

WholeRen White Paper on Dismissal Issues of Chinese Students in the United States 2016



WholeRen Education Research Center
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About WholeRen Education

WholeRen Education was established on May 4, 2010. WholeRen is the nation's first international student educational organization to achieve certification from the American International Recruitment Council. WholeRen Education was founded in America. We are among the most knowledgeable professionals regarding American and Chinese cultural differences, and have a combined service and research team that closely pays attention to the long-term development of students. Under this corporate banner, WholeRen Education Research Center devotes itself to research analysis on Chinese international students in America and to providing accurate consultations based on first hand data. If you would like to learn more about WholeRen, please browse <http://www.wholeren.com>.

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Abstract

The official statistics from the People's Republic of China's Ministry of Education indicate that the number of Chinese students studying abroad reached a new record high of 523,700 in 2015, an increase of 14% compared to the previous year. In accordance with the framework of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), WholeRen Education Research Center analyzed 2,914 students affected by dismissal issues from 2013 to 2016 and released this report. The *2016 WholeRen White Paper on Dismissal Issues of Chinese Students in the United States* ("2016 White Paper") is the latest continuation of our 2014 and 2015 White Paper reports.

Compared to the 2014 and 2015 editions, the major aims of the 2016 White Paper are to describe students affected by dismissal issues, and to call attention to high-risk demographics and environments by analyzing the data on these students and the reasons for the dismissal issues. The report also focuses on the current development of these students, emphasizes the repeated harm from "pay to stay" and the possibility of a second chance to return to a four-year college. The 2016 White Paper provides valuable data to all participants, such as universities, governments, industry professionals, students, and families, involved in American and Chinese education exchange. WholeRen hopes the data informs decision-making and alerts students to the potential consequences of possible violations of school requirements.

After sophisticated analysis, the two major reasons that Chinese students faced dismissal issues last year were poor academic performance (39.86%) and academic dishonesty (32.57%). The number of students who affected by dismissal issues because of academic dishonesty has increased from last year's 24.56% to 32.57%. In addition, the 2016 White Paper conducted data analysis on students in the returning to academic mainstream process. The results show that 64.37% of these students have returned to their original universities, 30.42% of the students are still in the process of working to return to school, while the remaining 5.21% of the students have decided to return to China. The 2016 White Paper will focus especially on analyzing the specifics of the above-mentioned data.

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Part 1 Background Overview

1.1 Overview of Chinese Students in America

Accompanying economic and social development, studying abroad has become a popular trend for Chinese students in the past several decades. According to the People's Republic of China's Ministry of Education, the total number of Chinese students studying abroad in 2015 was 523,700, an increase of 13.90% compared to last year.¹ The *Annual Report on the Development of China's Study Abroad (2015) No.4*, indicates that English speaking countries were still the most popular current destinations for studying abroad. The United States, Canada, Britain, and Australia were the top choices for Chinese students, and the number of students going to these destinations are constantly growing. The number of Chinese students going to Japan, South Korea, and Germany is slowly increasing as well. The students going to France and New Zealand, however, have decreased in number.² The countries that have vigorous economic exchange with China receive more attention; economic relationships are expected to attract more Chinese students in the future.



Figure 1-1: The Number of Chinese International Student in Destination Countries
(Picture from: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)

Serving as the most popular choice for Chinese students abroad, the United States has also become the country with the largest number of foreign students. The *2015 Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange* found that “the number of international students at U.S. colleges and universities had the highest rate of growth in thirty-five years, increasing by 10% to a record high of 974,926 students in the 2014-2015 academic year.” China remained the top country of origin of international students in the United States, increasing by 11% to 304,040.³ The sustained increase in the number of Chinese international students poses serious challenges to the management of American schools.

¹ Geng, D. (2016, March 16). Information on Chinese Students Studying Abroad 2015. In *Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China*. Retrieved from http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/gzdt_gzdt/s5987/201603/t20160316_233837.html

² Wang, H., & Miao, L. (2016, October 29). ANNUAL REPORT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHINA'S STUDY ABROAD (2015) NO.4. In *Center for China & Globalization*. Retrieved from <http://en.ccg.org.cn/annual-report-on-the-development-of-chinas-study-abroad-2015-no-4/>

³ Open Doors 2015. (2015, November 16). In *Institution of International Education*. Retrieved from <http://www.iie.org/en/Who-We-Are/News-and-Events/Press-Center/Press-Releases/2015/2015-11-16-Open-Doors-Data>

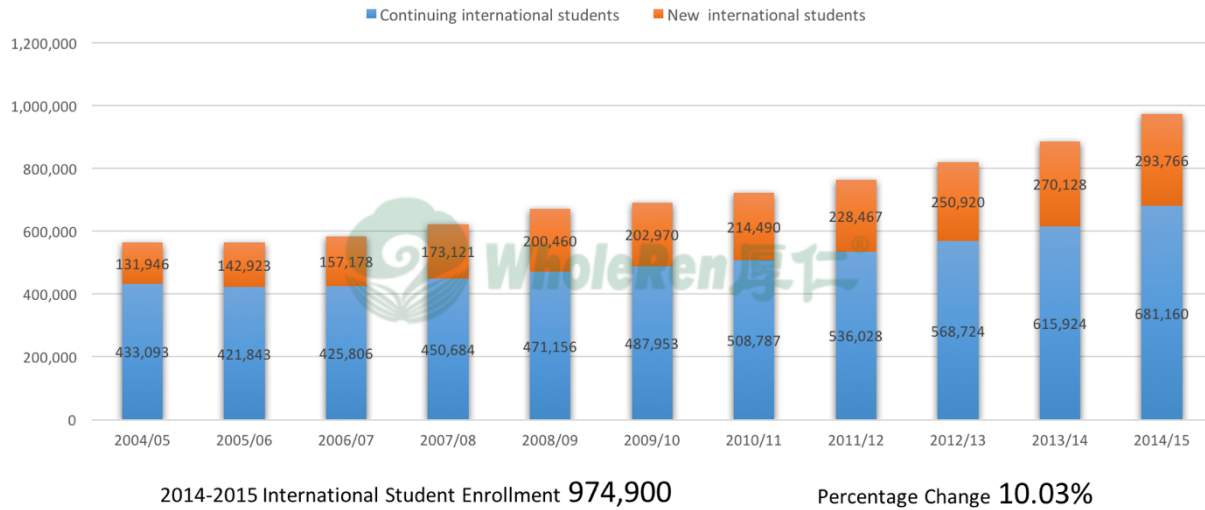


Figure 1-2: International Student Enrollment
(Data Source: Open Doors 2015, Institute of International Education)

With the increasing enthusiasm for study abroad in America, studying abroad at a younger age has also become a major feature among Chinese youths in recent years. The data from “Open Report” reveals that during the 2014-2015 academic year, there were approximately 125,000 undergraduate and 120,000 graduate students among the total number of Chinese international students attending school in America, an increase of 12.7% and 4.0% respectively over the 2013-2014 school year.⁴ This is the first time the number of undergraduate students coming to America from China exceeded the number of graduate students.⁵ The data in this report also reflects the decreasing age trend among Chinese international students.

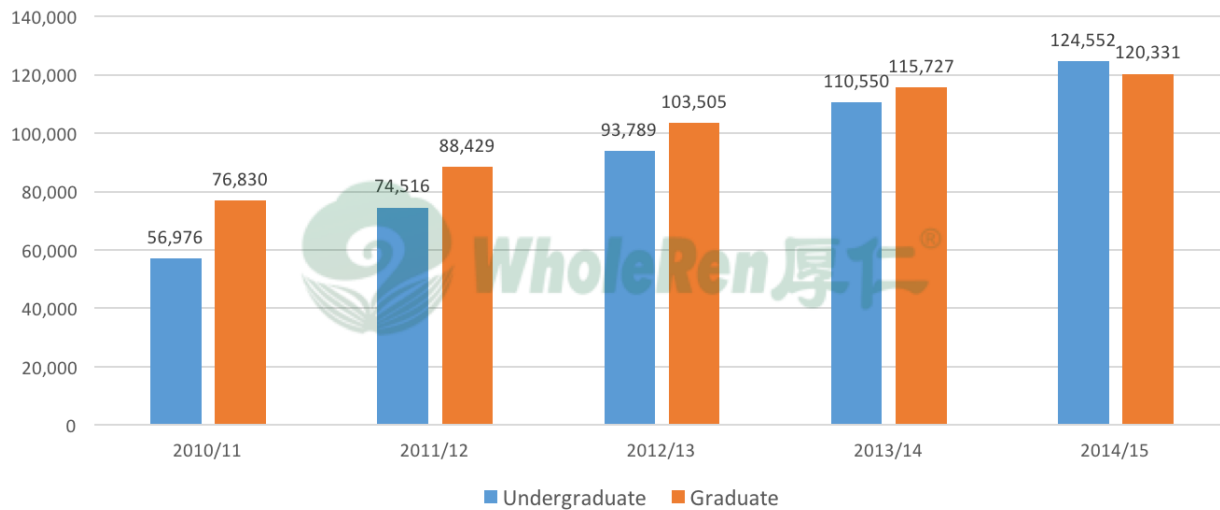


Figure 1-3: The Number of Undergraduate and Graduate Chinese Students in America
(Data Source: Open Doors 2015, Institute of International Education)

⁴ Institute of International Education. (2015). "International Students by Academic Level and Place of Origin, 2013/14-2014/15." *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*. Retrieved from <http://www.iie.org/opendoors>

⁵ Open Doors 2015. (2015, November 16). In *Institution of International Education*. Retrieved from <http://www.iie.org/en/Who-We-Are/News-and-Events/Press-Center/Press-Releases/2015/2015-11-16-Open-Doors-Data>

Responding to this, “*Annual Report on the Development of China’s Study Abroad (2015)*” indicated that in 2015 there was continually increasing enthusiasm among Chinese high school students for going abroad. When compared to 2012, the 2015 survey reveals that among those students going abroad to study as an undergraduate, the proportion of those students who had completed high school in China before attending college fell to 44% from 61%. The proportion of those students who had completed high school in America before attending college increased from 17% to 27%.⁶ *The Wall Street Journal* said, “The number of Chinese K-12 students rose 290% to 34,578 as of November from 8,857 five years ago, according to data collected by the Student Exchange and Visitor Program”.⁷

