiaCAConnection website was to act like an informational tutor, providing individualized learning for new Asian students. "Today, students are looking for 'me learning' in E-learning. It is not necessary about the tool or software used in the process; it is about the ability we have in practice to offer more personalization for the learner" (Fisher, 2003, p. 14).

On individualized learning, Bloom (1984) found that the average student who is tutored scores better than 98

percent of classroom students. Teacher and Web communities can purposefully support that. Students need to make competent decisions, and this is why collaboration is an important part of the process.

Making a site an interesting place to visit and use regularly is important. Hughes (2005) declared:

Students can not help the fact that they learn in different ways. In fact, this is what makes teaching fun and challenging. It should be exciting to try new ways to maximize instruction and student learning. It should also be the primary concern of the teacher to always consider who the students are, and what works best for them. (¶ 1)

While on this topic, it was interesting to note that Siebert (1997), *In General Survival Skills for International Students*, made some interesting suggestions that neatly dovetailed into the theme of this project. First, Siebert felt that learners must make a successful transition from being the passive learner and become more of an active learner. Second, students had to learn to deal with newfound learning environments, deadlines and pressures. Namely, they needed to learn to manage their time effectively. Third, learners must know how to replace feelings of discouragement with optimistic self-talk and



self-activation. That is, they needed to adjust themselves emotionally and become self-starters. Fourth, to survive emotionally, it required healthy self-esteem and the development of a positive attitude. Fifth, students had to develop empathy for people around them and realize they are not the only student feeling the pressure in adapting to the new learning styles. Six, they had to learn to grow from their new experiences and use their acquired knowledge in solving new problems they would face in the future. Again, Siebert's suggestion that students needed to learn about the new culture in order to become a successful learner rang very true and in a sense confirmed the decision regarding the importance of the AsiaCAConnection project theme.

Research conducted had revealed some important issues that foreign students faced as they began their studies in America. There were significant obstacles, but they could be overcome and turned into positive learning experiences. Through the creation of AsiaCAConnection, it was hoped that this web resource would assist new foreign students by providing information that was relevant, current and attainable. Furthermore, it was decided this online project could provide a unique window into the American

educational experience, something that was not being provided by the Asian educational system.

### Summary

Results obtained from the literature review presented convincing research and information that the resource site project for Asian students, AsiaCAConnection was a viable project.

In light of the findings of the literature review, a support website such as the AsiaCAConnection should focus on three distinct areas: 1) Helping Asian students become aware of new learning styles they might encounter in US colleges and how to effectively prepare for these new study style challenges. 2) Recognizing certain cultural differences that new Asian students might encounter and providing ways for them to effectively adapt. 3) Creating the perception that AsiaCAConnection was a useful information resource for aiding Asian students regarding education and life style, to pursue their goals in the United States.

CHAPTER THREE  
PROJECT DESIGN PROCESSES

Introduction

The creation of a usable, resource web site for assisting new Asian students in their American study endeavors was a compelling task. As discussed in Chapter One, of utmost importance and one of the project's unique features, was that information gathered would come from a population of Asian students which had already experienced the American education system, in order to ensure that web content would be both relevant and useful in helping the students better adapt to a different learning environment and lifestyle. In the previous chapter, the research literature presented was examined in relation to the three main concepts of this project: 1) Problems due to a student's native country education. 2) Cultural background influences. 3) How web site technology might enhance the acculturation process. By addressing the three main concepts, pertinent data was collected through student surveys and interview sessions. This chapter provides a description of how the data was collected and analyzed, how the project was designed and developed, and finally, how it was implemented and evaluated.

## Analysis

Analysis was an integral part of the overall project design process. In this regard, both data collection and analysis of resulting data were the essential components of the analysis process. Regarding data collection, quantitative (survey) and qualitative (interview) research methodologies were used to gather knowledge, opinions, observations and information from Asian students who had already lived and experienced American college life, particularly, in the region of Southern California. The data analysis phase, covering both survey and interview research results, provided feedback and direction for this project's overall design process.

### Data Collection

Quantitative (survey) and qualitative (interview) research methodologies were used for this study. For the surveys, participants were recruited from Asian students who were either experienced or inexperienced with the American education system. Most students selected for interviews lived and studied in America. They had ESL training in a private language school and in undergraduate or graduate class settings for a two-year period or longer. The purpose of the data collection was to design a website that provided new Asian students with useful

information to make their learning experiences as beneficial as possible.

For quantitative research, there were eight questions developed to learn more about student experiences, attitudes and expectations as they came to the United States for higher education (Appendix A). The methods for selecting students were either via email or direct personal contact. Again, for the purposes of this study, participants were required to have the predetermined qualifying factor of being an Asian student who was either experienced or inexperienced in the American college study system.

The surveys were conducted at a university study hall located in Riverside, California. The study location provided access to a sizable group of Asian students who were studying English in a university extension program. Students were accessible for survey implementation during study breaks and after school. Of the twenty-seven surveys disseminated to students at the study hall setting, all twenty-seven were completed and returned. Twenty-one surveys were also disseminated via e-mail and students were given a two week period in which to complete surveys and return them. Of these, only six completed the survey and responded, with fifteen students opting not to

participate during the two-week period. In addition, there were two surveys that were completed at a coffee shop located in Fullerton, California. Thus, of the fifty surveys disseminated, a total of thirty-five surveys were completed, collected and available for analysis.

Focus group interviews were conducted in a small student group setting. The focus group interview content conducted for the qualitative research component included 15 main questions (Appendix B). Interview questions were framed around the three main topics previously addressed, and presented in simple, understandable, short sentences. Responses resulting from the interview were either tape recorded for transcripts or recorded by hand, transcribed and then presented for student approval, to eliminate erroneous inferences by researcher. Five Asian students from Taiwan were selected to comprise the focus group. The recommended number of people per group is usually six to ten (MacIntosh, 1993), but some researchers have used up to fifteen people (Goss & Leinbach, 1996) or as few as four (Kitzinger, 1995). The interview lasted about one hour, as the researcher attempted to encourage and engage students, trying to make them more relaxed and open to dialog. Meeting with others whom they think of as possessing similar characteristics or levels of

understanding about a given topic, will be more appealing than meeting with those who are perceived to be different (Morgan, 1988).

The interviews took place at one of interviewee's home, in order to create a relaxed and comfortable environment. Neutral locations can be helpful for avoiding either negative or positive associations with a particular site or building (Powell & Single, 1996). Otherwise the focus group meetings can be held in a variety of places, for example, people's homes, in rented facilities, or where the participants hold their regular meetings if they are a pre-existing group (Gilbert, 1997).

