

# **Transnational Education in China: Joint Venture Sino-US Universities and their Impact**

**by  
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## **Abstract**

In recent years US universities have been diving into the Chinese higher education field by partnering with Chinese universities to create new joint venture Sino-US universities in China. From my field research interviewing students and professors at the NYU Shanghai and Duke Kunshan University campuses, I drew my main research questions: 1) What is the practical purpose of having JV Sino-US universities from the perspectives of the stakeholders – the home universities, governments, and students involved? 2) When we consider the ideal role and purpose of a university within society, what do these new transnational universities add to the conversation? I informed my research with the literature of international education, Chinese higher education, and critique of the modern Western university. From my research, I found that recruiting international students is a practical and value-laden challenge, and that the finances to support financial aid incentives may be an issue in the future. Concerning academic freedom, JVs have special privileges to operate in China with full freedom, but subtle issues of self-censoring or visas may still cause friction. Overall, these JV schools seem to suffer from the same issues that affect Western higher education in general, but they may be pioneers in re-evaluating liberal arts and discovering better ways to teach a broad range of students from different backgrounds.

**Keywords:** China; joint venture; Sino-US; NYUSH; DKU; international education

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## List of Acronyms

DKU	Duke Kunshan University
FAFSA	Free Application for Federal Student Aid
GAOKAO	National Higher Education Entrance Examination
GLS	Global Learning Semester
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IBC	International Branch Campus
JV	Joint Venture
NYUAD	New York University Abu Dhabi
NYUSH	New York University Shanghai
SAT	Scholastic Assessment Test

# Chapter 1. Introduction

Joint venture universities in China: the future of internationalized education for a global age or an experiment doomed to failure from lack of freedom and student interest? When I started my research in China on the campus of New York University Shanghai, this rather dramatic question went through my mind as I stepped onto the four-year-old shiny floors of the city campus in the middle of the Shanghai financial district. Ever since China opened itself to global trade, foreign educational institutions have been trying to become involved in China's education in one way or another, but there have always been many restrictions. Only in 2004 did the government officially allow joint venture (JV) campuses, where a foreign university could partner with a Chinese university to create a whole new university and campus – no independent branch campuses allowed. Along with the fast pace of globalization, universities have jumped on the bandwagon of 'internationalizing' their education to increase the quality of their education and for more utilitarian reasons, such as attracting the tuition dollars of international students.

The first Sino-Foreign JV campus was the University of Nottingham Ningbo, which began operating in 2004. Today there are many more Sino-Foreign campuses, but specifically, only three Sino-US JV universities, which are all in the earliest stages of development and an exciting experiment for American and international education. However, the Sino-US JV universities have been met with criticism and controversies from some parties, over their practical viability and academic freedom. The setting up of branch campuses and the value of internationalizing higher education are strongly debated topics to begin with; China's authoritarian government only adds another layer of complexity to the debate. I wanted to see for myself what these campuses were like by talking to the students and professors themselves, and I suspected they might shed light on issues of Western education and internationalization.

## 1.1. Research question

I begin this thesis by asking what the purpose is of having JV Sino-US universities, in practical terms from the perspectives of the stakeholders – that is, the home universities, governments, and students. I end the thesis with the larger, related

question that is woven throughout my interviews and analysis: what is the role of a university within a country and the world? So many questions about JV universities in China come down to the fundamental issue of whether or not these new universities can function properly and usefully as a university in their new context: 1) Can these universities with US standards actually have academic freedom in a Chinese context? 2) Will these universities be able to recruit enough quality students and fund themselves indefinitely? 3) Are there any real benefits to attending this new experiment of a joint university? But all of these questions cannot really be answered until we consider the deeper issue: what is a university supposed to do, and what should we expect it to do in society? And, how much can a university truly benefit the public, or does it inherently cater to the elite few who can attend universities and benefit from their status?

By studying these new JV universities in China, we are forced to reckon with these fundamental questions about all Western higher education institutions (HEIs). Many question how US universities could possibly accept operating in a totalitarian country with daily human rights abuses by the government, but this question can also be asked of universities operating in the US, which is itself a perpetrator of daily human rights abuses. How can a liberal arts school operate in China, where freedom of speech and action is not permitted? But, in a similar vein: how can a liberal arts school operate in the US, where student protests are shut down militarily on a regular basis?<sup>1</sup> I also question how these JVs will support their student body and continue to grow when their financial model most likely means they will have to lower their financial aid. On a related note, I question why the US government does not more fully fund higher education similar to many other developed countries, and therefore limit education only to those who can afford to be educated or earn scholarships. These JV universities in China present an opportunity to examine not only what is gained and lost in this new version of a transnational university, but also ethical issues regarding the way universities operate in the West, as well as in China.

If nothing else, I hope this thesis helps us to question the norms in our society about education. Why are universities set up the way they are? How did they get that way? Who is the system privileging? It is possible to re-imagine what a university should

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<sup>1</sup> Piya Chatterjee and Sunaina Maira, eds., *The Imperial University: Academic Repression and Scholarly Dissent* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

look like. We need to value more than one kind of student, and we should not assume that the Western education model is the best. As we look at ways these JV universities are part of the evolution of higher education, we have an opportunity to re-think our values concerning education and look for ways to improve.

## **1.2. Outline**

The sections of this thesis will progress logically to cover my major topics of analysis by addressing the following questions. First, what was the purpose of these JV universities in China when they were originally conceived, and how is their purpose being viewed now? Second, how have operational issues of finances and recruitment panned out in the life of the university and affected it? Third, how has the issue of academic freedom, which constantly comes up in opinion articles about these universities, actually influenced university life and freedom? Fourth and finally, what do these issues say about what the purpose and mission of the 'university' are, particularly in this transnational space? Before the analysis, however, I present a literature review on the internationalization of higher education, the evolution of Chinese higher education, and critiques of Western higher education, and present the methodology of my interviews and field observations.

## Chapter 2. Literature Review

I position my research on JV Sino-US universities in China within three fields of literature: the internationalization of higher education, the evolution/internationalization of education in China, and critiques of the US/Western university's privatization. A significant portion of the literature on the internationalization of higher education considers what globalization means for higher education, as well as the ways universities around the world are attempting to internationalize in response. There is a focus in such literature on the specific *motivations* for universities to internationalize, and *how* these universities create international programs, recruitment efforts, campuses, etc. The why and how of internationalization, especially as it regards Western universities, are relevant to my study, which focuses on US universities which have expanded into China. The literature on the evolving Chinese higher education landscape is important to understanding China's motivations for inviting foreign educational partners; my research builds directly on the literature starting to be written on the development of Sino-Foreign JV programs. From a broader standpoint, much of my work is critical of the corporate nature and 'business strategies' of the US university system, and my paper draws on and adds to the literature analyzing the 'imperial university' of the US.

### 2.1. Internationalization of higher education

A major theme in the literature of the internationalization of higher education is the incentives for universities to internationalize. Many authors on this topic agree that a significant part of the rationale to internationalize is economic, but other motivations include expanding a university's educational worldview and keeping up with other universities' reputations. Kreber notes that there are academic incentives (increasing the quality of academics by incorporating international perspectives), political incentives (promoting international security and peace), economic incentives (making money from bringing in more students and also creating better economic opportunities for those who receive international education), and cultural incentives (facilitating cultural exchange while maintaining and reinforcing home culture)<sup>2</sup>. Wilkins and Huisman look more

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<sup>2</sup> Carolin Kreber, "Different Perspectives on Internationalization in Higher Education," *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* 2009, no. 118 (March 2009): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.348>.

specifically at why universities do or do not establish international branch campuses. University considerations include looking at how the new campus would be “legally sanctioned, morally authorized or culturally supported”<sup>3</sup>. Issues of “legitimacy, status, institutional distance, risk-taking, risk-avoidance and the desire to secure new sources of revenue” come into play, because universities want to be able to ensure the quality of the branch campus, which is difficult if there is a large cultural and political difference between the host countries<sup>4</sup>. Universities, of course, are concerned about potentially losing money in risky new campus ventures, but also do consider expanding for the potential monetary and status gains. Certain types of universities will ultimately decide to take the risk – such as NYU and Duke – because of various factors: they feel they can afford the risk, and they think it is worthwhile to promote their brand internationally.

Jorgenson and Shultz also believe that internationalizing is now almost necessary to remain economically viable, and they look specifically at the brand of a ‘global citizenship education’ that is being pushed at so many universities in order to keep up with the market trends. Universities use this branding now to “attract the brightest of scholars/students, a substantial number of international students, and, of course, high-profile research and training projects”<sup>5</sup>. At the institutional level, Jorgenson and Shultz identify five key rationales for internationalizing: international profile and reputation, student and staff development, income generation, strategic alliances, and research/knowledge production. But the authors also indicate that this kind of internationalizing and branding generally benefits only the global North because of the relative power it has over the global South, and that study abroad programs are an expensive privilege that is often only accessible to elite students. Haigh also points out a hypocrisy: these universities are internationalizing with idealist branding, but with underlying economic motivations. The recruitment of international students, for example, is propelled largely by the income stream and numbers, and not so much the welfare of international students. Haigh highlights the way diploma ‘brands’ from high reputation

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<sup>3</sup> Stephen Wilkins and Jeroen Huisman, “The International Branch Campus as Transnational Strategy in Higher Education,” *Higher Education* 64, no. 5 (2012): 3.