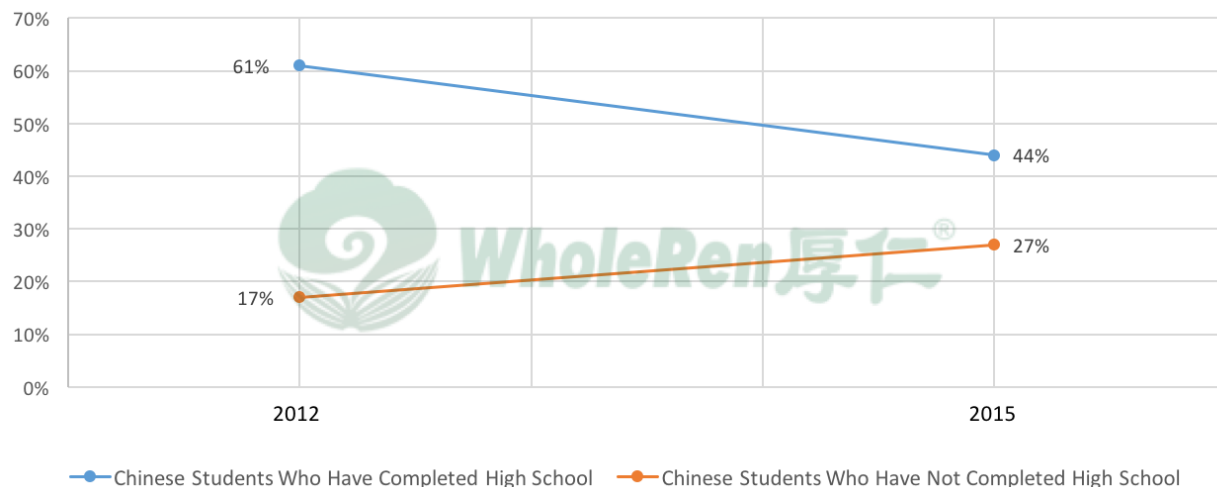


Figure 1-4: Demographics of Chinese High School Students Studying Abroad

(Data Source: *Annual Report on the Development of China’s Study Abroad (2015)*)

1.2 Research Intent

Under the current conditions of a sharp increase in the number of international students, the decreasing age trend of international students in America, insufficient preparation and a lack of trustworthy and professional support organizations in America or China, many problems arise during the process of international students adapting to study and life in a foreign country. These issues, such as a lack of academic or social skills, have slowly become an industry-wide focal point.

Chinese students are a vulnerable population because, while many of them are not top students, and some are young and lack self-control, these students pursue education and a life within an environment representing a different language and culture. However, they lack understanding of American culture and the American educational system, and often have difficulty engaging academics and life in America. At the same time, they suddenly find themselves separated from their family and familiar surroundings, which may lead to out of control behavior.

⁶ Wang, H., & Miao, L. (2016, October 29). ANNUAL REPORT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHINA'S STUDY ABROAD (2015) NO.4. In *Center for China & Globalization*. Retrieved from <http://en.ccg.org.cn/annual-report-on-the-development-of-chinas-study-abroad-2015-no-4/>

⁷ Jordan, M. (2015, December 17). U.S. Schools Draw More Chinese. *The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from <http://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-schools-draw-more-chinese-1450400223>

WholeRen Education Research Center is currently attempting to objectively develop a specific analysis to better grasp the extent of the circumstances, contributing factors, distribution and second-chance opportunities affecting unsuccessful international students in America, through a series of analyses on this cohort. Attention is paid to the post-dismissal status of unsuccessful students through a follow-up survey. For example, whether they were able to return to school, as well as whether they were eventually able to complete their study abroad goals, etc. Additionally, we implemented a professional statistical analysis on the situations of these student's post-dismissal development, in order to provide suggestions for rectifying their education in the United States. The analysis of the number of students who have been expelled is only an enumeration of the issues; how to put them back on the right track to complete school and avoid repeated harm is the underlying aim of this report.

Part 2 Data Analysis on Students Affected by Dismissal Issues

2.1 Data Collection

Statistics in the “2016 WholeRen White Paper on Dismissal Issues of Chinese Students in the United States” come from WholeRen’s proprietary database. Acting as America’s premier professional organization for providing second-chance opportunities for students who were affected by dismissal issues, original statistics are compiled by America’s sole organization with expertise focusing on high-risk international students and reflect the assemblage of the particular characteristics and overall situation of international students who were affected by dismissal issues. In the following sections, “us/we” will refer to WholeRen Education Research Center.

Following the 2015 White Paper, we have investigated the age, previous length of time in America, school location, level of academic attainment, school ranking, and other aspects of the students who faced dismissal issues, in order to sort out the reasons for these issues. These statistics enable us to acquire a deeper understanding of the situation of international students who were affected by dismissal issues.

By March 2016, the initial data analysis calculated there were 2,914 students affected by dismissal issues in WholeRen Education’s database (among them are 2,713 usable samples representing 93.10% of the data).

In the process of refining the original data, we carefully collected materials according to scientific methodology. The below WholeRen Education Research Center’s sample data is collected from the original text from the inquiries of students who were affected by dismissal issues.

[Sample Data Example]

When collecting the data, we first obtained student M’s basic personal information, school registration information, etc. to produce the profile below:

Full Name: M

Sex: Male

Date of Birth: XX/XX/1996

Age at Time of Discipline: 19

Academic Achievement at time of Discipline: Undergraduate

Major: Science and Engineering

School Disciplined By: University of A

Disciplining School Rank: 121

Disciplining School Type: Public, Non-denominational

Disciplining School Location: AA State

GPA: 1.8

Year Disciplined: 2015

Level of Academic Achievement at Time of Discipline: Second Year Undergraduate

Length of Stay in America at Time of Discipline: 1.5 Years

Reason for Discipline: Poor Academic Performance

Reason for Low GPA: Engrossed with Videogames, Unable to Adapt to American School Life

[Analysis Process]

Through making calculations and organizing the complete WholeRen Education Consultant Database’s Sample Book Data, we aim to accomplish the following tasks:

1. Conduct a simple factor analysis on a student’s individual information
2. Classify and analyze the specific reasons why a student was affected by dismissal issues

- Put forth a summary of the characteristics of the most vulnerable and high-risk academic demographics among Chinese students

2.2 Basic Personal Data Analysis

2.2.1 Age Distribution of Students Affected by Dismissal Issues

Below is the age distribution of students affected by dismissal issues:

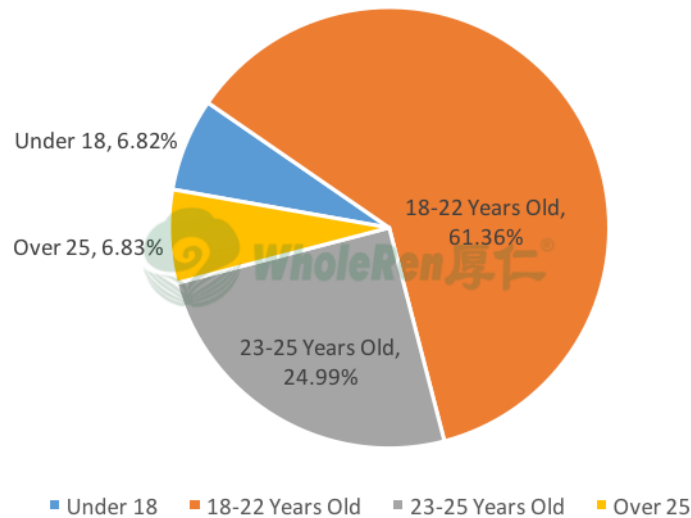


Figure 2-1: Age Distribution of Students Affected by Dismissal Issues

Students facing dismissal issues who were under 18 years of age (specifically those without a post-secondary academic record) account for 6.82% of all students disciplined. The largest age group proportionally is students ages 18-22 (approximately coinciding with the period of undergraduate study), who stand at 61.63% of all disciplined students. 24.99% and 6.83% of students affected by dismissal issues were Master's students and doctoral students respectively.

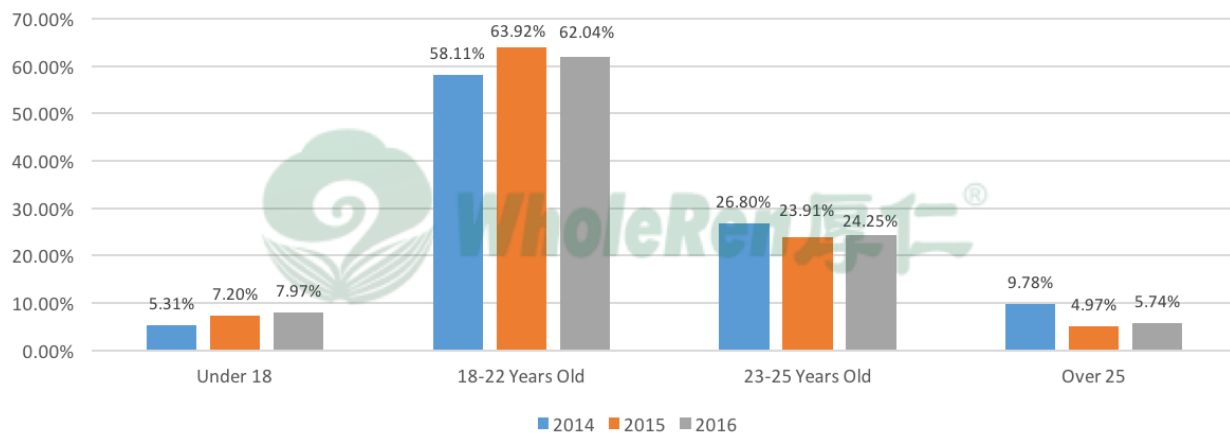


Figure 2-2: 3-Year Comparison on Age Distribution of Students Affected by Dismissal Issues

As observed in the separate 2014, 2015 and 2016 data comparisons, the 18-22 year old students (approximately those entering school as undergraduates) represent the cohort of international students in America at highest-risk for dismissal issues. The proportion of those students under 18 years of age with dismissal issues has seen a small increase over the last two years as well. This upwards trend may reflect the aforementioned trend of younger student demographics among international students, which may be leading to a corresponding increase in the problems of young international students.