#### Data Analysis

The data analysis resulting from both the survey and interview research questions provided positive feedback and direction for this project. Data was analyzed in relation to the three main question topics discussed earlier and participant responses were carefully evaluated within the structure of the three main question areas, to ensure the validity of the findings.

As described in the introductory section in this chapter, student participants in this study had to meet certain requirements before being determined eligible to participate in either the survey or focus group

questionnaires. Data collected from both the quantitative and qualitative sections proved invaluable in terms of data collection.

### Quantitative Data Analysis

In forming an approach for creating a survey strategy, the writings of McMillan and Schumacher (2006) provided pertinent information for the development of relevant survey content. Their writing stated: "Survey research is designed so that information about a large number of people (the population) can be inferred from the responses obtained from a smaller group of subjects (the sample)" (p. 25).

The survey selection approach differed from student selection in regard to the interview process, which by its nature is intended to be flexible and adaptable. Focus group interview students selected were those who had lived in the US over two years and had experienced ESL (English as a second language) training in a private language school, or in undergraduate or graduate class settings.

Survey results of this quantitative study included findings from thirty-five participants. Twenty-three respondents had lived in America for less than one year; twelve respondents had lived in America for over one year.



All respondents had studied in California during the time periods indicated.

There were fifteen students from Taiwan, thirteen from Japan, five from South Korea, and one, each, from China and Thailand (Q1). Twenty-four of thirty-five participants were Extension students, seven were two-year college students, two were undergraduate students, one was a high school student and one studied in a M.A. program (Q3). Regarding educational goals (Q4), fourteen students were only interested in learning English, four indicated they wanted to earn a two-year college degree, six were focused on a bachelor degree, three wanted to earn their master degree and two were studying toward a doctoral degree. The five students studying in Extension indicated that they had other educational goals: one wanted to go to high school, one desired to get a job in America, one wanted to become an English teacher, one wished to attend law school in Japan and the final student wanted to earn a college Certificate in Marketing.

The initial four survey questions dealt with information of a general nature, including country of origin, time spent in America, college attended and educational goals. The remainder of the survey questions addressed these two main categories: Problems faced by new

Asian students relating to academic concerns and living conditions.

Question (5) rated the level of difficulty Asian students experienced while studying in American schools. In analyzing data results, the least level of difficulty experienced by students had to do with question categories concerning evaluation of teacher, understanding of English and dealing with class assignments. It appeared the greatest difficulties had to do with money matters, costs for tuition, books and other educational costs. A moderate level of difficulty was indicated regarding topics of group discussion and difficulty of some class assignments.

For a complete list of data results for each respective question (5) category please refer to the Survey Results Section located in the Appendix (C).

The following were highlights of student survey responses to specific question categories: First, regarding their teacher, when students were asked how they felt about "Teacher's Expectations," six students (17%) responded "No Difficulty," 21 students "Little Difficulty," seven students (20%) stated "Some Difficulty" and one student (3%) noted "Great Difficulty." Regarding "Teacher's Attitude," 14 students (40%) responded "No Difficulty," 17 students (49%) answered "Little

Difficulty," three students (11%) stated "Some Difficulty" and no student answered "Great Difficulty." For "Teacher's Instructional Style," 16 students (46%) responded "No Difficulty," 11 students (31%) answered "Little Difficulty," eight students (23%) stated "Some Difficulty," and no student noted "Great Difficulty." In analyzing these responses one might conclude that students, to a greater extent, felt that their experience with their classroom teacher was in an overall sense very positive. Moreover, it appeared that the American teacher was perceived, in general, as more easy-going and supportive in nature than Asian teachers, as noted in Chapter Two.

Data results also showed that students experienced a minimal degree of difficulty regarding question categories "Assignment Due Dates," "Assignment Complexity," "Asking Questions in Class" and "Asking Questions Directly to Instructor." Positive comments about the teacher, mentioned above, may have influenced these low difficulty marks regarding "Assignments Due Dates" and related categories, just mentioned.

The greatest degree of difficulty arose when analyzing data results pertaining to issues of money. For example, concerning the question category, "Book Costs,"

no students responded "No Difficulty," five students (14%) answered "Little Difficulty," eight students (23%) stated "Some Difficulty" and 22 students (63%) noted "Great Difficulty." For "Tuition Costs," no students responded "No Difficulty," one student (3%) answered "Little Difficulty," eight students (23%) stated "Some Difficulty" and 26 students (74%) noted "Great Difficulty." The data indicated that many students had financial concerns and undoubtedly limited finances. The research further indicated that there were only a few schools which help the international student in terms of financial aid. This finding was expressed by Kantrowitz (2006) who stated:

There is very little financial aid for foreign nationals to study in the US, with the possible exceptions of citizens of Canada and Mexico. Most grants, scholarships, and loans from public and private sources are restricted to US citizens. (¶ 2)

As a result of this survey financial topics, such as identifying possible financial aid resources would receive considerable attention as the web site content was developed. It indeed appeared to be a challenging area.

Regarding question categories "Understanding English" and "Assignment Difficulty," resulting data revealed mixed levels of student difficulty. In reference to

"Understanding English" eight students (23%) indicated "No Difficulty," 14 students (40%) answered "Little Difficulty," 13 students (37%) stated "Some Difficulty" with no student noting "Great Difficulty." As to "Assignments Difficulty," two students (6%) responded "No Difficulty," 20 students (57%) answered "Little Difficulty," 11 students (31%) stated "Some Difficulty," and two students (6%) noted "Great Difficulty."

Question (6) rated the level of difficulty students faced while living in America after arrival. In an overall sense, data results showed that question categories such as "Housing Availability" and "Housing Locations" along with "Finding Roommates" and "Opening a Bank Account" proved least difficult. The highest degree of difficulty was reflected in question categories "Transportation," "Getting a Social Security Number," "Finding a Part-time Job" and "Making American Friends." Data results however, revealed moderate levels of difficulty concerning such categories as "Obtaining a Drivers License" and "Getting a Credit Card."