<sup>4</sup> Wilkins and Huisman, “The International Branch Campus as Transnational Strategy in Higher Education.” 14.

<sup>5</sup> Shelane Jorgenson and Lynette Shultz, “Global Citizenship Education (GCE) in Post-Secondary Institutions: What Is Protected and What Is Hidden under the Umbrella of GCE?,” *Journal of Global Citizenship & Equity Education* 2, no. 1 (2012), 26.

universities are so important now, and how they re-create social elite groups. Ideally, internationalizing should instead be about encouraging “graduates to contribute to global sustainability”, minimizing the school’s own ecological footprint, and making sure the HEI’s actions are “ethical, honest and democratic”<sup>6</sup>.

Another dimension of the internationalization of HEIs concerns issues of pedagogy when internationalizing and moral issues that come with having the West as the ‘standard.’ Doherty and Singh’s article talks about how an “international” elite education almost always uses Western education models as the ideal. For students at Western universities and in campuses set up with Western partners, there exists an idea that students need to be educated in accordance with the Western models of learning, as the “Asian” model of learning is too passive and these students need to be more active and creative like the Western ideal student<sup>7</sup>.

Zemach-Bersin points out that the logic of internationalizing is also often unquestioned as a positive good to promote cross-cultural understanding, when in fact, internationalizing can be wielded as a political tool: “Government documents and national reports on the importance of international education assert that study abroad is critical to gaining international power and defending the national interest... American global citizens are not only dependent on U.S. supremacy, but are educated to actively endorse and advance U.S. interests while studying abroad”<sup>8</sup>. Indeed, Zemach-Bersin points out that the US Senate has called for American students to study abroad precisely to bolster US soft power, which is not at its highest currently. In other words, this idea of a global citizen serves the US government’s goal to promote American interests. The motivations for internationalizing are important because they shed light on the process of creating partnerships and on power relations. As such, the reasoning behind study

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<sup>6</sup> Martin Haigh, “Internationalisation, Planetary Citizenship and Higher Education Inc.,” *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 38, no. 4 (August 2008): 427–40, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057920701582731>. 434.

<sup>7</sup> Catherine Doherty and Parlo Singh, “How the West Is Done: Simulating Western Pedagogy in a Curriculum for Asian International Students,” in *Internationalizing Higher Education: Critical Perspectives for Critical Times* (Hong Kong University Press + Kluwer, 2005), 53–74.

<sup>8</sup> Talya Zemach-Bersin, “Global Citizenship & Study Abroad: It’s All about U.S.,” in *Critical Literacy: Theories and Practices*, vol. 1 (Centre for the Study of Social and Global Justice, 2007), p.15.

abroad and branch campuses need to be considered critically, in order to engage with internationalization in an ethical way.

## 2.2. Chinese Higher Education

With regard to the literature on Chinese higher education, I have focused my attention on work that details how Chinese higher education has evolved over more recent decades, as well as work, like Futao Huang's, that describes how China has internationalized its education through the years. Huang observes that China is still an education "importer", and despite promoting Chinese values in its education, it is still drawing from Western models<sup>9</sup>. Ka Ho Mok questions whether internationalization in Chinese education is essentially Westernization in a different name. Asian universities have often modeled their internationalization after the Western model of public management and have incorporated marketization, privatization, and corporatization into their programs<sup>10</sup>. "A general trend that Asian scholars and academics have found is that academic freedom is eroding while education is becoming increasingly marketized and commodified"<sup>11</sup>, so there may be downsides to taking from the Western model. Asian universities, however, are still in the process of internationalizing, so in the coming decades, they may well evolve in a different direction than Western models of internationalization.

Montgomery takes this same point of view, but focuses more on how university global rankings (which all fall under the same standards of evaluation that were developed by Western institutions) have greatly influenced the marketization and focuses and goals of universities in China and around the world<sup>12</sup>. She also discusses how international foreign partnerships (such as JVs) influence education, and how partnerships with the West are prioritized. If "global competitiveness is still defined by

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<sup>9</sup> Futao Huang, "Internationalisation of Higher Education in the Era of Globalisation," *Higher Education Management and Policy* 19, no. 1 (2007): 1–15.

<sup>10</sup> Ka Ho Mok, "Questing for Internationalization of Universities in Asia: Critical Reflections," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 11, no. 3–4 (September 2007): 433–54, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315306291945>.

<sup>11</sup> Ka Ho Mok.

<sup>12</sup> Catherine Montgomery, "Transnational Partnerships in Higher Education in China: The Diversity and Complexity of Elite Strategic Alliances," *London Review of Education* 14, no. 1 (April 18, 2016): 70–85, <https://doi.org/10.18546/LRE.14.1.08.72>.

‘the West,’” can international university partnerships can be ‘equal’ in a system of unequal global influences?<sup>13</sup>

To put the new wave of internationalization and Sino-Foreign partnerships in context, it is important to examine the literature on China’s broad sweep of higher education trends. Huang’s piece on the history of China’s educational policies is particularly revealing. In the first phase from 1978 to 1992, China had policies on foreign education where they paid for students to go abroad to Western Universities, encouraged these students to study the sciences, and increased the number of English teaching programs in domestic colleges<sup>14</sup>. The stage from 1993 to the present has seen China advocating for joint foreign partnerships, for bringing international students to China, and for getting Chinese students who studied abroad to come back to China. Particularly after China became part of the WTO, the government looked to promoting Chinese values in other countries. Since joint partnerships have started in China, two types of foreign degrees have appeared: full degree programs and diploma programs. To date, nearly half of these programs confer business degrees/diplomas. From this context, Huang analyzes the foreign partnership trend and says that there are three factors that explain why China opened itself to foreign degree programs: 1) High demand for higher education, 2) The influence of economic globalization and the World Trade Organization, and 3) The need to enhance academic quality and standards and to internationalize Chinese higher education.

In the existing literature specifically about Sino-Foreign JV programs, we have pieces like Futao Huang’s, which explains Chinese regulations for foreign joint universities and economic incentives for Chinese universities to partner with foreign ones<sup>15</sup>. One major incentive is to increase the Chinese quality of education and the numbers of colleges available to Chinese students. Mok and Xu take a more hands-on approach by surveying students in a Sino-US JV degree program and examining “how students assess the educational quality of CFCRS [Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in

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<sup>13</sup> Montgomery, 73.

<sup>14</sup> Futao Huang, “Policy and Practice of the Internationalization of Higher Education in China,” *Journal of Studies in International Education* 7, no. 3 (September 2003): 225–40, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315303254430>.

<sup>15</sup> Futao Huang, ed., *Transnational Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific Region*, RIHE International Publication Series, no. 10 (Higashi-Hiroshima, Japan: Research Institute for Higher Education, Hiroshima University, 2006).

Running Schools] and their confidence in the diploma/award offered by these joint programs”<sup>16</sup>. They evaluated whether the programs met the students’ study needs and career goals, as well as the students’ satisfaction in a variety of categories. They obtained mixed results, though a majority of responses were positive. Students were least satisfied with their ability to communicate with their foreign speaking (English) teachers. All in all, their survey and research provide insight into what student experiences are like at Sino-US JV programs, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of these programs.

### **2.3. Purpose of the university**

To understand how the accomplishments and downfalls of Sino-US JV universities should be contextualized, and to be able to think about what these universities can or should achieve, we need to think about what the purpose of a university actually is. The literature that dives into the meaning of the university system and critiques its contemporary downfall is essential to understanding what JVs are contributing, or how they are following in the same footsteps of traditional universities. The literature on the critique of the Western – more specifically, American – university stands on several key pillars: privatization and corporatization; militarism and nationalism; selectivity and meritocracy.

In their foundational book *Imperial University*, Chatterjee and Maira delve into the imperial elements of the new university system in the US, and how militarization and nationalism are having negative influences on universities, students, and learning. Specifically, they put forth the idea that “higher education is firmly embedded in global structures of repression, militarism, and neoliberalism”<sup>17</sup>, describing student protests against tuition hikes and the ensuing militaristic crack down on the voices and bodies of protesting students. Retaliation against such students clashes with the stated ideals of critical thinking and freedom in the university. In other words, even in the US, where academic freedom is openly lauded, views that are critical of the university and state and neoliberalism are actually suppressed. The idea of academic freedom is what US

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<sup>16</sup> Ka Ho Mok and Xiaozhou Xu, “When China Opens to the World: A Study of Transnational Higher Education in Zhejiang, China,” *Asia Pacific Education Review* 9, no. 4 (2008): 398.