2.2.2 Distribution of Length of Stay in America at Time of Dismiss

Of students who were affected by dismissal issues, 41.37% of students had studied and lived in America for a year or less. Additionally, 69.31% had been in America less than two years. Those students who have spent more time in America have a much greater adaptability with far fewer instances of situations leading to dismissal issues. Among the students who have spent more than five years in America, only 1.92% were affected by dismissal issues.

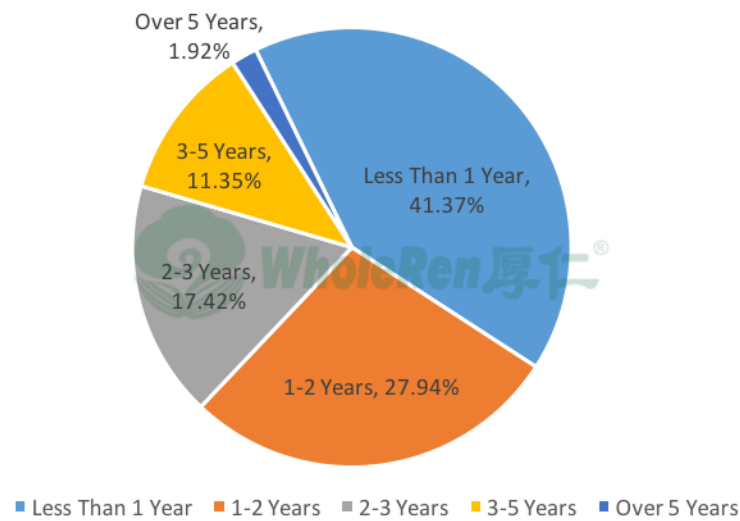


Figure 2-3: Distribution of Length of Stay in America at Time of Dismiss

An inability to adapt to new environments often leads to academic under-performance. An unfamiliarity with the American educational system and scope of administrative justice may result in unintentional violations.

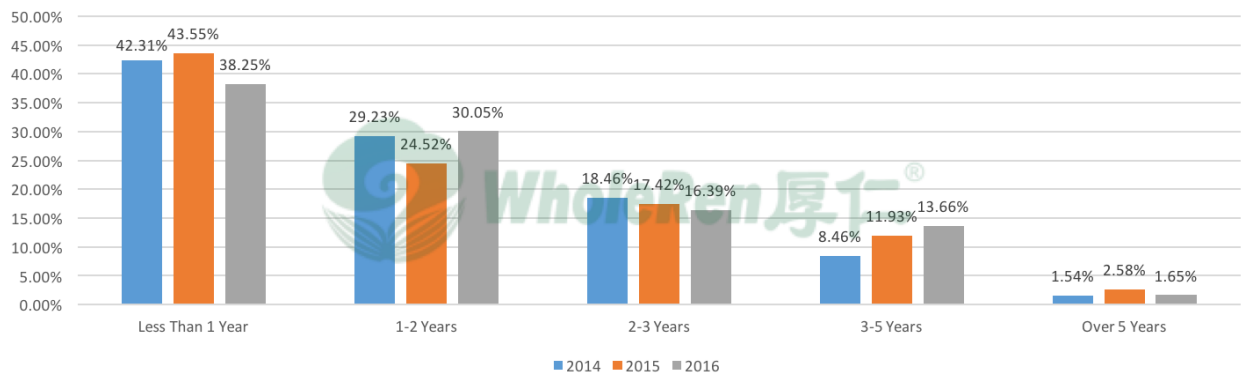


Figure 2-4: 3-Year Comparison on Length of Stay in America at Time of Dismiss

The three-year data comparison indicates that the proportion of international students who have been in America for 1-2 years and were affected by dismissal issues increased from 24.52% to 30.05%, an increase of 22.55%. Three major reasons give rise to this phenomenon: The fact that American academic workloads often become more difficult in the second year is an objective factor. American schools are also willing to give more opportunities to Chinese students who experience a situation in the first year; they are allowed to remain at school for a second year to improve, but the results are still short of expectations. Finally, cases of coordinated cheating seem to appear more often in a student's second year.

Compared to 2014 and 2015, the proportion of those students in 2016 who had been in America less than one year, and were affected by dismissal issues was reduced. The overall proportion has decreased when compared with the data on those students that have been in America for 1-2 years. This underscores that more international students truly recognize the importance of adaptability in the first year. However, an attitude of vigilance and self-discipline certainly is not easy to maintain; the second academic year still remains the peak period for the emergence of student issues.

2.2.3 Distribution of Academic Level at Time of Dismiss

Carrying out the analysis focusing on the level of academic achievement of students at the time of discipline: The proportion of students affected by dismissal issues are highest among undergraduates, who constitute 62.66% of all students affected by dismissal issues. Masters students represent 18.17%. The combined proportion of undergraduate and Master's students exceeds 80%.

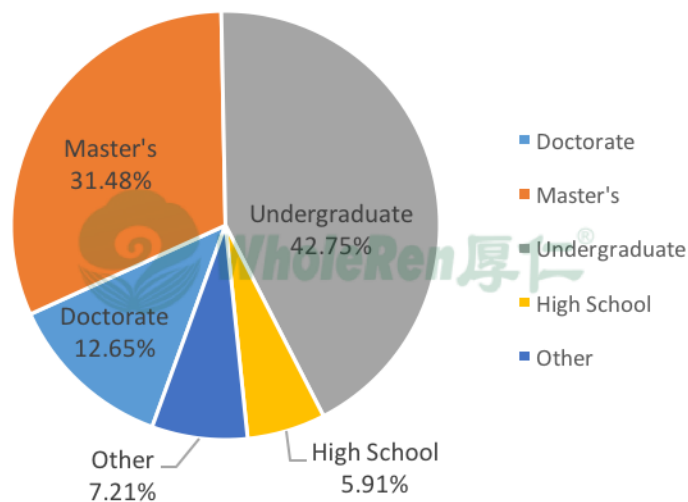


Figure 2-5: Overall Distribution of Academic Level among Chinese International Student
(Data Source: The Wall Street Journal and Open Doors 2015, Institute of International Education)

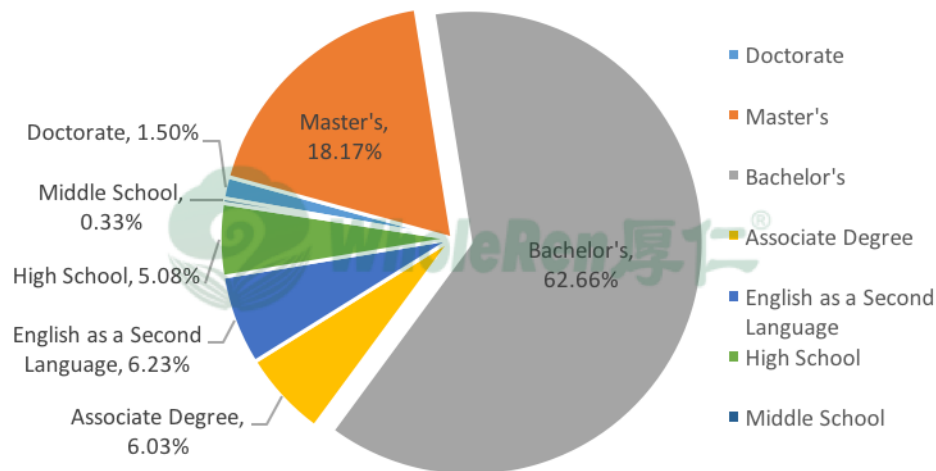


Figure 2-6: Distribution of Academic Level at Time of Dismiss

As can be seen from the above graphic, there is only a slight difference between the proportion of undergraduate and masters Chinese students coming to America, only 11.27%. However, the proportion of unsuccessful undergraduate students is much larger than the proportion of graduate students, at 44.49%. On average, undergraduates are younger than graduate students; this serves to highlight that the younger a student is, the more easily a critical academic situation may arise.

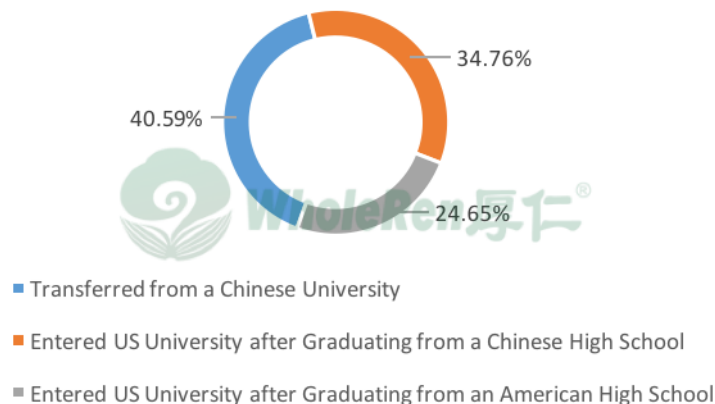


Figure 2-7: Information on Undergraduate Student Affected by Dismissal Issues

We have subdivided the students with dismissal issues into three categories, based on how they entered US universities: those who have entered after graduation from a Chinese high school, those who have entered after graduation from an American high school, and those that have transferred from a Chinese university to an American university. Taking it one step further, the analysis shows that the greatest proportion of students affected by dismissal issues was those who transferred from a Chinese college to an undergraduate program in America, representing 40.59% of the data. The next largest proportion is those students who entered after graduating from a Chinese high school, standing at 34.76%. Those students who matriculated directly from an American high school is the lowest proportion having dismissal issues at 24.65%.

It is not hard to understand that those students who have previous experience with academic life at an American institution before attending college have an easier initial process of adaptation when compared to those students who enter directly as undergraduates. The number of students who transfer from a Chinese

university to an American university has seen a steady annual increase. Because students' study habits and mindsets already conform to Chinese university models, those directly entering junior or sophomore major classes often have difficulty adapting in terms of schoolwork without a period of time to acclimate to unfamiliar surroundings.