It was helpful to review some of the actual numerical results for some of the question categories to facilitate data analysis. Regarding "Housing Availability" 16 students (46%) responded "No Difficulty," 13 students

(37%) answered "Little Difficulty," five students (14%) stated "Some Difficulty," and only one student (3%) noted "Great Difficulty." For "Housing Locations," 12 students (34%) responded "No Difficulty," 13 students (37%) answered "Little Difficulty," eight students (23%) stated "Some Difficulty" and only one student (3%) noted "Great Difficulty." One student did not answer. Upon further analysis, it was not surprising that housing availability and location did not result in higher levels of difficulty. College housing services often assist new student arrivals by helping them secure dormitory lodging, home stay accommodations, or the like. As a result, there appeared to be some level of comfort for new student arrivals by following the tradition of consulting with college officials and residing at a home stay or dormitory until other living arrangements could be made. It was also of interest that survey data also showed that "Finding Roommates" and "Finding Asian Food" reflected lower levels of difficulty. These results were not surprising either, in view of the considerable number of Asian students residing in the Southern California area. Moreover, networking with fellow students provided opportunities for bonding, meeting future roommates and of course sharing information about local eateries, stores, shopping centers

and the like, which feature native foods and activities. It should also be mentioned that related categories such as "Food Flavor" and "Food Costs" also fell in line with the same low difficulty rating as the above.

Again, categories which caused greatest difficulty as evidenced by numerical data include, "Transportation," "Finding a Part-time Job" and "Getting a Social Security Number."

Regarding "Transportation," two students (6%) responded "No Difficulty," seven students (20%) answered "Little Difficulty," seven students (20%) stated "Some Difficulty," and 19 students (54%) noted "Great Difficulty." The transportation issue in America was perhaps best described by a famous Chinese idiom, "If you have no car, you have no feet to walk." This is particularly true for new arrivals, as they realized how Southern Californians were dependent on their automobiles as a way of life. When one considers that many new student arrivals come from a transportation system driven by a bicycle or motor scooter, considerable culture shock resulted. Whether it was ride sharing, city bus or driving lessons, it was apparent that this web site project had an obligation to provide remedies for transportation concerns among new students.

For "Finding a Part-time Job," three students (9%) responded "No Difficulty," five students (14%) answered "Little Difficulty," nine students (26%) stated "Some Difficulty" and 18 students (51%) noted "Great Difficulty." These results seem to reflect students' frustration in finding a part-time work. This problem was not exaggerated. According to US immigration law, the F-1 visa holder (student visa) did not permit a foreign student to work, except on campus. Furthermore, data showed that one could not accept off-campus work during the first year of study. However, it was interesting to note that in the development of web site content, certain guidelines that may provide new students a ray of hope were developed. For example, after the first year of study on an F-1 Visa, a student may ask for permission to accept off-campus employment, if the student can prove economic hardship. Certainly, if this web site project could provide directed guidance and answers to specific student concerns, it might establish itself as an important online resource.

"Getting a Social Security Number" was also rated as a category with a higher degree of difficulty, according to collected data. Regarding "Getting a Social Security Number," four students (11%) responded "No Difficulty,"



four students (11%) answered "Little Difficulty," eight students (23%) stated "Some Difficulty," and 13 students (54%) noted "Great Difficulty."

Lastly, 23 students (66%) rated "Making American Friends" as a higher level of difficulty. This response was not surprising, especially regarding students who were new to America, in that they might often be self-conscious about their limited English skills and perhaps more reluctant to engage in conversation with their American peers. In analysis, it was recognized that these students must be encouraged to introduce themselves to American students, engage in dialog and try to put their fears to rest. It might also prove to be an important first step toward mastering English and building self-confidence. These topics appeared to be important areas to address as part of this web site project.

Data results for question categories, "Obtaining a Drivers License" and "Getting a Credit Card" indicated a moderate level of difficulty. For "Drivers License," seven students (20%) responded "No Difficulty," 10 students (29%) answered "Little Difficulty," 14 students (40%) stated "Some Difficulty," and three students (9%) noted "Great Difficulty." One student did not answer. For "Getting a Credit Card," nine students (26%) responded "No

Difficulty," nine students (26%) answered "Little Difficulty," five students (14%) stated "Some Difficulty" and 12 students (34%) noted "Great Difficulty." Data collected was convincing, in that banks, while trying to make the application process easier, had still not solved the problem. Students still had to have a social security number to start the credit application process and in many instances obtaining a social security number was quite complicated. This was another example of an important content area to address as part of this web site project.

For a complete list of data results for each question (6) categories, please refer to the Survey Results Section located in the Appendix (C).

The final two survey questions (Q7&Q8) gave students a final opportunity to voice their feelings and give advice to new students. Most participants wanted to impress on new students the importance of speaking English as often as possible. They encouraged new students to seize every opportunity to engage in conversation, even when they were among peers from their own country. Trying to make friends with American people was also mentioned. Specific student responses included.

You should try to speak English everyday. Even though your English is not good, you will become better if you speak English (S7).

You should not speak your own language. You should try to use English even with someone from your same country (S12).

Making American friends helps you to improve your English (S4).

Do not speak your own language, and just try to make American friends (S26).

Some of participants felt that Asian students should make the effort to be more independent and decisive:

Living in America is not as difficult as I thought. If you concentrate, you should adapt here very soon. You need to learn how to be an independent person. Also, at beginning, you should continue even if you are lonely (S3).

Try to be more independent and brave to describe what you want! (S6)

Please do anything independently and make yourself stronger (S24).

As mentioned in Chapters Two, students in the Asian educational system get by as long as they followed instructions. Classroom discussion was not encouraged nor

was individual or creative thinking. It seemed apparent that the Asian student had to overcome this belief system and become more of an independent thinker, not just mimic what people have said.

In addition, there were some participants who suggested that Asian students work on improving their English speaking skills before coming to America:

If new students really want to improve their English ability, they should practice speaking English before they arrive in America. I had hard time to adapt to English conversation (S16).

Before coming here, you need to study English.

Especially, you need to know more vocabulary (S17).

Prepare anything you can before going to America.

Study grammar, writing, reading in advance (S21).

Others opinions included:

Study about America culture; know what is different from yours (S1).

"Money is the most important" in America (S9).

Good luck!! (S21)

The above comments and observations generated by participating students became important factors and content elements to consider as the formal development and design of this web site project began.

## Qualitative Data Analysis

Interview results for the qualitative study included findings from five Taiwanese students who were selected to comprise the focus group. Focus group meetings with others whom they think of as possessing similar characteristics or levels of understanding about a given topic will be more appealing than meeting with those who are perceived to be different (Morgan, 1988). Also, interviews result in a much higher response rate than questionnaires (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Compared to individual interviews, which aim to obtain individual attitudes, beliefs and feelings, focus groups elicit a multiplicity of views and emotions within a group context.