<sup>17</sup> Piya Chatterjee and Sunaina Maira, eds., *The Imperial University: Academic Repression and Scholarly Dissent* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), p.3.

universities stand for ostensibly; in more insidious ways, the government always wants these institutions to support the legitimacy of the government. Chatterjee and Maria explain that “the academy’s role in supporting state policies is crucial, even—and especially—as a presumably liberal institution. Indeed, it is precisely the support of a liberal class that is always critical for the maintenance of “benevolent empire””<sup>18</sup>. In China, there is less of a belief in a benevolent empire than in America. Repression is clear in China, but more nebulous – though present nonetheless – in the US, where there is a set belief that the country is liberal and open, a belief that warrants more critical attention.

Tuchman and Brennan have representative pieces on how private universities operating in our capitalist market and the privatization of public higher education in the US has negatively impacted the education of students and society overall. According to Tuchman, privatization has negatively affected the education of students because without enough public funding, universities are forced to act like corporations, for example by upgrading and competing for students or creating reasons for students to pay high tuition fees. Tuchman intensively studied a flagship research university in the Northern US, “Wannabe U”, and studied trends in universities throughout the US. She states in her 2012 article, that federal funding for public universities has gone down significantly, and for many universities is now less than 10%, and they are struggling to find new sources of revenue. These universities have found that “the most reliable way to increase revenue is to raise tuitions”<sup>19</sup>. This is the model private universities have always relied on. To be able to raise tuitions, the mindset of the president of “Wannabe U” at the time is representative: she “accepted the university’s ambition to attract customers through brand recognition and improved competitive ranking”<sup>20</sup>. College administrators now think like business people, professors like entrepreneurs, and students like job finders and consumers. With these changes, Tuchman’s data indicate, “students spend less time studying... Furthermore, the gap between the educational accomplishments of rich and poor undergraduates and also the gulf between those of

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<sup>18</sup> Chatterjee and Maira, p.7.

<sup>19</sup> Gaye Tuchman, “Pressured and Measured: Professors at Wannabe U,” *The Hedgehog Review* 14, no. 1 (March 1, 2012): 19.

<sup>20</sup> Tuchman, 23.

whites and underrepresented minorities is growing”<sup>21</sup>. Since the government now funds institutions less and individual students through financial aid packages more, “they inadvertently decrease institutional control; bluntly, such programs push students to decide where they will spend their tuition dollars and leave colleges to figure out how to attract them”<sup>22</sup>. Because college is so expensive and ridden with the pressure of debt now, students are growing to “define college in social and occupational terms rather than as an opportunity to explore intellectual possibilities”<sup>23</sup>.

The privatization of higher education has also affected professors and the teaching in these institutions as well: “By 1960, after the expansion of the funding agencies and universities’ identification of research as a revenue stream, tenure had become a reward for the production of scholarship”<sup>24</sup>. The incentives for publications force professors to produce a high volume of papers for the good of their careers, instead of rewarding a focus on their classes and teaching. Evidence for this also comes from Backes-Geller and Uschi’s quantitative research on professor’s research production. They found that before getting promoted, and before receiving tenure, US professors significantly increased their research production. This finding supports the theory that universities reward research output, and professors will respond to the economic incentive model, and subsequently neglect other aspects of their positions, such as quality of teaching<sup>25</sup>. The rewards system of universities and the allocation of funding have led to a decrease both in the quality of teaching and student learning, and an increased focus on flashy campuses and research paper output.

Brennan covers how the privatization of higher education and how treating private universities as businesses negatively affects society. Stakeholders and the issue of autonomy have a large impact on higher education’s functioning, as does the pull between knowledge production and market factors. “Higher education is increasingly exposed to strong external expectations to be more visibly useful for economy and

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<sup>21</sup> Gaye Tuchman, “The Unintended Decentering of Teaching and Learning,” *Society* 48, no. 3 (May 2011): 216–19, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-011-9420-0>, p.216.

<sup>22</sup> Tuchman, p. 217.

<sup>23</sup> Tuchman, p. 218.

<sup>24</sup> Tuchman.

<sup>25</sup> Uschi Backes-Gellner and Axel Schlinghoff, “Career Incentives and ‘Publish or Perish’ in German and U.S. Universities,” *European Education* 42, no. 3 (September 1, 2010): 46, <https://doi.org/10.2753/EUE1056-4934420302>.

society”<sup>26</sup> by producing ‘useful’ citizens/workers and supporting the government/nation’s values indirectly. Whatever else universities do, governments always, either implicitly or explicitly, expect universities “to serve the knowledge system and the public good”<sup>27</sup>. There is also an “increasingly fierce and globalizing ‘academic arms race’ “, where academic reputation has become more important than anything else, forcing schools to focus more on how they are perceived and ranked than on internal matters<sup>28</sup>. Brennan sees three major impacts of higher education on society: “First, there is higher education’s role in terms of constructing and supporting the ‘knowledge society’’. Second, there is a role in constructing the ‘just and stable’ society. Third, there is a role in constructing the ‘critical society’”<sup>29</sup>. Importantly, Brennan and many others more broadly discuss the societal implications of a university education: when one looks at who gains admission into universities, and who benefits socially and economically from the education after graduation, there is little evidence of a meritocracy and more of a reproduction of people’s class status over generations.

Diving into a particularly important aspect of the privatization of the university, Marez’s article on student debt argues that “the contemporary regime of university debt constitutes a form of ... colonial capitalism” that traps students and limits their options creatively and financially and reinforces hierarchies and class systems<sup>30</sup>. Student debt has become a huge and crushing burden in the US, currently exceeding \$1.3 trillion, tethering the careers and lives of many people. Statistics on student debt show that there are 44.2 million Americans with student loan debt, and that there is an 11.2% default rate. Student debt has risen incredibly fast in the past decades, and the average student in the class of 2016 has \$37,172 in student loan debt<sup>31</sup>. Besides the obvious practical and financial burden, student debt also affects how we view and approach education: it teaches that “higher education is a consumer service; [and] that career

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<sup>26</sup> John Brennan, “Higher Education and Social Change,” *Higher Education* 56, no. 3 (September 2008): 381–93, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-008-9126-4>. 384.

<sup>27</sup> Brennan, p. 384.

<sup>28</sup> Brennan, p. 386.

<sup>29</sup> Brennan, p. 388.

<sup>30</sup> Curtis Marez, “Seeing in the Red: Looking at Student Debt,” *American Quarterly* 66, no. 2 (2014): 261–81, <https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2014.0019>. 262.

<sup>31</sup> Zack Friedman, “Student Loan Debt in 2017: A \$1.3 Trillion Crisis,” *Forbes*, February 21, 2017.

choices should be tailored to servicing debt”<sup>32</sup>. The burden of debt disproportionately affects particular parts of the population. Students who are “non-normative immigrants, unpropertied, illegal, indigenous, marginalized, or queer others are cast as in debt or as “failed” subjects”<sup>33</sup>. In other words, debt is a not only a huge barrier to the credit and livelihood of marginalized people, but also is laden with value judgement – debt is presented as the result of a personal failing, not the fault of the system. The issue of allocating limited funds to ‘deserving students’ instead of publicly funding education for all creates these burdens of debt and judgement.

Karabel and Astin also show how the new university system can re-create the class system. They conduct a study that links socio-economic background and academic prowess to the tier of university that students gain admittance to, and how the university attended affects their lives afterwards. A powerful part of their study goes into showing how upper tier universities are becoming hyper-selective now that so many students are attending university and are being told they need to attend the top ones to succeed. 20.4 million students were expected to attend university in 2017 in the US, “constituting an increase of about 5.1 million since fall 2000”<sup>34</sup>. University admissions can be seen as a meritocratic system where schools objectively pick the best students, but this is a limited view at best. With so many students now applying to colleges, standardized testing has been adopted to weed out candidates. Karabel and Astin point out that testing and selectivity meets the needs of educational institutions, faculty, and the social system in this way: “for the faculty [it is] a method of securing students who are easy to teach and who share some of their values and interests...; for the schools, a way of protecting their standards and of objectifying their status (by attracting a suitable number of certified high-ability students); for the social system, a mode of legitimizing the sorting process through the use of objective tests”<sup>35</sup>. They point out that the US values ‘equality of opportunity’ and the apparently neutral testing system seems to offer that and give chances to those that ‘deserve it’. This sorting process, however, actually “favors children from relatively privileged families [and] tends to perpetuate existing status

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<sup>32</sup> Marez, “Seeing in the Red,” 261.

<sup>33</sup> Marez, p. 261.

<sup>34</sup> “Fast Facts: Back to School Statistics” (National Center for Education Statistics, February 2017), <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=372>.

<sup>35</sup> Jerome Karabel and Alexander W. Astin, “Social Class, Academic Ability, and College ‘Quality,’” *Social Forces* 53, no. 3 (1975): 381–398, p. 382.

differences”<sup>36</sup>. University admissions is not necessarily based on unbiased decisions, and it is disheartening to learn about the markedly different outcomes of going to a ‘better’ compared to a ‘worse’ ranked school with regard to “adult income, [and] occupational attainment”<sup>37</sup>.