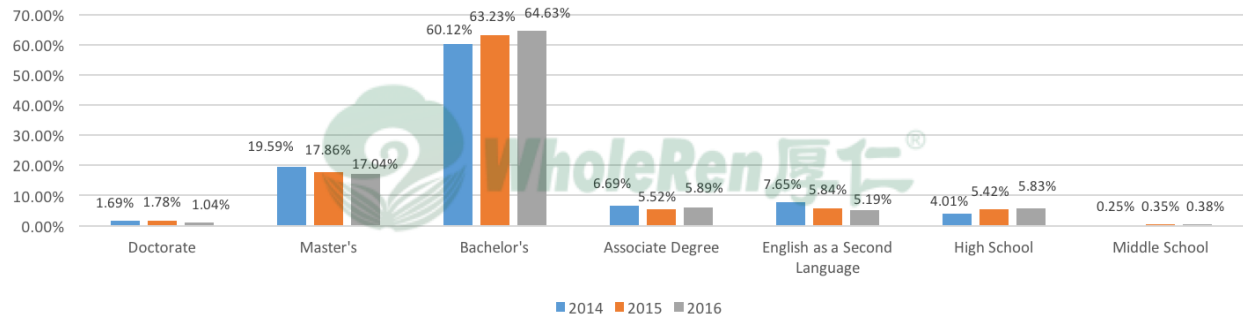


Figure 2-8: 3-Year Comparison on Distribution of Academic Level at Time of Dismiss

The proportion of undergraduate students who faced dismissal issues in 2016 continued the progressively increasing trend of 2015. The proportion of high school students affected by dismissal issues also has a slow-but-steady upwards trend. The proportion of Master's students with dismissal issues, however, has shown a slight downward trend, from 19.59% in 2014 to 17.04%. This data conforms to the aforementioned decrease in the proportion of graduate students and increase in the proportion of undergraduate students who go to America to study. As the average age of international students continues to decrease, more and more students going abroad to attend high school and college should arouse vigilance to defend against the emergence of critical academic situations.

2.2.4 Distribution of the Rank of Schools from which Students Affected by Dismissal Issues

According to the distribution of the academic level of students affected by dismissal issues in the above section 2.2.3, 82.32% of students were undergraduate, Master's or PhD students. This is to say that over 80% of dismissal cases occurred at a university. Looking at U.S. News ranking of all the universities attended by this cross-section of students who faced dismissal issues, 79.98% of those students affected by dismissal issues attended those universities that are ranked within the top 200 in America.

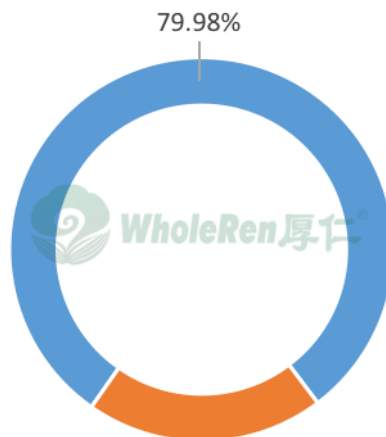


Figure 2-9: The Proportion of Top 200 University among All Universities

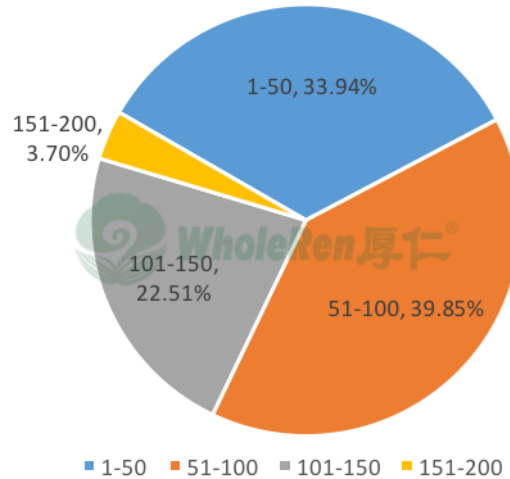


Figure 2-10: Distribution of the Rank of Schools from which Students Affected by Dismissal Issues

Through further research on the situation of those students affected by dismissal issues from the top 200 schools, 33.94% of students attended one of the top 50 schools nationwide. Moreover, the proportion of those students who faced dismissal issues and attended one of the top 100 schools stands at 73.79%. This highlights that the majority of those students affected by dismissal issues entered a highly ranked school and discovered the three major factors that often give rise to this phenomenon:

- 1) The academic pressure of the highest-ranked schools is becoming even more intense making it more likely that an inability to match the progress of the class will lead to less-than ideal grades. This is the most important factor.
- 2) Acceptance into a top-ranking university implies that a student's prior academic performance has been well above average. After starting a new phase of their academic career without matching the same level of previous academic success, the increased pressure and mental burden can easily give rise to a vicious and detrimental cycle, sometimes even leading to attempts at cheating in order to achieve higher grades.
- 3) Mistakenly believing that everything will be smooth sailing after being accepted to their dream school leads some students into self-absorbed sentiments and shirking one's academics.

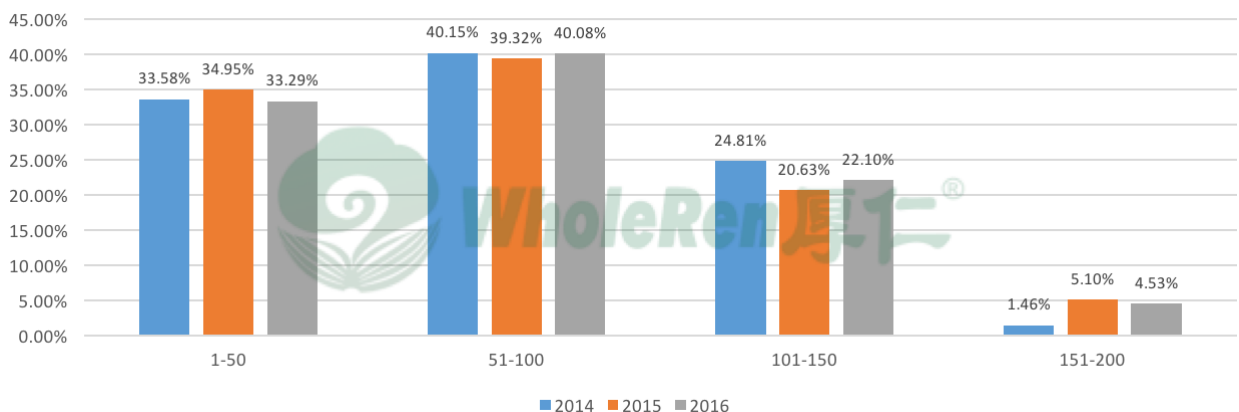


Figure 2-11: 3-Year Comparison on Distribution of the Rank of Schools

According to a comparison of three years of data, the distribution of the ranking of schools attended by those students who faced dismissal issues exist within a relatively small scope, without any major changes over time. The top 100 ranked universities appear to be the highest-risk environment for a situation resulting in dismissal issues to occur.

2.2.5 Distribution of Location of Students Affected by Dismissal Issues

Through calculating the distribution of locations of students affected by dismissal issues, the map indicates that cases of dismissal issues being happened are concentrated along the west coast and in eastern communities. West coast communities include California, Oregon and Washington State. Among these locations, California's Los Angeles and Washington State's Seattle communities are the locations with the most instances of student discipline. Eastern locations include Massachusetts, New York State, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, etc. The regions with the most serious instances of dismissal issues are often economically developed, are Chinese immigrant population centers and are popular destinations for immigrants and international students. These cities have abundant higher education resources and top-tier schools are often concentrated in these locations.

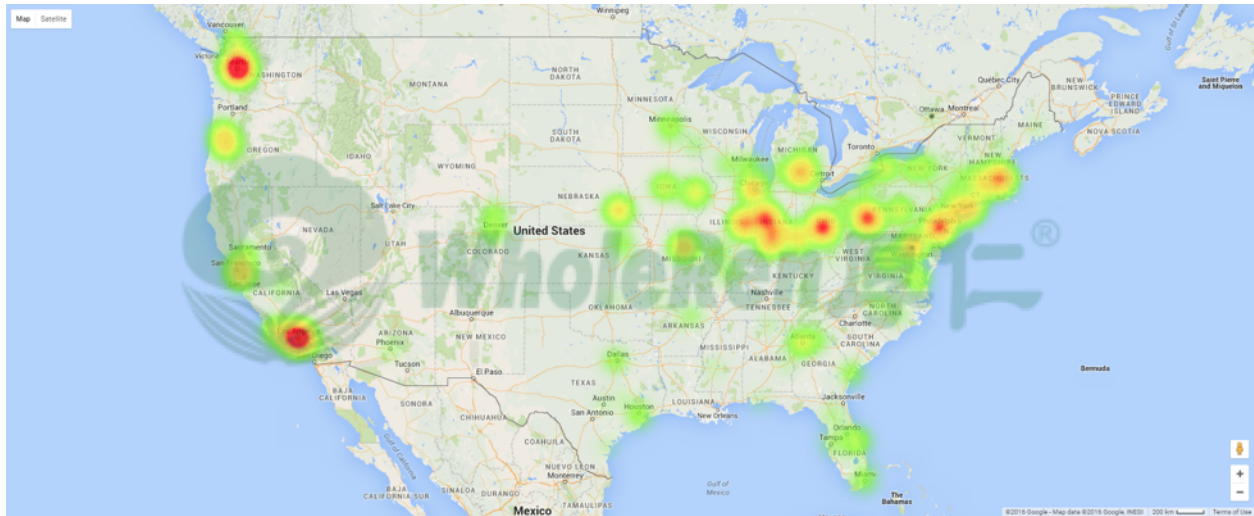


Figure 2-12: Distribution of Location of Students Affected by Dismissal Issues (Data till March 2016)

2.3 Analysis of Reason for Facing Dismissal Issues

An analysis on the data on the 1,185 students who faced dismissal issues between March 2015 and March 2016 reveals the following distribution of the reasons for dismissal issues.