All interviewees had lived in the US for over four years and had experienced ESL training in a language school in Southern California. Two students were attending community college, two were undergraduate students at a university and one attended graduate school.

Upon first arriving in America, three of the five students lived in a college dormitory, one resided in home stay and one was living with relatives temporarily. After a short time living in America and becoming more familiar with their surroundings, all five students made the change to apartment living. They felt apartment life was less

expensive, there were fewer rules to follow, and they experienced an overall sense of freedom, when compared to the structure of dormitory or home stay life.

The majority of interviewees' indicated their main reason for coming to America was to learn English. However, one student (I1), a 2-year college student with a goal of earning a B.A. degree had a different reason. The parents made the student come to America to gain an education. They believed that America had a better educational system and study environment. After initially resisting, this student finally agreed with the parents and prefers the American education system over the instructional program in Taiwan. In the student (I1) words:

...In Taiwan, teachers only teach students from textbook and tell them to memorize...Students must accept what the teacher says...All the classes are the same...so bored in the class...There is more fun and freedom in American classroom...at least American teachers smile all the time.

Another interviewee also mentioned, "There is too much pressure for students in Taiwan education. There is no communication between teacher and student. Teachers

only read the textbook in the class and does not care if you have your own opinion or thinking" (I3).

Regarding the topic, "What are your experiences socializing with American students? (Q8)," all of the interviewees felt it was not easy making friends with America people. The reasons stated were "limited English ability" and "shy personality." Although they agreed that Asian students need to build more confidence to become successful, some students pointed out concerns such as "culture differences," "lifestyle differences" and "prejudice." Students mentioned:

The only chance to talk with American students is in the class. I called them "class friends" or "quarter friends" (I1).

Most of my classmates are friendly, but there are still some American students who show prejudices toward Asian students (I4).

Regarding suggestions they would give to newly arriving Asian students, all participants noted "Transportation" and "Living" as topics of concern. Taiwan is a small island, so most of the people use public transportation, such as bus, train or metro services. For short distances, many people use motorcycle. However, in America, as students quickly learned, an automobile was

the main form of transportation. Regarding "living," in Taiwan, the government supports the public school system, so living in a dorm is cheaper than apartment life. However, in America, dorm life is more expensive than that of an apartment. Interview results revealed that one student suggested that upon arrival, new Asian students should live in a home stay for the first six months. This student (I1) advised, "...stay in home stay, students can practice their English and they do not need to worry about safety or transportation problems."

Besides "Transportation" and "Living" issues, others suggestions included the following:

Do not be afraid to speak English with American people. Make some American friends, hang out with them. Do not speak your own language all the time (I2 & I4).

For studying and improving in English, they should put themselves into an English environment completely. Studying a second language is very hard, but anyone can make it if you study harder. Anyway, do your best and enjoy your life in America (I3).

It would be nice if you have a clear goal to achieve in your studies in America. If it is possible, work on your English skills before coming and bring some



tool (reference) books with you may help. Also, make sure you bring much more money than you originally expect! People are nice in America, however, you sometimes feel bored without cars. (I5)

To make a web site informative and useful, what information would be helpful for newly arriving Asian students (Q13), all answered, agreeing with the message conveyed in a famous Taiwanese saying, "What is important in life is eating, clothing, living, walking, educating and entertaining." Simply put, but quite understandable.

About anything else interviewees would care to mention (Q14), One pointed out that newly arriving students should not spend too much time in an English language school setting. The student (I5) stated, "International students have to try not to stick in Extension language center for long time. The college or university environment is a better place for learning more!" Other interviewees agreed. They felt that taking an ESL class versus a non-ESL class (regular college class) is a very different study experience. It appeared international students could easily become too comfortable in an ESL class setting, since all classmates were at same English level and teachers knew how to teach ESL students and approach them with kid gloves. By contrast, in a

non-ESL setting, international students had to study with native-speaker Americans, in a more competitive environment.

When asked "Is there anything else you would like to mention?" (Q14), students made two final statements. One was there was no short cut for improving English, studying hard is the only way. The other comment was to try hanging out with different people and explore different cultures, in order to develop a world wide vision.

After learning about the online project (Q15), all interviewees answered that they would like to visit the AsiaCAConnection web site after it was completed and provide further feedback and information.

In summary, student participant responses from quantitative research survey results indicated that overall, all participants felt very positive about the American educational system. Specifically, students seemed satisfied with their study experiences except when discussing categories that addressed their English language skill level, high costs of living and tuition, and transportation. Moreover, language difficulties, as mentioned above, seemed to negatively impact student abilities to make American friends. Likewise money issues and the need the need to seek part-time work, was

difficult due to restrictions in obtaining a social security number.

Regarding qualitative research, all interviewee results demonstrated an overall positive experience with the American education system, when compared with that of Taiwan. Only in the categories of housing and transportation was there any negative feedback. In these categories students recommended that new arrivals would do better by first living in home stay for the first six months, in order to become more familiar with the Southern California environment and lifestyle. Further, it was felt that new students would increase opportunities for practicing English and learn about American culture by living in an American family environment. As well, they would not need to worry about safety or transportation issues, while they became more acclimated to their new living conditions.

Finally, interviewees suggested that new students not study for too long a time period in an ESL class only setting. According to students, the benefits of being in a non-ESL college class atmosphere could not be overestimated.

In the course of implementing the surveys it became apparent how important the roles surveys and interviews

play in data acquisition and analysis and how results obtained could help form the appropriate content needed to help guide newly arriving Asian students in their American studies. By listening to the responses, analyzing results and subsequently designing pertinent content web categories, the important concerns, as mentioned above could be addressed online.

Research indicated that there did not appear to be any other web resource providing the kind of content information that AsiaCAConnection would provide. Existing web resource sites appeared limited in scope or did not provide the kind of quality and directed assistance that this web site project proposed. Those sites seemed to be geared to students who had already lived in America or studied here for quite some time. For example, a site from the Asian Cultural Center at the University of Indiana was a place for Asians to meet. But rather than helping with American based learning skills, it focused on providing refresher classes in a native language, ways to appreciate your homeland, or a place to voice dissatisfaction about campus issues.

In final analysis, the information collected during surveys and interviews would be the key elements in

helping to guide this project in making site relevant to the needs of the new Asian students.