Finally, Karabel and Astin discuss the three main ways education could be distributed. The resources for education could go to 1) the “brightest students,” 2) anyone, equally, “regardless of ability or social class,” or 3) the “lowest performing and lowest-status students”<sup>38</sup> (because they need the most help, and this could ultimately help individuals and society more than giving them more resources to the already brightest). Currently, most countries focus on the brightest students or take the elitist route. The assumption is that this is the only way to distribute education, but that view needs to be critically evaluated, as it may be reinforcing a classist society.

## **2.4. Literature Summary**

From my survey of the literature, I have several key takeaways that are particularly relevant to my thesis research. Using the literature on the internationalization of higher education as a basis for my study, I explore how the supposed motivations of universities to create branch campuses affect the structure and operations of the schools I visited. Many authors and universities conceptualize “internationalizing” in different ways, so in my own research, I delve into how my participants personally experience their “international” campuses and what they take away from their “global” education. As noted in some of the articles, the kind of internationalization created by Western schools can be biased towards Western models of education; the JV schools in my study provide an interesting case study for whether or not internationalization can be less biased and draw from more than one culture of education.

With regard to Chinese higher education, it is important to think about why the Chinese government has allowed foreign universities to operate in the country, and why now in particular, and what is hoped to be gained. In the context of China’s education

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<sup>36</sup> Karabel and Astin, p. 383.

<sup>37</sup> Karabel and Astin, p. 383.

<sup>38</sup> Karabel and Astin, p. 398.

history, the government clearly does not want to lose the “Chinese character” of the education, but now also wants to modernize and be globally competitive. Therefore, allowing foreign schools to operate, but only JV partnerships, makes sense because China can maintain some control over the ventures, while learning from these schools to further develop their own higher education system.

The articles that critique higher education help me to more generally situate my assessment of these schools within the context of the issues facing universities in the West. China-specific issues are essential to my analysis, but I ground my critique of higher education in the broader perceptions of a university’s purpose in society, and look at what issues have crossed over from traditional US schools to these US-China hybrid schools. The major critique in the literature concerns privatization and private universities: universities are forced to think more like businesses – how to maintain their revenues, attract more students, and increase their research output. The negative impacts of privatization include declining teaching quality and increasing student debt. In addition, the practice of funding individual “deserving” students, instead of whole universities, helps the reproduction of classes in society. My research of JV universities in China looks, in part, at how these new universities may be rethinking higher education or reproducing the same problems in a different context.

## **Chapter 3. Methodology**

At the beginning of the research process, I kept the topic for this thesis purposefully open-ended. I wanted to study Sino-US JV universities and engage with students and faculty about their experiences at these newly established universities to see what the universities are really like from an insider's experience. I hoped to come away from these interviews with ideas about how both the US and China are internationalizing their higher education and how the environment of JV universities is impacting its participants. I asked wide-ranging questions to interviewees and did not decide on a specific research question before doing the research. These universities are only a few years old, and little is currently known about them. I wanted to go into the experience without too many predisposed opinions and see the universities for myself and find out which issues are critical.

### **3.1. Site Selection**

In terms of research timeline, I spent six weeks each at NYU Shanghai (NYUSH) and Duke Kunshan University (DKU), interviewing as many professors and students who were willing and able to talk to me. NYUSH and DKU were chosen as the research sites because I wanted to focus on universities where the foreign joint partner was from the US, and only three full JV universities had a US partner: NYUSH, DKU and Wenzhou Kean University. I selected two out of the three universities as I did not have time to conduct field research at three individual campuses, and decided on NYUSH and DKU specifically as they both have high academic standing and recognition in the US. Both universities gave me official permission from their research ethics departments to interview their students and faculty.

### **3.2. Interviewing and Observational Methods**

In terms of research methods, I took an interviewing and field observation approach, as I wanted to learn from the personal experiences of participants. I decided on a semi-structured interview format to incorporate some of the same questions into all the interviews for consistency, without making the overall conversation too rigid. I did not have an exact research question, as I wanted to frame my eventual thesis around the

topics that came up organically from students and staff. As such, I allowed for the conversations to veer off into the topics that interested each participant. Furthermore, it did not make sense to ask the same questions to participants with different backgrounds – for instance, international students versus Chinese students, or students versus professors. Some questions that I did ask almost every participant, however, include:

- “What is your background and how did you end up at this university?”
- “How have you enjoyed your experience here and what have been the best and most difficult aspects of attending this university?”
- “How, in your opinion, is this JV university different than a US education and a Chinese education, and what are your views on the teaching style?”
- “Would you characterize the environment and education here as ‘global’ in some way?”

By asking these standardized questions and other tailored questions, I got a good sense of what it was like to be on the campus of each JV university, what people thought of their experiences on campus, and what made these universities unique. I made further observations about each JV university by attending public lectures at NYUSH and two classes each at NYUSH and DKU. I assured the student interviewees that they would have anonymity in my final paper, so they could completely speak their minds. I gave professors the option of anonymity if they wanted it; almost all of the professors at NYUSH said I could use their names, while most of the professors at DKU wanted to be anonymous. The demographics of the people I talked to can be roughly divided into four groups: Chinese professors, international professors, Chinese students, and international students. As the schools and participants have always used the terms ‘international and Chinese’ as the identifying markers, I will use the same terms for the purpose of categorization, unless there is a specific reason not to.

### **3.3. Positionality**

Before moving further, it is important to address my positionality and identity as a researcher, and how my positionality may affect my data and perception of the interviews. No research is objective, and no researcher is neutral, so who I am and the opinions and feelings I had while researching are important to consider. As a white, female, American graduate student, I can easily imagine the experience of attending one

of these JV schools in China as an international student. From a personal perspective, I can understand the mindset of an international student at NYUSH or DKU much better than I can understand the experience of anyone else, such as that of a Chinese student. I studied abroad in Beijing as an undergraduate student, and I believe I felt a certain amount of positive bias towards these JV schools because of my positive undergraduate experiences. On the other hand, as a researcher looking for material for my thesis, I naturally looked for interesting topics to critique, which could have swayed my analysis in another direction.

My identity might have made certain interviewees feel comfortable talking with me, and others less comfortable, but I do not know, in specific terms, how my identity might have influenced their responses. Language is another consideration – I conducted all my interviews in English, and although some interviewees had English as their first language, others expressed that they were not completely comfortable expressing their thoughts on the subject matter in English. Ideally, I wish my Chinese was at a level where I could have interviewed more of my participants in their preferred language.

As a graduate student who graduated from an expensive liberal arts undergraduate university in the states, I am embedded in, and have greatly benefitted from, the exact system that I am now critiquing. My position is very privileged, as are the positions of the students at the two JV universities I talked to. Although I attempt to dissect many problems with the higher education system in this paper, I am only able to write this paper in the first place because of the privileged education I was able to receive.

### **3.4. Numbers and Demographics of Interviews**

I went into the research hoping to get approximately 20 interviews from each university, and that of those 20, most would be interviews with students. I wanted to interview a more or less balanced number of international students and Chinese students. These were the ideal numbers in my mind; in practice, it was more difficult to achieve these numbers because I had no control over who was willing to talk to me. I employed the snowballing method of interviewing to find student contacts; before arriving at NYUSH I made contact with one professor and two students at NYUSH and one professor at DKU. After interviewing these initial contacts, I asked them to introduce

me to anyone they knew who might want to do an interview. I ended up having students to interview largely from their mutual friend contacts. On the other hand, I initiated most interviews with professors by contacting them directly after identifying their email addresses on the school websites.

At NYUSH, I ultimately conducted 18 interviews; of these, 5 were with professors, and 13 were with students. Of the students, 9 were international and 4 were Chinese. Of the professors, 4 were international and 1 was Chinese. At DKU, I conducted 25 interviews and ended up with a rather different demographic: 17 interviews were with professors, and 8 with students. Of the DKU professors, 10 were international and 7 were Chinese. However, I was only able to find Chinese students willing to talk to me, so I have no international student interviews at DKU. This most likely comes down to two reasons: first, it was harder to find students to do interviews in general at DKU because I was at DKU during the month of November, the second half of the academic year when the workload is generally much heavier. (I was at NYUSH in the first half of the semester.) Moreover, DKU has a smaller number of students on campus compared to NYUSH, and of those students, only a small percentage are international. In all, there were approximately 40 international students at the DKU campus, with the vast majority of the students being Chinese students, while there was roughly an equal mix of Chinese and international students among NYUSH's total of approximately 1,200 students on its campus.

The demographics of the interviewees on both campuses clearly influence my findings: my impression of DKU is more so based on the perceptions and experiences of Chinese students, but I was able to hear different sides of the story from both international and Chinese students at NYUSH. Perhaps if I had been able to talk to DKU international students, I might have formed a more nuanced understanding of why there are so few international students at DKU.

### **3.5. Research Sites Description**

NYUSH and DKU are very different structurally. As such, I cannot always make a direct comparison between the two schools in my study of Sino-US JV universities. However, the differences between NYUSH and DKU do lend themselves to helping me gain a more complex and nuanced understanding of how Sino-US JV universities can be

conceptualized and governed. In broad terms, I will lay out the differences between the structures of NYUSH and DKU below.