Poor Academic Performance	39.86%
Academic Dishonesty	32.57%
Attendance Issues	8.14%
Behavioral Misconduct	7.00%
Incomplete Understanding of Academic Policies	6.00%
Mental Health Issue	3.43%
“Pay to Stay” Scheme and Other	3.00%

Figure 2-13: Reason for Facing Dismissal Issues

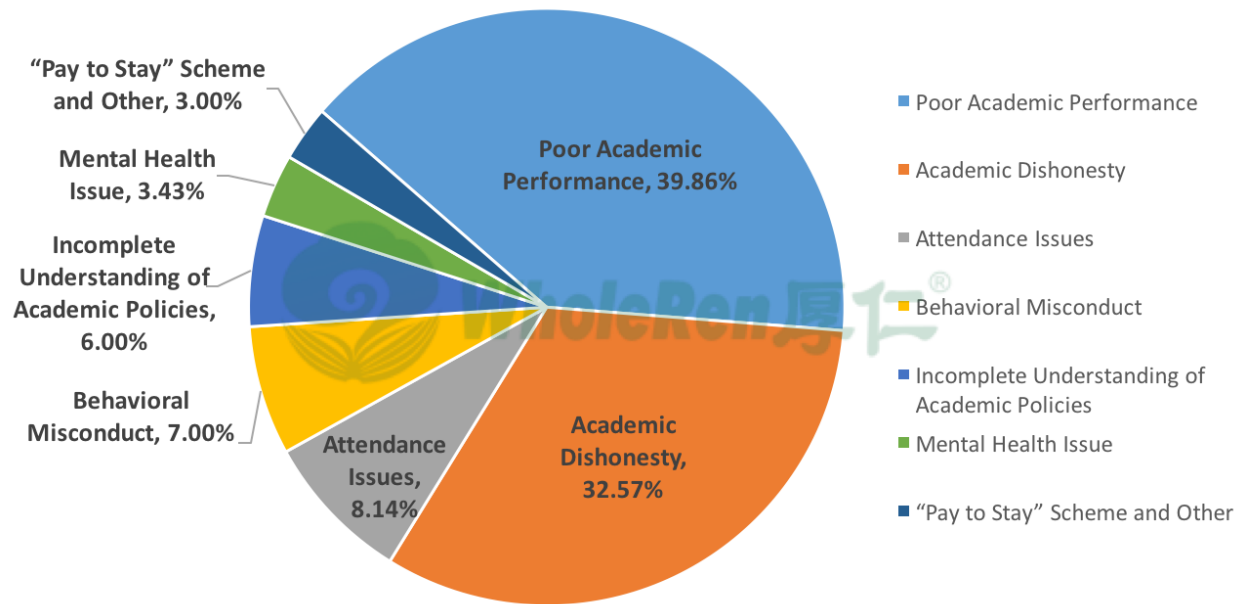


Figure 2-14: Distribution of Reason for Facing Dismissal Issues

As can be seen from the above chart, issues with poor academic performance and academic dishonesty are the leading causes of students affected by dismissal issues. Among disciplined Chinese students, 72.43% cut short their study in America due to these two reasons. These 7 reasons for initiation of dismissal issues will each be discussed and analyzed below:

Poor Academic Performance

Poor academic performance, at 39.86%, is the most commonly seen cause for Chinese international students to face dismissal issues. The major manifestation of this is a low GPA. American institutions of higher learning have strict criteria regarding students' grades: undergraduate GPA cannot fall below 2.0 and graduate GPA cannot fall below 3.0. Those who fail to maintain this standard will receive a warning from the school; if there are no further improvements, more serious dismissal issues might happen. Factors leading to a low GPA include:

1. Lack of self-discipline or self-control, combined with a lack of focus on schoolwork
2. Insufficient English proficiency, an inability to speak, comprehend or write the language
3. An inability to adapt to new academic environments in a timely manner

Consistent guidance and support is critically necessary to enable international students to quickly adopt to new academic environments, engage in campus life, maintain a positive attitude, and eliminating distractions and other issues that may arise.

Academic Dishonesty

In America, honesty is a serious matter and American colleges and universities pay close attention to issues related to matters of academic dishonesty. However, academic dishonesty is still the second largest reason for Chinese international students to face dismissal issues, standing at 32.57%. The most commonly seen dishonest academic behaviors include: cheating on a test, plagiarism, having another student take a test for them, falsifying application materials, incorrect citations, falsifying grades, etc. We have come into contact with students affected by dismissal issues because of these reasons and separated their cases into two kinds: deliberate and unintentional. Deliberately dishonest "bad students" are nothing more than those who fear they are unable to pass a test or complete their homework, while the "good students" are overachievers who

hope to raise their GPA. Unintentional dishonesty, for example, not citing sources while writing an essay or unfamiliarity with the rules regarding online or take-home exams, may reflect a lack of understanding of American culture, conventions and institutions, or is a choice resulting from a careless or flippant attitude. In recent years, cases of Chinese international students involved in cooperative cheating are becoming increasingly frequent.

The thing worth noting is that the issue of academic honesty among Chinese international students has already caught the attention of some college professors. In many cases, even if the student hasn't displayed any unsuitable behavior in terms of their tests or schoolwork, professors may still strictly monitor the student's work. The emergence of this kind of discriminatory tendency may have its origin in the negative impression of Chinese international students having a generally poor track record for academic honesty.

Among the disciplined students who received assistance from WholeRen Education, the number of students affected by dismissal issues as a result of falsifying application material is increasing. In order to enroll in their dream school, students may embellish or fabricate their background information, even going as far as to hire someone to sit in on language proficiency tests. As soon as this kind of behavior is discovered, schools have sufficient grounds for retracting admissions and even blacklisting the student. A few students make active use of false application material; some students, however, are deceived by intermediary organizations and unwittingly submit falsified application materials. Please see the appendix for specific examples of cases involving falsified application materials.

Attendance Issues

Attendance issues were the cause for 8.14% of international students facing dismissal issues. American colleges and universities pay particular attention to the attendance rate of international students, those who don't follow attendance policies face dismissal issues. The attendance rate of international students has a direct connection with student visas; when students fail to satisfy school requirements, this results in a loss of status as a legal international student. Speaking for a small portion of international students, going to America alone implies a situation in which there will be no supervision; this abrupt "freedom" can easily cause them to shirk their schoolwork and disregard attendance policies. The major causes of international student "truancy" include: addiction to videogames, laziness, and unrealistic travel plans. Apart from this, because attendance will be factored into students' overall grades, if a student misses too many classes then it is very likely that will receive an unsatisfactory grade. Moving forward, this may result in a vicious cycle of poor academic performance.

Behavioral Misconduct

Behavioral Misconduct refers to international students who have violated American laws or school policies, including students not following classroom rules, fighting, or even more serious behavior such as violence, threats, vandalism and harmful actions. 7.00% of students were affected by dismissal issues as a result of behavioral misconduct. Breaking laws due to a lack of knowledge of American laws is very common in these misconduct cases, and should draw everyone's attention. Living and studying in America, but not knowing the laws, can put Chinese students in a precarious position. In February, 2016, a Chinese international student at the University of Iowa posted inappropriate language on in an online community form and was deported. Please see the appendix for more information on this case.

Incomplete Understanding of Academic Policies

The number of students who faced dismissal issues due to incomplete knowledge or understanding of common and foundational academic regulations and policies stands at 6.00%. This is a classification of dismissal issues that is new to this year's edition of the White Paper. Roughly, this means that students did

not follow proper procedures in enrolling in their school, did not attend mandatory classes, did not pay enough attention to minimum credit requirements, and other infractions. As a result, students affected by dismissal issues for many easily-avoidable mistakes. Every American school will give a detailed introduction and explanation of basic academic policies at the start of orientation. Because they have not yet fully adapted to the language and environment, however, a large number of Chinese students cannot completely comprehend the orientation and miss critical information. There are even a small number of students who do not take orientation seriously and as a result, they purposefully skip it. All this leads to negative future consequences as students commit unintentional violations or even faced dismissal issues as a result of them being unclear about school policies.

Mental Health Issues

3.43% of students affected by dismissal issues cut short their education due to mental health issues. Before going to America to study, a large number of students lack experience living and studying on their own. This causes them to face numerous challenges and feel even more pressure, often leaving students that already find themselves in an unfamiliar environment at a loss as to what to do. Some students also develop mental health issues because there is insufficient guidance in bridging American and Chinese cultural differences.

A sense of isolation is unavoidable for international students. Because of language and cultural barriers, new arrivals often have difficulty making friends, which may lead to withdrawn and reclusive behavior. This phenomenon is certainly much more prevalent than is commonly thought. This situation has an even more serious effect on the mental health of less mature youths abroad. When negativity and mental pressure are not managed through proper channels, it can easily lead to mental health problems, anti-social behavior and feelings of dread at the thought of school. When left to progress unchecked, this may produce symptoms of depression and may even result in hospitalization that leaves students with no choice but to discontinue their studies. Integrating new Chinese students with other international and American students and engaging in campus life are logical steps to avoid this downward spiral.

“Pay to Stay” Scheme and Other (financial concerns, visa issues, etc.)

In WholeRen Education Center’s database, 3% of students were affected by dismissal issues as a result of association with a “pay to stay” school, falsified application materials, and other reasons. Within this category of students, the proportion of students who were affected by dismissal issues as a result of affiliation with a “pay to stay” school is 74.59%.

“Pay to Stay” Scheme

From 2015 - 2016, the United States Department of Homeland Security ramped up their efforts to combat “pay to stay” schools, involved students and the entire “pay to stay” operation. In March, 2015, approximately 1,500 students were implicated when three “pay to stay” schools in Los Angeles were closed down. On April 5, 2016 the United States Department of Homeland Security designed a “pay to stay” “fishing” college, the University of Northern New Jersey, and launched its website. Apart from twenty-one students who were arrested in the case, more than 1,027 other students involved with the “pay to stay” school may be deported. Because of the influence of this matter, WholeRen received requests for consultation from 106 students implicated in “pay to stay” schemes, in April 2016. If we include this data in our calculations, then the proportion of students who are unsuccessful as a result of “pay to stay” increases to 11%.