### Design

The ADDIE (Analyze, Design, Development, Implement and Evaluate) model was used to support the design and development of this web site project. This method would support both the planning and management of content and the instructional delivery process. Site design and content development were greatly influenced by the quantitative and qualitative data collected. In designing and developing this site, the latest software was used in order that would create a contemporary, visually compelling and navigable site. Software included Macromedia Dreamweaver, Flash, Adobe Photoshop and iMovie. These were chosen because of their acknowledged excellence in supporting effective web site design and ease in all aspects of navigation. Site design also incorporated attractive graphics, color and layout that would reveal content and information in an easy to understand visual environment. The URL (Universal Resource Locator) is: <http://asia-caconnection.tripod.com>

While content on AsiaCAConnection was to include important information, advice and tutorials covering

education and cultural issues, the site was also crafted to present content in an interesting way, featuring categories that students would find useful and enjoyable. For example, a media web site category called, Cool Tools, featured free downloads of fun and helpful educational aids that students could benefit from while enjoying the time spent on the site. It was decided that this type of category as a design component could add an enjoyable and positive learning experience for Asian students. Cool Tools examples included:

Calculate Your GPA.

This feature allowed one to total courses and credits with an online tool. If you wished to raise a GPA, an additional calculator helped determine how many credit hours and what grade average students would need to raise their current GPA.

GuruNet.

This was a downloadable web tool that provided more information on any word on a web page.

Xemantex (Web Reading Made Easy).

This tool enabled individuals to visit a web site and "grasp, understand and assimilate" any text on

the page. It also enabled one to translate the text into another language.

#### Web Wordsmith.

Here one could conveniently link all the words on a page to online references such as the Merriam Webster Dictionary and Thesaurus as well as a Computer and Acronym Dictionary.

#### Free Writing and Mind Mapping.

This was a writing tool for brainstorming of ideas and outlining a paper.

This was another excellent resource for providing Asian students with information they would need for their future job planning. It was also an important link in navigation. [http://www.jobweb.com/Resources/Library/International/US\\_Employment\\_81\\_01.htm](http://www.jobweb.com/Resources/Library/International/US_Employment_81_01.htm) (From US Employment: Challenges for International Students by Caprice Lantz). The site provided the how-to's for getting a student visa to internship information. It appeared that this type of information motivated students and enabled them to see that there was "light at end of tunnel" regarding their studies and their future.

It was decided that this project should try to motivate students in order to instill hope and encouragement. To this end, specific content areas were

designated, each with the purpose of providing essential information most necessary for the new Asian student. Topic areas included: About Southern California, About Universities, Living Options, Costs, and Getting Started. Each respective area presented content intended to help students in specific ways: The "Southern California" topic area familiarizes students with the history of the state, important landmarks, maps and how to get around. If a student feels a comfort zone with their new surroundings prior to arrival, the transition would be made much easier. Under "Universities" students will find college listings, locations and links that enable students and parents to evaluate a wide variety of learning institutions. With this information a student may evaluate which college to attend according to a schools reputation, location, study options as well as price. Again, by providing students and parents information about college choices in early planning stages, a comfort zone would hopefully be established.

Accordingly "Living Options" made effort to provide information about important living choices: Temporary versus permanent housing, dorms, apartments, and homestay. Each living option was examined as to location, benefit, price and suitability. "Costs" addressed financial



requirements for college tuitions, living, travel, food and entertainment. Most certainly by allowing students and families to formulate a real budget, important decisions could be made about dollar expenditures and how to prepare accordingly. If money matters could be decided upon in advance, the American study experience would not pose unnecessary hardship. Finally, "Getting Started" tips tried to put minds at rest by answering essential questions that most families and students might ask. Establishing phone service, getting a social security number, arranging for a post office box were only some of the areas addressed.

In support of the above mentioned content areas, site navigation was designed to present information in an understandable way. The navigation system was designed with a user-centered approach, in an effort to make it usable, clear and navigatable. The home page and subsequent informational pages were designed with three basic frames: A top frame for the title, a second frame to the left containing navigational buttons addressing main topic areas with pop-up menus, and a main frame in center, containing essential topic information along with buttons addressing subtopics. Again, the main topic areas were depicted in the site flow chart. A site visitor had the

option of easily moving from one topic area to another, by using the easy to understand navigational buttons, as they investigated the site content and informational architecture.

Figure 1 below was an initial visual outline of the project during early stages:

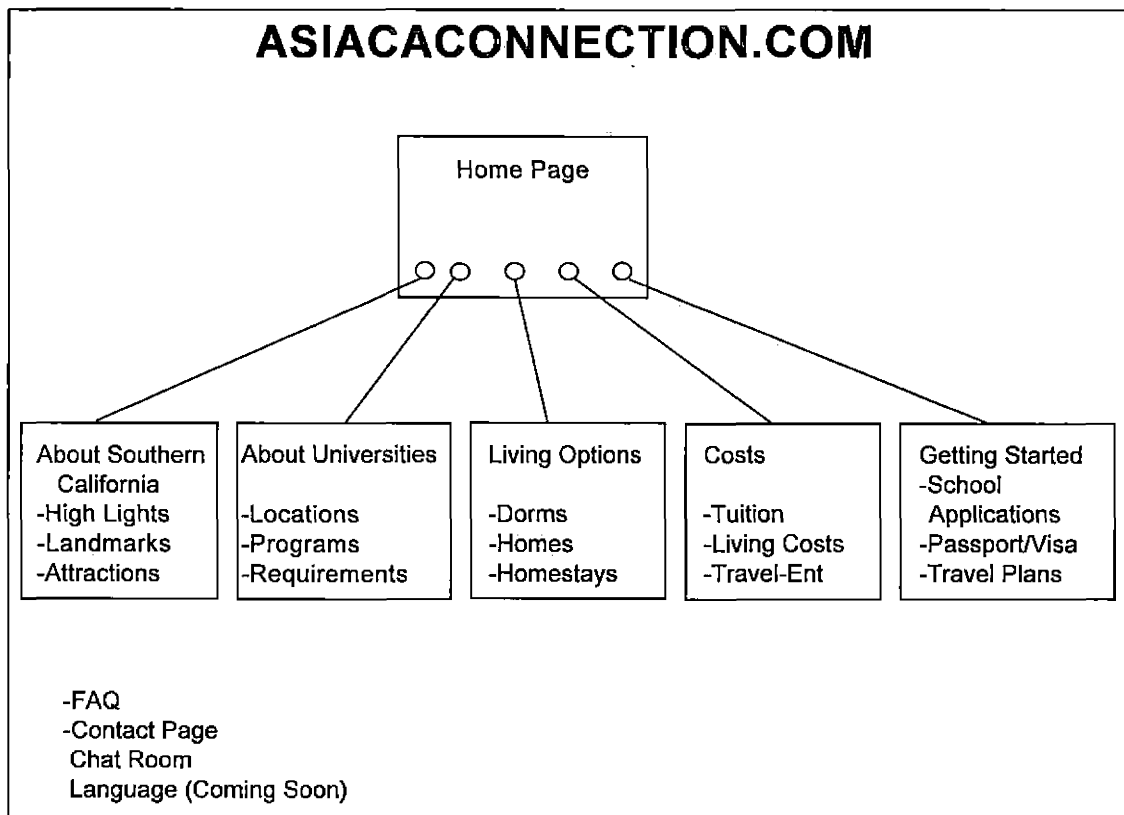


Figure 1. Initial Visual Outline of AsiaCAConnection Web Site

## Development

The design and architecture of this web site focused in creating relevant and useful content in an easy to navigate environment. The intent was to incorporate content derived from survey and focus group results and continue to polish and refine site design as needed, based on results from Alpha testing conducted during the development stage. Content and design were then integrated into web pages. The main web development software tool chosen to aid in this development phase was Macromedia Dreamweaver. This software, incorporating Dreamweaver, Flash and Fireworks, had the capabilities for each part of the web production process. The software allowed for the creation of dynamic web pages and for editing and incorporating changes as necessary based upon results of Alpha testing.

The development of this web project was an ongoing endeavor requiring the input of Asian students. Regarding the Alpha testing phase, specifically, there were five interviewee students who participated. The five interviewee students, mentioned in "Qualitative data analysis" section, were invited to visit the site and navigate pages. A laptop computer, with wireless access was made available in the study hall location. Each

student spent approximately ten minutes familiarizing themselves with site design, navigation and content. Following the initial ten minute familiarization period, each student was asked pertinent questions by the moderator, in an effort to get specific feedback. Question areas addressed site design, artistic quality, usefulness of information and suggestions for improvements.

As a result of student feedback, certain content and navigational changes were made. First of all, unnecessary buttons were deleted and size text fonts were increased in some areas in an effort to improve overall design and clarity. The concept of less is more seemed to be appropriate, as the changes implemented here seemed to make site content more understandable. In addition, some pop-up menus were deleted in an effort to add clarity. It seemed that too many motion effects due to pop-ups were causing confusion especially under categories, "About Universities," "Living Options" and "Getting Started." In place of the pop-ups, stationary text links were added, creating ease and understanding. These changes in design and navigation seemed to strengthen the project, allowing students to navigate with more ease.

The changes mentioned above, along with other modifications information resulting from focus group

activity, discussion and analysis, allowed for a more polished site design. Please see a more finalized visual outline of the AsiaCAConnection web site project included in Appendix (D).

### Implementation

Full implementation of this site was conducted at three distinct locations. The first location was a focus group meeting held at a university study hall in Riverside, California. A second implementation session was conducted at a computer lab site on campus in San Bernardino, California and followed the same procedures as above involving approximately the same number of students. A third implementation session was conducted at a design studio, in Los Angeles, California, seeking feedback from a web development professional regarding the overall effectiveness of site graphics.

An important result of implementation, which was voiced in all three implementation sessions, by students as well as the web professional, was that a web design works best when it is direct and uncomplicated. In listening to these observations, changes were made to that end: Text link titles were edited and made more understandable, white space was added around some visual

elements to add visual clarity and background color was augmented in order to make copy elements more readable. These results of implementation helped site usability. Buttons were made easy to find, links were more obvious and clarity of content was enhanced.

### Evaluation

The focus group and user feedback responses collected during implementation phases were the primary tool used in evaluating the effectiveness of the AsiaCAConnection site. Participant feedback became an integral part of the evaluation process in determining user satisfaction or the lack thereof.

Regarding the implementation sessions mentioned above, the moderator posed the same questions to participants at all locations, after they had time to familiarize themselves with the site. Questions included: What link topics do you find most useful? Is the level of English used on the site understandable? What is your opinion of the graphics used? What else would you like to see on the web site? What is your overall opinion of the site? The moderator recorded all responses in writing.

Most responses revealed an overall sense of satisfaction with the site and participants at every

location felt that the information and design format presented were pertinent to the needs of the new student embarking on a course of study in Southern California. One general comment, as mentioned above, was always to try to simplify site graphics in order to enhance navigation and clarity of content.

Regarding the question about the level of English used on the site, one hurdle confronted by a student was the inability to comprehend the English language used on the site, even though attempts had been made to keep English language level very basic. The student asked, "Can the site be made available in Chinese?" In evaluation, this became an important issue to be considered going forward. In the future, a special Chinese online dictionary may be added to ensure that new English language students can benefit more fully from the web site's content. Another solution would be to create a Chinese version of the site, in an effort to enhance and fine tune the AsiaCAConnection project.

Regarding feedback received from the web professional mentioned above, it was recommended that due to large gif files and video clip content included on AsiaCAConnection.com, students should be advised to use high-speed internet when visiting the site. He also

mentioned the importance of not making a design too complicated. His other comment, about the effective use of color and graphics was taken as a compliment, especially from a person who was in the graphics profession.

### Summary

This project sought to create an innovative and useful web site for helping new Asian students maximize their study opportunities in Southern California. Advice came from Asian students who had already experienced the American study system.

Site design, content and architecture were greatly influenced by the quantitative and qualitative data collected. In terms of project analysis, it became very apparent how important surveys and interviews played in data acquisition and analysis and in the overall effectiveness of project design and development. Moreover, as the design phase of this web project evolved, the data results obtained enabled final site content to be most useful and pertinent to the needs of newly arriving Asian students.

The ADDIE model was used to support design and development of the web site project and latest software tools were used to create dynamic web pages and site



content that was informative, useful and pleasing to the eye. In review and summary, important lessons were learned, among them the need to carefully listen to participant feedback and guidance, the absence of which can limit the success of a project of this magnitude.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

#### Introduction

The information included in Chapter Four provides an overview of the research, design and development stages of the project, AsiaCaConnection.com.

It begins with an overview of the conclusions resulting from project implementation and analysis. Further, there are a series of recommendations, which should add value to the project going forward. Finally, this chapter concludes with a final summary and a reflection on the essential achievements resulting from project implementation.