NYUSH, which is a partnership between NYU and East China Normal University, took in its first students in 2013. From its inception to the present, NYUSH has operated as an undergraduate university, with no graduate departments. It has a full 4-year undergraduate program which had its first graduating class in 2017. Notably, NYUSH is also committed to taking in and maintaining a 50/50 split of international and Chinese students for every class year<sup>39</sup>.

On the other hand, DKU, a partnership between Duke University and Wuhan University, has a very different operating structure for the students and programs. It took in its first students in 2014 and has been operating with several graduate programs, but without a full 4-year undergraduate program so far. It does operate an undergraduate 'Global Learning Semester' (GLS), however, where undergraduate students spend one semester at DKU and take elective courses for what is essentially a study abroad semester from their own schools. In terms of graduate programs, the campus offers Medical Physics, Global Health, Environmental Policy, and Management Studies to date<sup>40</sup>. In September 2018, however, DKU will have their first intake of students for a full 4-year undergraduate program. The demographics of DKU also differ significantly from that of NYUSH. In the planning stages, DKU, like NYUSH, intended to have a 50/50 split of international and Chinese students. However, DKU's graduate programs and GLS program have so far enrolled a majority of Chinese students every semester by a large margin. The upcoming class for DKU's undergraduate program will also have a majority of Chinese students, with "225 students in our undergraduate class, 175 Chinese students and 50 international students" according to the faculty involved in the recruiting for the class starting in 2018<sup>41</sup>. As I will discuss later, DKU found out within the first few years of operation that there was not enough international student interest in attending

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<sup>39</sup> "Undergraduate Admissions | NYU Shanghai," Shanghai.NYU.edu, accessed March 21, 2018, <https://shanghai.nyu.edu/admissions>.

<sup>40</sup> "Academics - Duke Kunshan University," dku.edu.cn, accessed March 21, 2018, <https://dukekunshan.edu.cn/en/academics>.

<sup>41</sup> (Professor #19 Undergrad programs, USA, DKU, Male), Interview by Erica Weston, Personal Interview, Kunshan, November 2, 2017.

DKU to maintain a 50/50 split, perhaps because DKU had not spent as much on financial aid packages as NYUSH to attract large numbers of international students.

Besides these structural differences, DKU and NYUSH are situated in two very different locations. NYUSH is located in downtown Shanghai in one large building plus dorms, while DKU is located in the smaller and lesser-known city of Kunshan, and comes with a full, residential campus.

## Chapter 4. The Practical purpose of Joint Ventures in China

Universities have been establishing branch campuses for decades. In recent years, the number of branch campuses has risen dramatically: 249 IBCs (international branch campuses) are currently in operation, and between 2011 and 2015, “66 new branch campuses came into existence, a 26 percent increase in the number of IBCs globally”<sup>42</sup>. China has become a major host country with 32 IBCs, while the US owns 1/3 of all IBCs globally, more than any other country<sup>43</sup>. There are 12 degree granting Sino-US partnerships in China currently, (only three of which are full JV campuses), and they “collectively enrolled more than 6,500 students in the 2014-15 academic year, with enrollments ranging from fewer than 40 to more than 3,000 students. More than 90 percent of the enrolled students were Chinese, while fewer than 6 percent were U.S. citizens. By contrast the majority of the faculty -- about 60 percent -- were Americans”<sup>44</sup>.

When explaining the motivations behind establishing a branch campus, virtually every university’s website and strategic planning documents will mention ‘the globalizing world we live in’ and the ‘need to internationalize to be relevant’ or some variation of these phrases. Such is also the case with the Sino-US JV universities I studied: these universities promote this rhetoric of globalization prominently in their planning guides, strategic guides, public speeches, websites, and promotional literature. Beyond this rhetoric, what is the point of establishing joint ventures in China? How does expanding benefit the US schools, why did the Chinese government finally decide to allow JV partnerships, and why would students attend JV schools? These are the major questions which must first be answered in order to answer the broader, more theoretical question: what are these JV universes adding or detracting from the sphere of higher education and, specifically, international higher education?

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<sup>42</sup> John T. Crist, “U.S. Universities and International Branch Campuses,” NAFSA, April 2017, [http://www.nafsa.org/Professional\\_Resources/Browse\\_by\\_Interest/International\\_Students\\_and\\_Scholars/Network\\_Resources/International\\_Enrollment\\_Management/U\\_S\\_\\_Universities\\_and\\_International\\_Branch\\_Campuses/](http://www.nafsa.org/Professional_Resources/Browse_by_Interest/International_Students_and_Scholars/Network_Resources/International_Enrollment_Management/U_S__Universities_and_International_Branch_Campuses/).

<sup>43</sup> Crist.

<sup>44</sup> Elizabeth Redden, “Constraints on Chinese Campuses,” Inside Higher Ed, September 29, 2016, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/09/29/us-report-examines-constraints-university-programs-china>.

Sino-Foreign educational partnerships have sprung up rapidly since China opened its doors to global trade in the 1970s and developed “provisional regulations to encourage Sino-Foreign collaboration in higher education” later in 1995<sup>45</sup><sup>46</sup>. For Western countries, there were strong political and economic incentives for expanding into China in the 80s, 90s, and 00s, when China was experiencing an economic boom and becoming a major player in the international economy. It was during this time when universities such as Johns Hopkins (1986), Oklahoma City University (1988), and University of Nottingham Ningbo China (2004) started developing joint educational programs in China<sup>47</sup>. However, it was not until 2003 that China allowed full JV campuses to be established by foreign countries, and even so, Chinese universities were required to own at least 51% of the stakes in the partnership.

#### **4.1. US universities’ reasons for expanding**

It was during the ‘China boom’ that NYU and Duke seemed to have started planning for the possibility of expanding into China, based on early planning documents. NYU, however, was coming to this decision in a different way than Duke. Specifically, NYU was already in the process of establishing/branding themselves as a “Global Network University” with multiple campuses, and study abroad sites. Before establishing NYU Shanghai, they had created NYU Abu Dhabi (NYUAD), and six study abroad NYU sites designed for their students to study all over the world together with NYU professors<sup>48</sup>. Although Duke had been using the motto “bringing the world to Duke” for some time, it had not previously set up any foreign campuses until its venture into China with Duke Kunshan University in 2014.

Early planning and strategic documents explain why NYU and Duke decided it worthwhile to pursue such new, expensive, and risky ventures in China. Although ‘being global’ recurs throughout the documents, there must be more specific reasons why

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<sup>45</sup> Michael Gow, “Sino-Foreign Joint Venture Universities: An Introduction,” International Institute for Asian Studies, 2017, <https://iiias.asia/the-newsletter/article/sino-foreign-joint-venture-universities-introduction>.

<sup>46</sup> Gow.

<sup>47</sup> Gow.

<sup>48</sup> NYU Web Communications, “Global Network University Reflection,” NYU.edu, March 20, 2018, <http://www.nyu.edu/content/nyu/en/about/leadership-university-administration/office-of-the-president-emeritus/communications/global-network-university-reflection>.

these ventures seem useful for NYU and DKU. Many cynics have said that universities are, at their core, corporations, and are primarily looking for new cash flows with JVs. Certainly, in recent decades, many Western schools have financially benefited from the huge influx of Chinese international students; many critics believe that Western universities want to now move directly into China to gain even more cash flow from Chinese tuition dollars. However, there have in fact been cases of JV programs in China ending, partly because of financial issues. Failures are not uncommon among international branch campuses globally (e.g. Yale with Peking University)<sup>49</sup>. It is important to look at all possible motivations including strategic planning, branding, and ‘internationalizing’.

#### **4.1.1. NYUSH**

An article published by NYU in 2010, reflecting on the university’s goals as a Global Network University, offers key insights into why NYU believes internationalizing through “portal” sites around the globe is important institutionally, even before NYUSH was established<sup>50</sup>. Although the piece is long and wordy and perhaps overly eloquent about the wonders of our globalizing world, there are also many practical takeaways. For one, it is clear that NYU views itself as a leader in the international field of education and research, and sees this aspect of itself as a key element that will improve its standing and research and appeal: “NYU draws leading faculty and students from all sectors of the globe. This international presence enhances research, teaching and learning in NYU’s laboratories, classrooms, lecture halls, and conference centers by keeping the global dimensions of today’s most urgent questions always in the foreground”<sup>51</sup>.

In contrast to NYU’s student recruitment materials which largely extol the benefits of internationalization to students, the aforementioned NYU planning document discusses the benefits of internationalization to NYU itself, specifically, for its research output. Even the very definition of a “Global Network University” centers around research: “NYU can create a new model for a worldwide research university – a Global

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<sup>49</sup> Duke Cheston, “Duke’s China Branch Campus Brings Out Critics,” Carolina Journal, November 15, 2012, <https://www.carolinajournal.com/news-article/dukes-china-branch-campus-brings-out-critics/>.

<sup>50</sup> Communications, “Global Network University Reflection.”

<sup>51</sup> Communications.