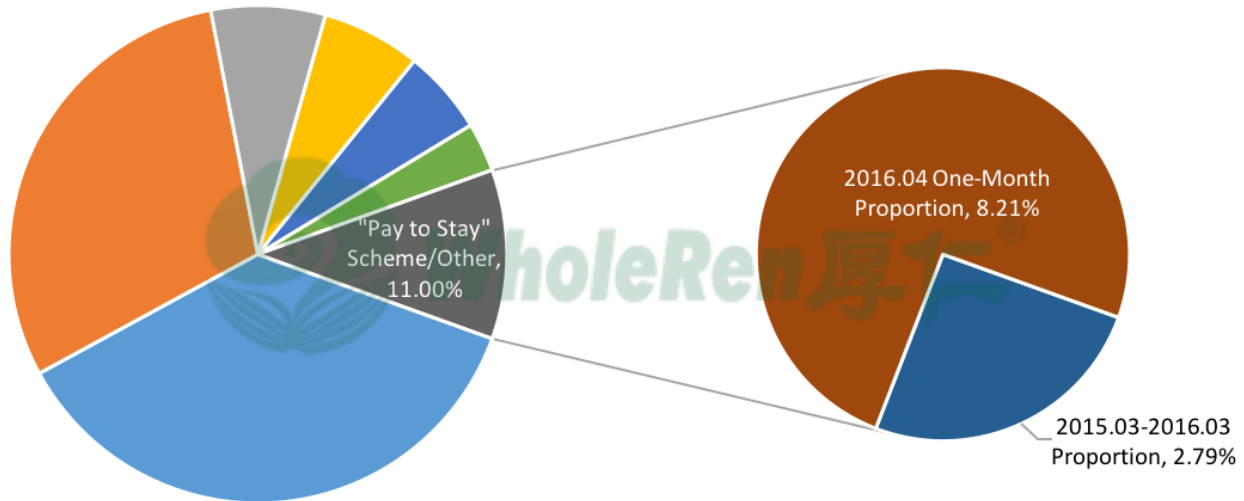


Figure 2-15: Proportion of “Pay to Stay” Scheme after Adding April 2016 Data

The “pay to stay” business has steadily gained popularity among Chinese students in recent years. Most Chinese student are less informed, and chose to “pay-to-stay” under difficult circumstances. As the graphic below shows, there has been a continual increase in the number of people in America using Chinese to search “pay to stay” over the last five years, and in fact seem to have peaked within the last six months (according to Google Trends). According to the data, the majority of searches originated from Chinese population centers such as New York city and the California Bay area.

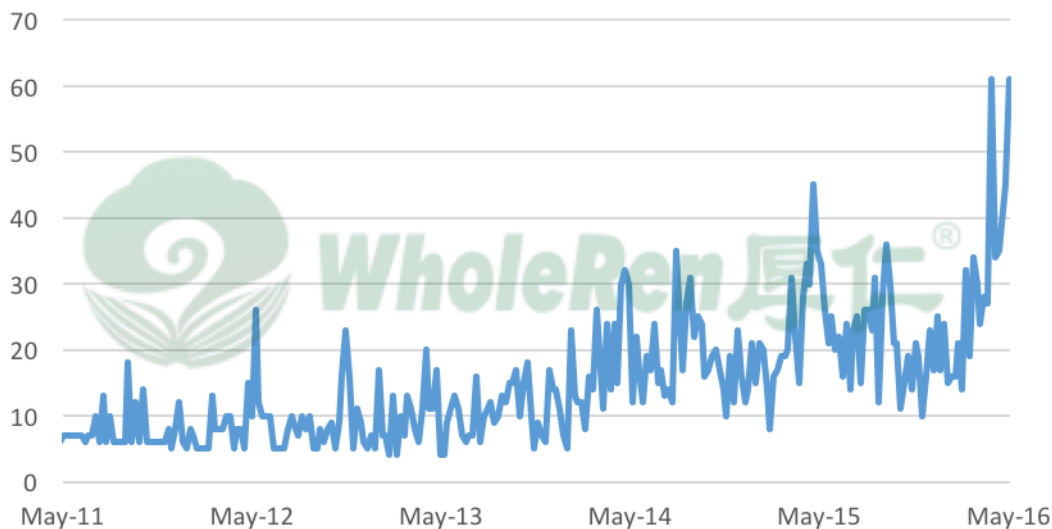


Figure 2-16: Search Trends of “Pay to Stay” in Google
(Data Source: Google Trends)

“Pay to stay” schools are sham colleges not recognized by the United States Department of Education or verified by the United States Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). “Pay to stay” is a form of visa fraud that allows someone to remain in America illegally to study or work by acquiring student status through these schools, which exist only in name. “Pay to stay” methods not only harm law-abiding international student and migrant worker visa applicants, it also greatly threatens America’s national security. Especially worth paying attention to is that after facing dismissal issues for the first time, a few international students will choose “pay to stay” as a means of maintaining their student visa status. As a

result, they are often repeatedly expelled from school and may even face deportation. The serious and repeated harm of “pay to stay” imperils participants and causes unwanted scrutiny for innocent students.

International students in America must maintain their status as full-time students in order for their visas to remain in effect. The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services has zero tolerance for those who “temporarily borrow” the status of a student. Once uncovered, not only will the offending school be shut down, but also the offending student will be promptly deported back to their country of origin. Once their deception is uncovered, any new plans to return to America to continue study will be placed in jeopardy as the student may be refused for a subsequent student visa.

2.4 Three-year Comparison on the Reason for Dismissal Issues

In comparison with the data from 2014 and 2015, some changes were found in the reasons for dismissal issues:

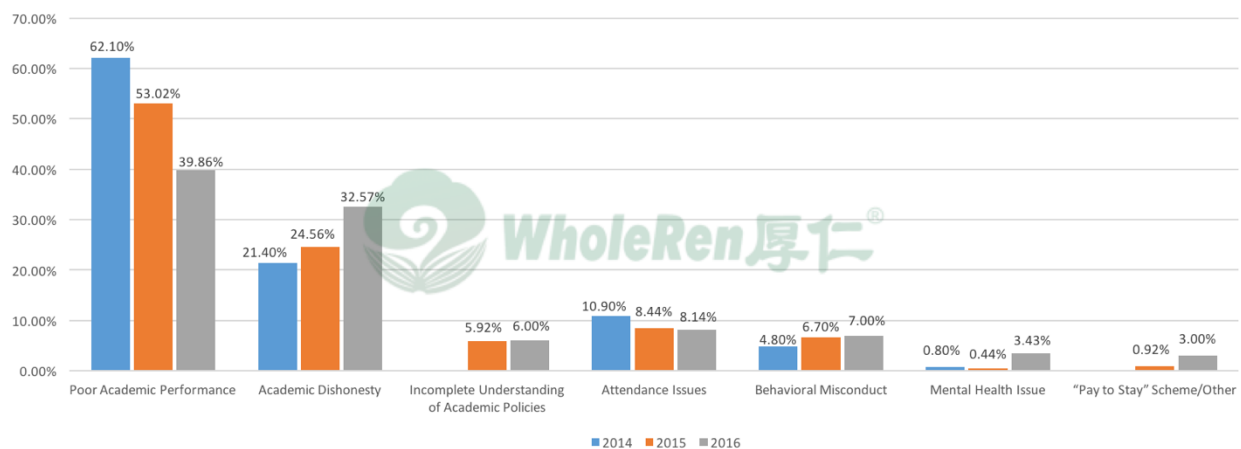


Figure 2-17: 3-Year Comparison on the Reason for Dismissal Issues

First of all, the number of students facing dismissal issues due to poor academic performance is decreasing annually, dropping to 13.16% comparing to 2015. Students affected by dismissal issues because of academic dishonesty, however, has increased 8.01% from last year. Another change is that the proportion of mental health issue saw an eight-fold increase from 2015! Last year, 5.92% of students faced dismissal issues because of international student status; the main reason was because they were not well prepared for their study. This year, we have categorized this reason for facing dismissal issues as a lack of a study program goals on the part of the students.

Problems with the academic integrity of international students are not only issues for the American and Chinese Education Ministries; they have also become social news topics. The pressure to continue their schooling, competition for a job, and even issues of “face” all cause international students to pay more and more attention to their grades. This might have been a good thing; however, it has developed into a series of academic integrity issues. In recent years, the repeated instances of fraudulent, deceptive or inappropriate behavior among international students have left people at a loss for words. For more information on a student at a top 100 ranked mid-western American involved in an organized cheating case in 2015, please see the appendix. Beyond this, not appropriately citing academic sources is the most common academic integrity issue with Chinese students. There is a Chinese popular saying that goes “all writings under heaven are nothing but copies”. In American education, however, this sentiment is certainly not applicable.

Carelessly using citations without paying attention to sources while completing homework, writing essays or taking tests all reveal that these issues exist widely and clearly implies the students' unfamiliarity with personal property and copyright laws. This phenomenon also epitomizes a singular cultural difference between America and China.

It is worth international students and families to pay attention to the growing proportion of mental health issues. Studying alone far from home and faced with a new environment gives rise to restless anxiety and feelings of depression. Because of language and cultural differences, a few students are unwilling to interact with others, and therefore develop feeling of loneliness and anti-social behavior. As the average age of students studying abroad continues to decrease, larger numbers of high school students will go to America to study. These students are young; they don't have experience studying and living on their own. Mentally, they are far from fully mature. In an unfamiliar environment, running into any situation can easily leave students at a complete loss as to what to do. In these situations, there is an increased need for regular communication with family members, friends, or even professional counselors. When difficulties arise, providing prompt and appropriate assistance provides a sense of security and belonging, guiding them away from depression, improving their academic and social abilities. With this, students are able to lead a much smoother and stable life in America.

Part 3 Current Development of Students Affected by Dismissal Issues

3.1 Current Development of Students Affected by Dismissal Issues

After the publication of the *White Paper* series, WholeRen Education Research Center conducted follow-up research on the current situation of those students affected by dismissal issues. This year, we have drawn from our database a sample of 1,000 students who received help from WholeRen prior to March, 2015 and conducted a one-year follow-up survey.