#### Conclusions

The AsiaCACaConnection has been a fulfilling yet highly challenging project to undertake. I realized that after completing the literature review, there were not many online resource sites that addressed this topic area from the perspective of the newly arriving student. Therefore, for the content to become relevant, the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the information gathering had to be conducted with proper care and attention, in order to

provide the new Asian student with information and guidance that would be reliable.

In this regard, the project in great part, has focused on helping Asian students prepare for new challenges, recognize cultural differences they may encounter by designing AsiaCAConnection as a useful resource site for aiding students in their American study endeavors.

With results from quantitative and qualitative data collected and the ADDIE model established as the method for support design and development, the site building process began. Latest software tools were used to create a web page layout that emphasized cohesive page continuity, design and content. Students and design professional critiques provided further guidance for establishing a design that emphasized effective display of content through contemporary graphics.

#### Recommendations

Because the international students participating in quantitative and qualitative research studies provided such invaluable insights, it was felt that this line of research should be continued in the future. Therefore, future recommendations include the following tasks as part

of a continuing effort to make the site relevant to needs of new students.

First, a recommendation is made that additional, new Southern California focus groups be formed quarterly, in order to fine-tune content areas and create pertinent new topic areas. Only through ongoing needs assessment and student feedback will the site be recognized a useful online resource. Second, it is recommended that feedback groups in Taiwan be formed, in order to provide potential new students, who have not yet embarked on their studies in America, the opportunity to fine-tune their plans before departing. This new feature could be implemented with the help of instructor contacts at both the high school and college levels in Taiwan. Third, it is recommended that a special information link be created for students' parents, addressing their concerns, as their children, or young adults begin making study plans for their Southern California adventures. While requiring additional efforts, these recommendations and project features may well add value to the service AsiaCAConnection can offer students planning a course of study in the United States.

## Summary

After studying 18 years in Taiwan, 1.5 years in a Japanese language school and four years in Tokyo to earn my Bachelor's degree, I have learned a lot about the differences between Asian and American school systems and their philosophies.

A large difference exists in the expectations of each system of students. In Asia, a teacher or office supervisor will ask students what their goals are, then provide them with all information they need and the proper and acceptable way to proceed: Where and how to study in a particular location, where to live, how to travel, what classes to take, where to get financial aid. All pertinent information is provided.

In America, things are quite different. It is the individual's responsibility to find the answers-it builds self-confidence because no one will do it for them. The American system requires that students be independent and self-starters.

As I designed this project, I felt a commitment to help the new Asian student learn essential lessons for success in America- the kind of information that foreign students need in order to be successful in a totally new living environment.

In creating AsiaCAConnection, I also learned about the importance of instructional design and how background research, planning and analysis can be just as important as the creative aspects of graphics, art and web page design.

In the future, as I continue to work on this project, I will try to remember the important lessons taught to me by my professors at CSUSB and try to make them proud of my accomplishments.

APPENDIX A  
QUANTITATIVE SURVEY QUESTIONS

My name is Ying-Mei (Amy) Chien and I am a graduate student at CSUSB. I am creating a resource web site, titled, "AsiaCAConnection," to help new students from Asian better prepare for their study experience in America.

In regard to my project, survey information obtained from participants will be compiled and made part of my resource web site AsiaCAConnection. All contact information will be kept confidential and only opinions and suggestions of participants will be posted or made a part of AsiaCAConnection web site.

Participants will be presented with an 8 ½" by 11" packet containing a series of questions pertaining to my project. Survey questions include:

1. What country are you from? Country: \_\_\_\_\_
2. How many months have you studied in America? Months: \_\_\_\_\_
3. What type of institution are you attending?
  - Language School / Extension     2-Year College
  - 4-year college     Graduate School     Other \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is your educational goal?
  - English Study Only     AA Degree     B.A. / B.S.
  - MA/MS     PhD.     Other \_\_\_\_\_

For the questions below, please use following rating system:

- 4—Great Difficulty
- 3—Some Difficulty
- 2—Little Difficulty
- 1—No Difficulty

5. Rate the level of difficulty you face in your American school with the following:
 

Teacher's Expectations	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Teacher's Attitude	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Teacher's instructional style	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Understanding English	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Assignments Difficulty	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Assignments Due Dates	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Assignments Complexity	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Asking Questions in Class	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Asking Questions of Fellow Students	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Asking Questions Directly to Instructor	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Group Discussion	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Book Costs	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Tuition Costs	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Enrolling in Classes	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
School Parking	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Dealing with School Officials	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1



6. Rate your level of difficulty that you face living in America when you first arrived with the following:

Housing Availability	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Housing Location	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Housing Costs	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Finding Roommates	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Food Flavor	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Food Costs	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Finding Asian Food	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Drivers License	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Buying a Car	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Buying a Cell Phone	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Visa Requirements	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Getting Social Security Number	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Opening a Bank Account	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Getting a Credit Card	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Preparing for TOEFL	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Making American Friends	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Finding Part-time Job	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Places to Visit	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1

7. Briefly describe what you would tell new students about to begin their American studies. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Is there any thing you would like to mention? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for participating in this survey.

APPENDIX B  
QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

## Interview Questions

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Country:

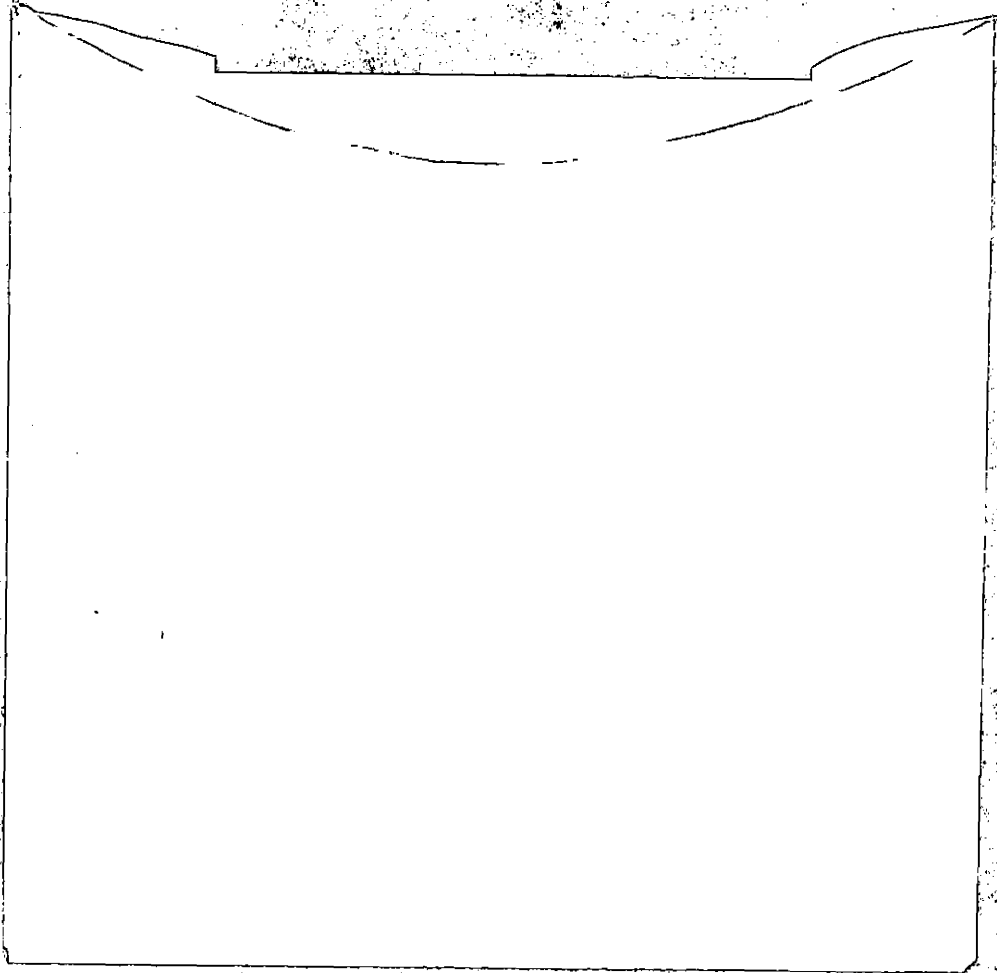
1. How long have you been in America?
2. Where are you studying now?
3. Where are you living now?
4. How did you get school information before coming to America?
5. Who picked you up in the airport when you first arrived in America?
6. Where did you live when you first came to America?
7. What was the main reason you came to America?
8. What is your opinion of the American education system?
9. What are your experiences socializing with American students?
10. What will you do after graduation?
11. What suggestions would you give to newly arriving Asian students?
12. What is the biggest problem you faced since arriving in America?
13. What information do you think having an informative website for new Asian students would be helpful?
14. Is anything you would like to mention?
15. Would you like to visit this new Asian student web site when it is completed?

APPENDIX C  
SURVEY RESULTS

QUESTIONS / CATEGORIES	TOTAL				
	Great Difficulty (4)	Some Difficulty (3)	Little Difficulty (2)	No Difficulty (1)	No Answer (0)
Q.5 Teacher's Expectations	1	7	21	6	0
Teacher's Attitude	0	4	17	14	0
Teacher's instructional style	0	8	11	16	0
Understanding English	0	13	14	8	0
Assignments Difficulty	2	11	20	2	0
Assignments Due Dates	2	7	17	9	0
Assignments Complexity	2	8	16	9	0
Asking Questions in Class	2	5	18	10	0
Asking Questions of Fellow Students	1	7	15	12	0
Asking Questions Directly to Instructor	1	5	22	7	0
Group Discussion	6	8	13	8	0
Book Costs	22	8	5	0	0
Tuition Costs	26	8	1	0	0
Enrolling in Classes	0	7	16	12	0
School Parking	8	10	7	9	1
Dealing with School Officials	0	8	15	12	0
Q6. Housing Availability	1	5	13	16	0
Housing Location	1	8	13	12	1
Housing Costs	8	11	11	5	0
Finding Roommates	3	8	8	16	0
Food Flavor	4	9	13	9	0
Food Costs	4	9	14	8	0
Finding Asian Food	2	6	13	13	1
Transportation	19	7	7	2	0
Drivers License	3	14	10	7	1
Buying a Car	13	7	9	6	0
Buying a Cell Phone	3	4	11	17	0
Visa Requirements	6	5	15	8	1
Getting Social Security Number	19	8	4	4	0
Opening a Bank Account	2	6	13	14	0
Getting a Credit Card	12	5	9	9	0
Preparing for TOEFL	9	7	15	4	0
Making American Friends	14	9	10	2	0
Finding Part-time Job	18	9	5	3	0
Places to Visit	5	10	11	9	0

QUESTIONS / CATEGORIES	PERCENT				
	Great Difficulty (4)	Some Difficulty (3)	Little Difficulty (2)	No Difficulty (1)	No Answer (0)
Q.5 Teacher's Expectations	3%	20%	60%	17%	0%
Teacher's Attitude	0%	11%	49%	40%	0%
Teacher's instructional style	0%	23%	31%	46%	0%
Understanding English	0%	37%	40%	23%	0%
Assignments Difficulty	6%	31%	57%	6%	0%
Assignments Due Dates	6%	20%	49%	26%	0%
Assignments Complexity	6%	23%	46%	26%	0%
Asking Questions in Class	6%	14%	51%	29%	0%
Asking Questions of Fellow Students	3%	20%	43%	34%	0%
Asking Questions Directly to Instructor	3%	14%	63%	20%	0%
Group Discussion	17%	23%	37%	23%	0%
Book Costs	63%	23%	14%	0%	0%
Tuition Costs	74%	23%	3%	0%	0%
Enrolling in Classes	0%	20%	46%	34%	0%
School Parking	23%	29%	20%	26%	3%
Dealing with School Officials	0%	23%	43%	34%	0%
Q6. Housing Availability	3%	14%	37%	46%	0%
Housing Location	3%	23%	37%	34%	3%
Housing Costs	23%	31%	31%	14%	0%
Finding Roommates	9%	23%	23%	46%	0%
Food Flavor	11%	26%	37%	26%	0%
Food Costs	11%	26%	40%	23%	0%
Finding Asian Food	6%	17%	37%	37%	3%
Transportation	54%	20%	20%	6%	0%
Drivers License	9%	40%	29%	20%	3%
Buying a Car	37%	20%	26%	17%	0%
Buying a Cell Phone	9%	11%	31%	49%	0%
Visa Requirements	17%	14%	43%	23%	3%
Getting Social Security Number	54%	23%	11%	11%	0%
Opening a Bank Account	6%	17%	37%	40%	0%
Getting a Credit Card	34%	14%	26%	26%	0%
Preparing for TOEFL	26%	20%	43%	11%	0%
Making American Friends	40%	26%	29%	6%	0%
Finding Part-time Job	51%	26%	14%	9%	0%
Places to Visit	14%	29%	31%	26%	0%

APPENDIX D  
CD OF WEB SITE PROJECT





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