Network University.” The article goes on to add: “Beyond its capacity to magnify the talent and assets available to each citizen of the network, the reality of the network can support research and curriculum in ways that open new possibilities, providing researchers access to otherwise difficult to obtain material and offering students contextualized learning opportunities. We have found, for example, that a local presence can provide access to interesting new data for researchers”<sup>52</sup>. It is important to examine critically *why* universities internationalize, because these motivations will influence the strategic decisions on internationalizing and student experience later on. As Jorgenson and Shultz note, universities in the recent decades have been trying to brand themselves as international to “attract the brightest of scholars/students, a substantial number of international students, and, of course, high-profile research and training projects”<sup>53</sup>.

The NYU planning document also reasons that having JV branches will help to attract more students to NYU: “The opportunity to live, study, teach, and conduct research throughout the system will support the University's capacity to attract the very best faculty and students.” With a huge number of applications, a university can keep its admissions rates low and admit highly qualified students, subsequently boosting its reputation and generating more income. The document also points out that in the past, only about “7% of NYU students were going abroad for even a semester,” and that this is not acceptable for a “major university rooted in New York”<sup>54</sup>. The number of NYU students who study abroad matters because the figure can be used to market the school and attract more student applications. Creating branch campuses with easily transferable credits is a smart way to encourage students to do study abroad. Also, as a former NYUSH professor pointed out, shuffling students between institutionally owned study abroad sites keeps all the tuition dollars cycling within NYU, instead of letting the money go to other institutions that students might have chosen for study abroad opportunities<sup>55</sup>. Overall, NYU's move to become a global network university seems to fit their goals of staying relevant in a globalizing world, enhancing their ability to produce

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<sup>52</sup> Communications.

<sup>53</sup> Jorgenson and Shultz, “Global Citizenship Education (GCE) in Post-Secondary Institutions”, p. 26.

<sup>54</sup> Communications, “Global Network University Reflection.”

<sup>55</sup> Michael #13 Gow, Interview by Erica Weston, Personal Interview, Shanghai, September 30, 2017.

research, attracting students, and maintaining financial stability, all while being an entrepreneur in a new, newsworthy educational endeavor.

#### 4.1.2. DKU

Duke's planning document for DKU is written with NYU and similar internationalizing universities as an inspiration. Directly from the planning guide:

“There are significant opportunity costs to Duke not being in China. As the Education Advisory Board report, ‘Operations of American Institutions in China’, indicates, many of our peer institutions are already ahead of Duke in establishing operations in China. We believe that our model, both by establishing a joint-venture with Kunshan and Wuhan University and more broadly by envisioning ourselves as a globally-networked university, offers an opportunity to both catch up and become a leader as a 21<sup>st</sup>-century global university”<sup>56</sup>.

In other words, Duke's decision to expand into China was based on seeing China as an important investment for 21<sup>st</sup>-century universities and seeing that other institutions were already capitalizing on China. The practice of funding individual students in place of higher education as a whole (well explained by Haigh and many others), means that universities in the US are often forced to think like a business in many regards. Privatization of public universities forces them to find new revenue streams, and private universities have always operated like a non-profit business (unless they are for-profit universities). Private non-profit universities like Duke and NYU must work to promote their brand and reputation so they can improve their two major revenue streams: donations and student tuition fees<sup>57</sup>. Universities must find ways to stay competitive, attract students, and raise their reputation to remain financially viable and highly ranked – and internationalizing is potentially one of these ways.

DKU was initially conceptualized by the Duke business school, which makes sense as a business program would certainly benefit from having connections to China and its economy. Even though the Duke business school then withdrew some of its support for DKU, Duke as an institution decided to continue pursuing the opportunity in

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<sup>56</sup> Office of Global strategy and Programs Office of the Provost, “Duke-Kunshan Planning Guide” (Duke University, March 2011).

<sup>57</sup> Gordon C Winston, “Subsidies, Hierarchy and Peers: The Awkward Economics of Higher Education,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 13, no. 1 (February 1999): 16, <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.13.1.13>.

China. Duke envisioned the DKU campus initially as a site for graduate programs and research, bringing to mind NYU's idea that having global sites would be very beneficial for research output<sup>58</sup>. The specific Duke graduate programs that ended up being established in Kunshan all have clear reasons to be interested in China; to date, Global Health, Business Management, Medical Physics, and Environmental Policy departments have been established. The Chinese Ministry of Education ended up requiring DKU to provide opportunities for undergraduates as well, prompting DKU to set up the Global Learning Semester for short-term undergraduate studies, with plans of a full 4-year undergraduate course in 2018<sup>59</sup>. Again, mirroring NYU's reasoning for expanding into different countries, Duke's planning guide says that "Duke's international reputation does not yet match its reputation in the United States nor reflect the quality of its teaching and research programs. If we are to meet our ambitious goals in research, teaching and service, this gap must be aggressively closed... Duke will work to attract the best faculty from around the world, both to enhance our teaching and research missions"<sup>60</sup>. Duke clearly believes this venture will improve its reputation and ability to research and attract high-quality students and faculty.

Overall, it seems the US university stakeholders are motivated to stay relevant in the new global world and attract students and researchers by breaking into the burgeoning China market, although it is unlikely that they are profiting at this point from the ventures. Despite not being a money-making avenue currently, international ventures still have strategic importance, promoting "international profile and reputation, student and staff development... and research/knowledge production" according to Jorgenson and Shultz<sup>61</sup>.

When I asked professors why they thought NYU and Duke would want to expand into China in my interviews, many expressed that China was such an important burgeoning power, institutions naturally would like to have a stake in the country and let their students gain experience in China. This certainly seems to make sense thinking

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<sup>58</sup> Chenying Huang, "Duke Kunshan University—A Bold Innovation," *Sanford Journal of Public Policy* (blog), October 15, 2014, <https://sites.duke.edu/sjpp/2014/duke-kunshan-university-a-bold-innovation/>.

<sup>59</sup> Office of the Provost, "Duke-Kunshan Planning Guide."

<sup>60</sup> Office of the Provost. p. 11.

<sup>61</sup> Jorgenson and Shultz, "Global Citizenship Education (GCE) in Post-Secondary Institutions."

about China's growing economy and the number of Chinese students studying abroad in the US. Oddly, however, despite the generally accepted idea that learning Chinese and learning about the Chinese culture would be very beneficial to American and other international students, these JV schools do not seem to strongly emphasize learning Chinese. In the case of DKU, there has been a fair amount of trouble recruiting Duke students and other international students to attend the school. At both NYUSH and DKU (in their future undergraduate program), international students are only required to take two years of Chinese, and as one NYUSH international student pointed out, "We're in the middle of the richest part of the richest city in the country full of foreigners and a lot of kids will come here [for] four years and do not even speak Chinese, to me that's preposterous"<sup>62</sup>. Many professors at DKU expressed in the interviews that the university was trying very hard to recruit international students, and the university had had to adjust its vision from being 50/50 international/Chinese to having closer to 1/3 international students. Several professors also pointed out that NYUSH was able to attain a 50/50 split because of the large financial aid packages offered<sup>6364</sup>.

It seems like common knowledge that learning Chinese and getting involved in China are 'smart moves' for a student's future. In practice, not too many Western students are interested in coming to China for a long time, or even learning Chinese if they do stay in China. Therefore, it is unclear whether or not expanding branch campuses into China and then trying to increase the size of the student body (like both DKU and NYUSH are trying to do) will be successful in the long run. Also, the schools do seem to be branding themselves and setting up the curriculum so as to be "global" and not necessarily "Chinese", because they may have realized that they are not getting enough interest from international students purely based on their Chinese identity. However, DKU seems to be holding on to the Chinese identity more firmly than NYUSH so far, partly because it does have a majority of Chinese students. This is also the case at other JV schools in China – the British JVs, for instance, have thousands of students,

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<sup>62</sup> (Student #15 UK, Male, NYUSH), Interview by Erica Weston, Personal Interview, Shanghai, October 10, 2017.

<sup>63</sup> #19, Interview by Erica Weston.

<sup>64</sup> (Professor #21 Language and Culture Center, USA, DKU, Male), Interview by Erica Weston, Personal Interview, Kunshan, November 8, 2017.

but only very small percentages of international students<sup>65</sup>. This model appears to be working financially, but it is very different from what these US JV schools have been trying to do with their goal of a 50/50 student split.

If Sino-US JVs like NYUSH do emphasize their global identity more than their Chinese identity (to attract international students), this will be in line with many internationalizing endeavours that model their “international” identity after a Western model. As Doherty and Singh note, international elite education still uses the Western model as the ideal. In Western universities and universities in much of the world, there is often the assumption that students need to be taught through the Western liberal arts model of learning, and that an ‘international’ education should generally adhere to this Western model – though this view is increasingly starting to be critiqued.