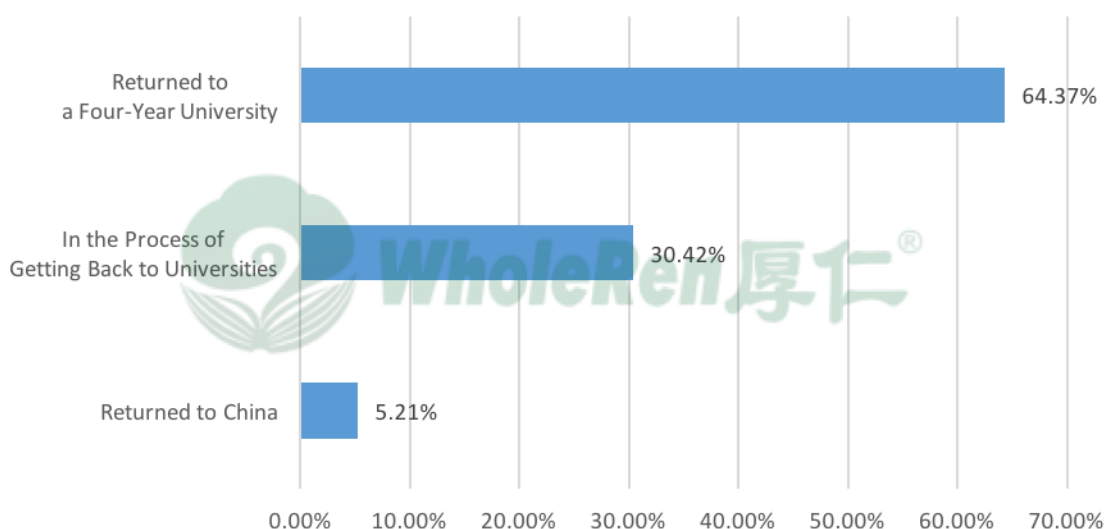


Figure 3-1: Current Development of Students Affected by Dismissal Issues

The figure above shows the different outcomes of the sample students affected by dismissal issues after one year. 64.37% of the students have returned to their original universities or a four-year university; 30.42% of them are still studying in America and are in the process of getting back to universities; the remaining 5.21% of students decided to go back to China after consideration.

We continued to analyze the students who are in the progress of getting back to universities. 20.26% of them are not back to school yet because their probation or suspension period was not finished. These students will be able to go back to studying after meeting their disciplinary requirements. Over half of the students cannot go back to four-year college because they did not meet the required GPA. Lastly, although they faced dismissal issues, the remaining 17.91% of the students have recognized their academic issues, they have resolved to improve their grades to apply to an even higher-ranked university. As a result, they did not return to a four-year college within one year.

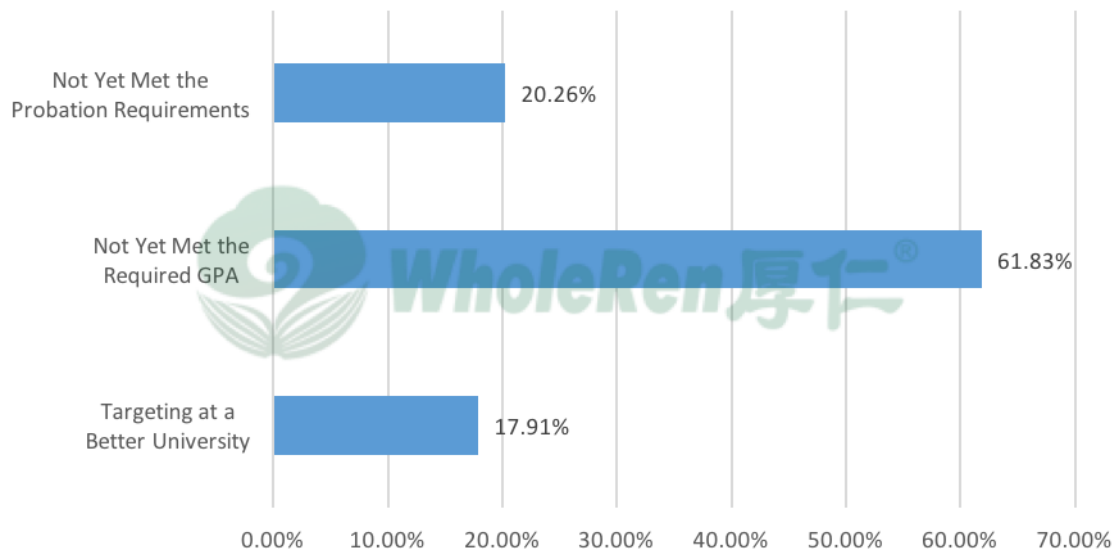


Figure 3-2: Current Situation of Students Who Are in the Process of Returning to University

The majority of the students implicated in cases of cheating do not necessarily have low grades. Often believing they won't be caught, these students use any manner of inappropriate methods to achieve higher grades. After facing dismissal issues, these students usually learned their lessons and were then aware of the importance of academic integrity in the American education system. After a short time, they were able to return to their universities. Most of the students who have poor academic performance are proactively seeking out academic tutoring and making study plans in order to improve their grades as quickly as possible. To see more detailed cases of students returning to the correct academic path, please see the appendix.

3.2 Dismissal Issues Risk Aversion

Analyzing the 2015-2016 sample of students affected by dismissal issues and comparing this data with previous years, it is not difficult to conclude that even though there is a minor change in the reason for dismissal issues, poor academic performance and academic dishonesty are still the main factors that led to Chinese international students facing dismissal issues. In total, these two reasons have resulted in over 70% of the cases over the past three years.

Other cases such as those involving the romantic relationships, mental health problems, campus violence, and illegal activities of international students have been making headlines recently. The students involved in these situations face not only the interruption of study, but also the punishment of laws. Sometimes, they face the blame and misunderstanding of society.

From the start of studying abroad to the emergence of dismissal issues, international students need to pay the most attention to these four stages: pre-departure, the first semester, upon receiving the first-time warning, and upon facing dismissal issues. New students should not minimize participation in college sponsored orientation programs.

Pre-Departure: Pre-departure courses are exceedingly important; they are also easily neglected. For students preparing to study abroad in America for the first time, systematically understanding American

culture and basic laws, standards of behavior at school, credit requirements and especially academic integrity in the American education system – the correct use of citations, how to carry out group projects, the pitfalls of cheating on tests – can only benefit students. This kind of preparation can also expose the student to a different culture and the kind of cultural differences they should expect. Having prior exposure to different thoughts and ideas, as well as becoming acquainted with a new culture and legal system, is a major precondition for success in America.

The First Semester: This is the time when students ease into their studies. According to our data, taking only undergraduate students as an example, among the students who faced dismissal issues due to poor academic performance, 57.85% had a low GPA (lower than 2.0) in the first semester, and 71.02% had a low GPA in the first year. The change of linguistic environment and study methods have the most impact on new international students. Therefore, a smooth transition in the first semester is incredibly important.

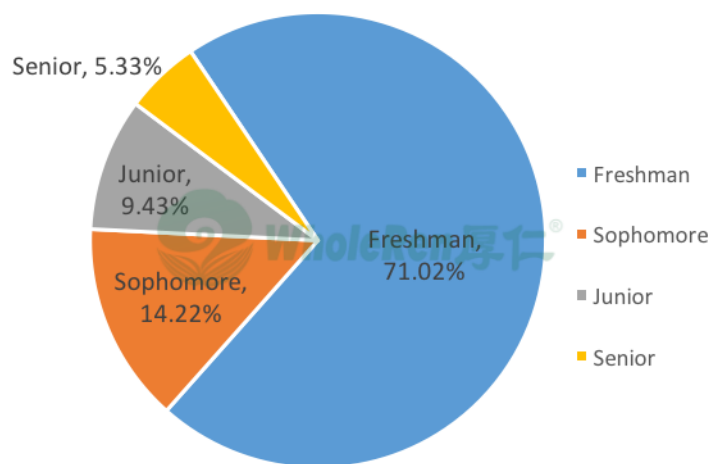


Figure 3-3: Distribution of Low GPA among Undergraduate Students

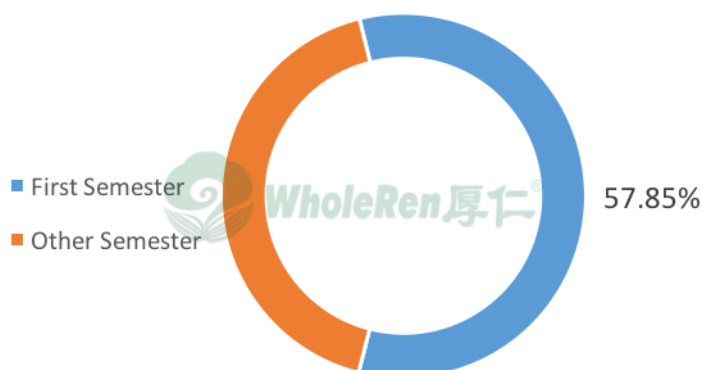


Figure 3-4: Proportion of Low GPA Happened in First Semester

Upon Receiving the First Warning: Discussing the majority of reasons for having dismissal issues, American colleges and universities often will not directly suspend or expel the student. Instead, colleges often first give a warning followed by a period of time to observe and monitor the student's progress. Students ought to pay serious attention to this first warning. However, the majority of students affected by dismissal issues showed no improvements or changes after receiving their first warning, and ultimately found themselves in the predicament of being forced to leave school. It can be difficult, especially for students who are younger, lack self-control and are without effective study habits, to rely on oneself to

overcome these difficulties if they have already been warned previously. In searching for the root of the problem, making use of the encouragement and guidance of outside resources during this period of time is essential. Left to themselves, younger students either don't know how to change or hope the problem just solves itself.

Upon Facing Dismissal Issues: Being forced to discontinue one's studies implies a discontinuation of one's status in America as a legal student. Although this is already one of the worst situations an international student may encounter, the way in which it is managed when it first happens may affect the ultimate outcome. American colleges and universities approve of second chances, transferring school, switching out of an unsuitable study environment or major, and offering a probationary period are all seen as effective methods of minimizing repercussions to the student. A large number of precedents reveal that those students who seize hold of these second chances may ultimately return to the proper academic path. In doing so they may come to terms with their reasons for studying abroad in the United States, achieve their academic degrees, and even do so with even greater success than previously imagined. The point worth paying attention to is that when facing dismissal issues, affiliation with a "pay to stay school" is illegal and a mistake that only serves to harm one's own future chances to study as well as damages one's reputation, even as an adult or when pursuing a career.

Among the above four critical periods, pre-departure, the first semester, and upon receiving the first warning are the critical points at which to guard against situations resulting in dismissal issues; it is essential for every current and potential international student in America to pay it special attention. Responding in a calm, appropriate, and timely manner may minimize the negative impact of the situation upon facing dismissal issues.

Part 4 Conclusion

There is no straight shot along the road of Chinese international students seeking education at American schools. These students are different ages, are at different stages in their academic careers, and attend a number of schools in a variety of locations. The data reveals, however, that situations have already arisen for a portion of international students in all of these demographics. Therefore, none of the issues discussed in this edition of the “2016 WholeRen White Paper on Dismissal Issues of Chinese Students in the United States” are examples of unusual or outlying cases; rather, they illustrate issues that touch every international student. The purpose of this report is to generate greater understanding of the conditions of Chinese international students in America among the educators and families, to tackle the roots of these issues head on, and to act to prevent common issues from recurring.

A feature of American higher education is that it may be much easier to successfully enter a university than it is to leave a university successful. Those students, who hope to prevent these kinds of dismissal issues from arising, should pay special attention to four critical periods: pre-departure, the first semester, the first warning and upon facing dismissal issues. To a certain degree, these four phases are representative of the student’s behavioral and attitudinal changes abroad. The conclusion reached by WholeRen on the basis of our research is that they are also the critical junctures at which to implement measures to ensure the success of students abroad.

To confront the differences between American and Chinese culture and institutions and reduce the impact of issues emanating from a lack of understanding the academic community needs to speak clearly and succinctly on the differences between American and Chinese culture, which is not an easy task. At a minimum, however, it is important to understand that American laws, school regulations and rules of academic honesty as they relate to international students are not the same as the student may be familiar with in their own country. Issues of academic dishonesty, inappropriate behavior, and the majority of “unintentional infractions” often rise to a level of urgency due to visa requirements when facing dismissal issues. The serious consequences of an incomplete knowledge of the American legal system are especially hard to overlook.

Under no circumstances, submit fake application materials. Even though a few so called “tactics and tricks” may allow a student to temporarily vault certain barriers, there are certain to be future troubles. Even if the student enters a highly-ranked school, they will face greater difficulty on the road towards future studies. Using false application materials and test scores is no different from strapping a time bomb to one’s own chest; it is often the case that students are directly and severely disciplined as soon as they are uncovered by the school. Such deceptive actions can haunt a young person’s academic survival and persist through a professional’s career.

Paying close attention to the mental health issues of international students, particularly the companionship and guidance of young international students, WholeRen Education’s data analysis reveals that in 2016, there was a sudden increase in students who violated the discipline code as a result of mental health issues compared to 2015. It is not realistic to assume that a student, who is away from their parents, living an independent lifestyle, is not using their mother language to solve daily problems and is in a strange academic environment all for the first time will not have pressure weighing on their mind. The ever-decreasing average age of international students, who are less mentally mature and may not have the ability to process all the information or properly handle all the pressure they are experiencing in America, will likely continue in the coming years. If there is no standard communication and guidance, feelings of depression and isolation build and issues that can easily result in mental health issues may arise. We call upon the families of international students, if you have no way to accompany your child abroad, at least inquire as to other means of communication or seek professional help in monitoring the adjustment of your child.

To seek help getting back on track after facing dismissal issues is a responsible, mature next step. Although being disciplined by a school is a setback, second chances are often given at American educational institutions. As long as it is managed properly, facing dismissal issues is far from the end of one's academic career. When seeking help, students should seek out the most experienced and professional organizations. Otherwise, students may find themselves unable to return to school, or even in violation of American immigration law and at risk of deportation. If students attempt to affiliate with a "pay to stay" school to preserve their visa status, not only will this eliminate any opportunity for a second chance, it often leads to persistent and serious issues for the student. Each year the United States Department of Homeland Security shuts down large numbers of "pay to stay" schools, directly tracking down and repatriating any offending students. It is only at this point, having been uncovered in a sham and at risk of deportation, that a student should truly consider their academic career in America to be over.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: [Behavioral Misconduct: Lack of Knowledge of American Laws]

On February 1, 2016, a Chinese student at the University of Iowa got expelled because of a posting on social media. The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services terminated his visa and had him deported to China. The post was in Chinese, saying “I have put a lot of effort in studying, if the school failed me this term, I’ll make the professors experience the fear of Gang Lu”. Gang Lu was a doctoral student in University of Iowa who thought his advisor was delaying the publication of his paper and not sending his reference on purpose. On November first, 1991 he shot several people on campus before killing himself.



Figure Appendix-1: Student Got Expelled Due to “Lack of Knowledge of American Laws”

The student’s inadvertent “joke” and numerous comments and overreactions as reflected by some other students, show a lack of legal consciousness. The United States takes “human rights” seriously, not completely understanding this fact can result in unsuitable or inappropriate words and deeds in public. In fact, it is a misinterpretation of foreign culture and laws. The bottom line of free speech in America is ensuring the rights of all, any language threatening an individual is forbidden.

Appendix 2: [Academic Dishonesty]

1. Falsified Application Materials

A few international high school students have been forced to return home immediately following the discovery that they had provided falsified application materials. The student and their parents were both unaware that the material was falsified because at the time it was submitted and managed by an intermediary organization. When they attempted to make contact with the school, they received some unexpected news: police in American were already participating in this transnational fraud investigation! When the family attempted to confirm this matter with the intermediary organization, the organization denied any responsibility claiming that there was no backup of the application submitted. The school replied to the student and their family that, in light of present circumstances the student would be taken into custody if they reentered America. The seriousness of the situation surpassed the family's imagination.

A college junior at New York University was recently expelled because of problems with the application material submitted by an intermediary organization. The student's grades were continually satisfactory; there were no other prior issues with dismissal problems. When the incident took place, the teacher went to speak with the student directly to ask where he attended high school. The student replied that he had attended high school in China; the teacher, however, retrieved the student's application materials, which listed another school. Before the student's application was submitted, it was passed on to an intermediary organization. Because of this incident, the student was expelled.

2. Test Fraud

In 2015, WholeRen was alerted to a large-scale fraud case involving a top 100 American middle school and more than 100 Chinese international students. These students hired others to sit in on their online classes for them; after they were discovered by the school, the entire cohort was punished with suspensions. Through communication after the fact, it was discovered that these students originally had outstanding academic backgrounds. Because they were unable to adapt to the patterns of American academics, they produced incomplete homework assignments and experienced problems raising their grades.

The pressure these students feel to secure an advantage in the future for job searches or in the competition to continue into higher education is massive. Those who sit in on classes, sit in on tests, or draft fraudulent essays for others certainly have seized onto the fears and concerns of international students regarding their grades, providing an unscrupulous service in the pursuit of personal gain. Those people acting as substitute test takers are often junior and senior international students, whereas those students involved with organized fraud tend to be college sophomores. This kind of vicious cycle prevents the formation of a healthy academic atmosphere among international students.

In 2016, WholeRen was once again became aware of an organized fraud case dealing with online courses. Again, all the involved students had a history of exceptional academics. In order to safeguard their GPA, these students violated school policy. When one student needed to take a test they would pass along answers to other students within the group. Without a deep understanding of online courses in America, they ignored the implication that this kind of multi-person cooperation is considered a form of cheating.

Appendix 3: [Current Situation of Students Affected by Dismissal Issues]

1. Walking Out from the “Bad Student” Shadow with Academic Guidance

Student Background: Student H came to America in 2013 and attended a mid-western four-year University. The student received a warning that their GPA for their first semester was lower than a 2.0. When his/her GPA for the second semester showed no improvement, the student was expelled.

Disciplinary Outcome: In 2015, student H successfully applied to a new school. At the same time, an academic advisor worked with student H one-on-one to help them create a detailed summary of their previous academic situation and develop a plan to combat the issues identified.

Current Developments: After a semester of academic guidance, student H’s semester GPA was 3.8. At present, student H has already successfully transferred to a four-year college and is full of optimism for the future.

2. An Attitude Adjustment to Make It Back on the Right Track

Student Background: Student Z was a first-year college freshman. Student Z had a negligent attitude towards study and because of low attendance was expelled from school.

Disciplinary Outcome: An academic advisor helped student Z promptly switch into a new school. Without a change in study habits and attitudes, however, they would have difficulty succeeding even at a new school. The advisor emphasized correcting student Z’s attitude towards study in order to develop good study habits. The advisor kept a thorough study plan for the student, was available at any time in order to maintain their close relationship, made attempts to understand student Z’s current situation at school, raise the student’s attendance rate, and ensure the student completed their homework etc.

Current Developments: Student Z has changed his/her initially lackadaisical attitude and transformed into an active and self-disciplined student. Nowadays, student Z is able to actively engage in all kinds of school activities and interact with teachers and classmates. Having greatly improved, student Z now has a passion for study.

3. Standardizing Academic Behavior and Completing the Dream of Studying Abroad

Student Background: Student X, a college junior, was a great student with fluent English and high grades. Student X took a midterm for another student and was expelled when caught by the school.

Disciplinary Outcome: Student X felt helpless after being expelled. Under the guidance of an academic consultant, student X quickly transferred to another college and maintained legal student status. At the same time, the consultant gave student X one-on-one sessions to internalize the facets of honesty and realize the importance of academic integrity.

Current Development: After arriving at the new school, Student X voluntarily reached out to the professors and explained his/her past mistakes and expressed renewed determination towards academic integrity. Later, Student X behaved appropriately and, with improved grades, returned to a four-year college to complete his/her study.



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