## 4.2. Chinese government motivations

For the Chinese government stakeholders on the regional and national levels, a key reason for creating JV universities with Western partners is to have these universities act as a model for the development of China’s higher education system. The Chinese State Council’s “Regulations of the People’s Republic of China on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools” published in 2003, “encourages local universities to cooperate with renowned overseas HEIs in launching new academic programmes in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to introduce excellent overseas educational resources to local institutions”<sup>66</sup>. Part of China’s long-term plans to grow in strength and reputation on an international level clearly include the creation of internationally ranked and highly reputable universities. In one interview I conducted with a former professor at NYUSH who also studies JVs in China, the professor pointed out that JVs from different countries (US, UK, etc.) were allowed to operate freely in China, because the Chinese government wants to see what the educational approach of these different schools from different countries might be and incorporate some of the practices into China’s own educational system<sup>67</sup>. Specifically,

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<sup>65</sup> “New International Student Ambassadors Keen to Make a Difference,” Xi’an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU), September 21, 2016, <http://www.xjtlu.edu.cn/en/news/2016/09/new-international-student-ambassadors-keen-to-make-a-difference>.

<sup>66</sup> Mok and Xu, “When China Opens to the World.” p. 395.

<sup>67</sup> #13 Gow, Interview by Erica Weston.

the professor believed the Chinese government was interested in elements such as systematic oversight from UK universities, and the liberal arts model and extracurricular activities from US universities, and planned on adapting such concepts for the Chinese context so as to create more innovative, but still patriotic, citizens/graduates.

NYUSH is the result and an example of the Chinese government's emphasis on learning from different countries' models. When East China Normal University (ECNU) initially attempted to partner with Imperial College London to create a JV, the government intervened and told ECNU to drop the British university partner and find an American university partner as there were already enough British JVs in China. NYUSH was thus formed when ECNU reached out to NYU to bring in an American partner<sup>68</sup>.

Regional governments and small cities may also benefit from welcoming JV schools. The case of Kunshan welcoming DKU more broadly exemplifies the desire of regional governments to improve their reputation by developing prestigious universities as part of their campaign. This explains why these regional governments, such as Kunshan, have given so much financial support to developing the JV campuses – the financial backing is understood as an investment in the growth of the city's economy and status within China<sup>69</sup>.

Besides the goal of developing the Chinese educational system, there are other motivations for bringing in these hybrid JV universities to China. In a study that Duke commissioned to understand the market for a potential JV school in China, the researchers spoke to Chinese families and found that some Chinese parents were starting to move away slightly from the belief that sending their children abroad to Western countries for education was the best route<sup>70</sup>. Although studying abroad is still an extremely popular option, some families want their children to maintain closer ties to China, so JV universities may be a perfect alternative. In the Duke commissioned report, a senior official of a Sino-Foreign JV said that “cultivating global citizens while keeping

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<sup>68</sup> #13 Gow.

<sup>69</sup> K. Farrar, “In China, Duke U. Navigates a Foreign Landscape,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 61, no. 17 (2015): A10.

<sup>70</sup> “101224 CMR China Duke Report Final Docx (Recovered),” China Market Research Group, December 24, 2010, [https://docs.google.com/document/d/11r5aDxoai6bYafMpt1Bs1p41odGAiyDjKi48bl1v6jk/edit?copiedFromTrash&usp=embed\\_facebook](https://docs.google.com/document/d/11r5aDxoai6bYafMpt1Bs1p41odGAiyDjKi48bl1v6jk/edit?copiedFromTrash&usp=embed_facebook).

students connected to Chinese humanistic and cultural foundations are the key competitiveness of Sino-foreign universities in China”<sup>71</sup>. Similarly, Denis Simon, the executive vice-chancellor of Duke Kunshan University, “pointed out that such universities have become increasingly popular over the past few years because many students and parents believe that there are good prospects in China. ‘China is changing so rapidly. If you are away from it for four or six years, you will lose contact with your network and the ability to reintegrate with them after returning’”<sup>72</sup>. For many Chinese families and students, JV seemingly offers the perfect balance of a Western education and a physical connection to China.

### **4.3. US backlash to expansion**

Now that we have examined why JV universities are formed, as well as the general motivations of the stakeholders and participants, we need to cover some of the criticisms against and concerns about JV universities. The two main criticisms directed to JV universities in China involve academic freedom and financial stability, or whether or not the huge ventures are diverting money away from home campuses. I will spend much of the rest of this thesis covering these two topics, although the discussion on finances will be less about the issue of taking money away from home campuses and more about the impact of financial structures on the students in JV universities.

Before diving into a complex discussion, I will broadly outline the major concerns about the JV universities in China and the home universities’ responses to these concerns. Financially, the international ventures are both expensive and risky. Many faculty members do not like the idea of investing in ventures that seem disconnected from their primary concerns on their home campus and that might jeopardize funding for projects they do care about. For the most part, the financial concerns that were voiced for NYU and Duke during the planning stages of their new campuses died down after the JV universities got up and running. The university presidents at both schools said approximately the same things to their faculty to reassure them. First, the regional Chinese governments would be footing almost all of the bill for building the campuses

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<sup>71</sup> “101224 CMR China Duke Report Final Docx (Recovered).”

<sup>72</sup> Zhou Wenting, “Joint Venture Universities Set to Be the next Big Thing,” China Daily, December 22, 2017, <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201712/22/WS5a3ccea1a31008cf16da2f44.html>.

themselves. Second, the home campuses would be relying on donations, tuition money, and some money from their strategic funds to finance the new campuses, instead of taking away from the home university's operating funds. In a set number of years, the campuses were expected to be self-sustaining<sup>7374</sup>. Some critics still question NYUSH and DKU's financial sustainability, but for the most part, the two institutions now run without a lot of uproar. In my section on 'Recruitment, Finances, and Consequences,' I will delve into some more complex issues of how these campuses may or may not be able to grow their student body due to financial issues, and how the rush for recruitment and an international-Chinese student balance has led to interesting student dynamics on campus.

As for academic freedom, over the past 4-5 years that these two JV schools have operated, there have been numerous articles, news reports, and controversies regarding NYUSH and DKU's academic freedom. In the planning stages, professors at NYU and Duke had voiced their overarching concerns – how can one expect to have academic freedom in China, a repressive totalitarian country that systematically prevents the freedom of information online and within academic spheres? The main response from the university administrations has always been: the JV university has special privileges in China that are granted by the government, and there is an agreement with the Chinese government that the JV school will only operate in the country with the freedom to teach and speak about anything. Since the first cohorts have arrived on these campuses, the debate on exactly what academic freedom means for these special-permission Chinese campuses has become muddier as issues of research, self-censorship, and visas begin to emerge.

Two of the key questions I want to explore in this thesis are: 1) What are universities ideally meant to do in their societies and the world, besides producing graduates? 2) Can universities evolve in ways that will make them more accessible and less elitist? I look at these questions in the context of JV Sino-US universities by examining how NYUSH and DKU are conducting themselves in China, in terms of their

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<sup>73</sup> Ian Wilhelm, "Duke's China Plan Sparks Doubts on Campus," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 25, 2011, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Dukes-China-Plan-Sparks/127640>.

<sup>74</sup> Elizabeth Redden, "NYU Establishes Campuses and Sites around the Globe," *Inside Higher Ed*, March 11, 2013, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/03/11/nyu-establishes-campuses-and-sites-around-globe>.

values and actual operations. I asked faculty members and students what they believed were the purpose and mission of these unique schools, and I explored whether these ideas were embodied in the universities' day-to-day operations.

#### **4.4. Student testimonies for the JV universities**

In the interviews, I heard different reasons why international students liked their unique school, compared to why Chinese students liked the school. To highlight these students' personal thoughts on their experiences, I will use direct quotes and provide some context. Although many students told me they loved NYUSH and DKU, the particular quotes below jumped out to me because they indicate why these JV schools in China are unique and what the students liked that they might not have gotten from another experience. Some students had very practical reasons why they preferred this type of education while others showed more emotional attachments to the JV they were attending. One Chinese graduate student at DKU who was in the environmental policy program said, "I prefer this school, because you know eventually I will come back to China to improve the environment here, and on this campus, I can have a close relationship to China and also have some international view"<sup>75</sup>. For this student, an American education in China was both practical and satisfied a personal and emotional need. She also told me that she truly appreciated her professors' openness to receiving critiques from students and their flexibility in pedagogy to best suit student needs, which she did not experience in her education at a Chinese undergraduate school.

Most international students I interviewed at NYUSH had a practical view of their education: they believed their experience at NYUSH would set them apart after graduation and help them work outside their own country if they wanted to. However, I also observed sentiments rooted in emotions from many students, students who were happy about the unique atmosphere of the university and the opportunity to study with a diverse group of students. As one NYUSH international student expressed: "Here it's all mixed up and I love that, I love having friends from all over the world I love that

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<sup>75</sup> (Graduate Student #39 Environmental Policy, China, Female, DKU), Interview by Erica Weston, Personal Interview, Kunshan, November 30, 2017.

everyone's a lot more accepting and open-minded, especially about cultural differences - it's really cool that way"<sup>76</sup>.

One Chinese student at NYUSH expressed that she really liked the freedom to honestly discuss sensitive topics in a way that would not be possible in other Chinese schools, and that she really liked learning from her diverse group of classmates. This student also made an interesting point about the relevance of the school's curriculum to her. She comes from an ethnic minority in China, and from her experience at NYUSH, she was able to learn more about China's minorities from an academic standpoint, and about filmmaking as an Interactive Media Arts major. When I asked if the school was helping her with her goals, she said,

"Yah, definitely, because I was from such a diverse province, we have 25 ethnic minorities out of 56 total in China, that's nearly half of them living in my province, so I'm really getting interested in this culture because I am one of the ethnic minorities myself. I think my study here equip[s] me with the knowledge and the ability to reflect on what is happening in my hometown, and I think it is something that is worth documenting"<sup>77</sup>.

Several other Chinese students expressed a similar view in the interviews: that their time at school was helping them develop their Chinese identity while also teaching them about many other countries, peoples, and international viewpoints. This struck me as a unique and important feature of these JV universities. American universities do not generally focus on studies about China or any other culture, outside of specific departments and majors. As such, many international students in the US may experience isolation and feel the tug of assimilation culture to fit in when they do not feel supported by their institutions to explore their own cultures and identities. Places like NYUSH and DKU seem to support these personal journeys, most obviously for Chinese students (but for many other students as well) based on my interviews.

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<sup>76</sup> (Student #3 USA, Female, NYUSH), Interview by Erica Weston, Personal Interview, Shanghai, September 16, 2017.

<sup>77</sup> (Student #5 China, Female, NYUSH), Interview by Erica Weston, Personal Interview, Shanghai, September 21, 2017.

## **4.5. Overall reasons for JVs to exist and some challenges**

For all the stakeholders in the equation, there are utilitarian and idealistic motivations to support JV universities. For the US schools, international branding and international research are strategically savvy for the institution as a whole, but also, there is much to learn from working and teaching in China. For the Chinese government, JV partnerships are part of a bigger plan to evolve Chinese higher education. However, many international students have reservations about moving to China to go to college, while Chinese students have reservations about the quality of a newly established US school that is not in the US. That said, current JV university students themselves tend to love the pedagogy, environment, and diversity of the student body of their JV schools. The main stumbling blocks to the longevity of JVs concern finances and academic freedom. Financially, it is expensive for JV schools to continue offering significant financial aid, but it is unclear whether there will be enough international student interest in the long run to fill every class year without significant financial aid. As it concerns academic freedom, the worst-case scenario (as a couple professors mentioned off hand) is that China could change its policies and rules for these JV universities and rescind their privileges, which would force the JVs to shut down. It will take time to see how these international JVs develop and whether they can help advance a new form of international education.

## Chapter 5. Recruitment, Finances, and Consequences

The methods of recruitment, the different levels of interest from Chinese versus international students toward JV universities, and the issue of how much can be charged for tuition are all important considerations for JV universities. I focus on these issues because on a practical level, they determine whether or not the JV universities are sustainable. On a theoretical level, the implications of recruitment and finances significantly impact what the university values, how it operates, and what student life is like. These issues connect to the larger Western education issues of privatization and university admissions criteria.

Chinese and international students have different tuition fees in JV schools. The difference in fees has potential ramifications for recruiting Chinese students versus international students. For Chinese students, tuition fees are capped by the government at a certain level similar to normal Chinese university prices (but still significantly higher). The fees are much lower than Duke or NYU tuition fees in the US, which means the university takes in less money per Chinese student. However, the tuition fees for international students can be the same as what is being charged in the US home institutions. NYUSH (and to some extent DKU as well) has been offering financial aid to provide an incentive for international students to come to a newly established university in China<sup>7879</sup>.

From my interviews with students and faculty from both NYUSH and DKU, it seems the schools do intend to offer less aid as they become more established. There is a lot of uncertainty within the student body whether this will go well for the JV universities, as many students (from NYUSH mostly) accepted their offers partly because of the large financial aid packages extended to them. Some students at NYUSH wondered whether other potential international students would bother coming to a US school in China if they had to pay the same fees as a university in the US<sup>80</sup>. These

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<sup>78</sup> #13 Gow, Interview by Erica Weston.

<sup>79</sup> #19, Interview by Erica Weston.

<sup>80</sup> (Student #11 USA, Female, NYUSH), Interview by Erica Weston, Personal Interview, Shanghai, September 28, 2017.

issues around recruitment and tuition fees in JV schools bring up questions not just regarding financial sustainability, but also student life – specifically, how student life might be affected by the diversity of students on campus.

## **5.1. Recruiting the right ratio and expandability**

A professor who used to work at NYUSH explained to me that Chinese students were admitted to NYUSH through an intensive interview system to make sure they had the necessary English skills and the ‘personality’ for NYUSH<sup>81</sup>. He personally felt this system was very good for admitting quality students, but that such an intensive process would make it difficult for the school to expand and accept more than the small number of students they had now. Also, he pointed out that because Chinese students’ fees were capped, and because a 50/50 student split must be maintained, it would be very hard financially to expand the student body size. He added that if financial aid was indeed crucial for enough international students to come that would make the finances of expanding even more difficult. However, cutting down on financial aid would affect student demographics – only wealthier international students would then be able to attend the university, upsetting the quality and diversity of the student body.

### **5.1.1. Recruiting International students**

Another aspect of recruitment, besides financial aid, is how the school is marketed to international students. To appeal to international students, there seems to be a delicate balance, perhaps even a catch-22, at work. To attract enough international students to reach 50% of the student body, JV universities have to maximize their reach. For one, they have to broadly appeal to students who are looking for a more casual learning experience in China. As such, they are avoiding setting high Chinese language and culture requirements for graduation. The class requirements and campus set-up of NYUSH and DKU, which I will delve into later, reflect their goal to broadly appeal to students. However, JV universities also want to appeal to students whose intention is to be immersed in China and the Chinese culture. If the schools water down the experience of China too much, they may not attract those who want to study Chinese and China intensively. This could be an issue for NYUSH and DKU, which are trying to be of broad

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<sup>81</sup> #13 Gow, Interview by Erica Weston.

appeal. Yale's venture with Peking University provides an example of the issue playing out. Not enough of Yale's own students attended the Beijing program, possibly because those interested in studying Chinese wanted a more language intensive program, while others preferred to study abroad in one of the more standard study abroad sites. Ultimately, this lack of interest forced them to shut down the program<sup>8283</sup>.

The international students I talked to at NYUSH came to this "American school in China" for very different reasons. Some of them had come almost by mere accident - they had intended to study in the main NYU campus but had clicked 'apply' to all three of the NYU campuses in the application, simply because the option was present. When they were admitted to the Shanghai campus with huge scholarships, it felt ridiculous to turn down the offer<sup>8485</sup>. Some were intrigued by NYU's Shanghai campus, to begin with, and ended up committing, again, because of the generous scholarship packages offered. Other students did not mention finances, but indicated they chose NYUSH simply because of their huge interest in China. Then, there were students who knew nothing about China, but saw the opportunity to go to a renowned US university in China as a big, exciting adventure.

For many students around the world, the idea of coming to a US university with a liberal arts curriculum is very appealing, and NYUSH and DKU lean heavily on the reputations of their home campus to attract students. However, the idea of living in China for four years to receive this brand of education is, in general, a foreign and intimidating concept to many students living in the West, or outside of East Asia. Despite the growing interest in China for its huge economic growth and rich cultural legacy, the JV schools are aware that it is difficult to convince international students to come to a brand-new school in China. After all, the trodden path is to attend schools in the US and UK. In addition, the language most students learn growing up, if they have an inkling they want to attend university outside of their country, is English, not Chinese. To sell JV

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<sup>82</sup> Joyce Lau, "Yale-Peking University Program Canceled," *The New York Times*, July 29, 2012, sec. Asia Pacific, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/30/world/asia/30iht-educbriefs30.html>.

<sup>83</sup> (Professor #24 Academic Writing, USA, DKU, Male), Interview by Erica Weston, Personal Interview, Kunshan, November 9, 2017.

<sup>84</sup> (Student #1 Syria, Male, NYUSH), Interview by Erica Weston, Personal Interview, Shanghai, September 14, 2017.

<sup>85</sup> (Student #2 Hungary, Female, NYUSH), Interview by Erica Weston, Personal Interview, Shanghai, September 15, 2017.

campuses to international students, both NYUSH and DKU have designed their campuses and curriculums to be reminiscent of those at the US, and make it possible, in fact, to go through the four years of studies with a minimal amount of immersion in China or China studies. For instance, the campuses themselves are classically US-style (NYUSH with the city campus style building and DKU with the classic residential campus), with everything a student could need available within the space of the campus. A good number of students admitted they spent most of their time on campus or in their dorms. Once on campus, everything can be accessed in English. In terms of the curriculum, at both schools, international students are only required to take Chinese for 2 years and some students graduate without even a conversational level of Chinese<sup>8687</sup>.

Even more interestingly, when I talked to China Studies majors and professors in that department at NYUSH, they complained about how the administration wanted the major to have a lower requirement for Chinese language study. There were only about 8 students who were China Studies majors at the time of my interviews in fall 2017, and the administration wanted to attract more students and said that the current high requirement of language study was turning students away<sup>88</sup>. The people involved in the program, however, thought this was a ridiculous idea, as no one could truly understand China (and be a China studies major) without a solid grasp of the language, which would require, at the very least, four years of study<sup>89</sup>. The bigger danger in easing Chinese language and culture requirements is that it may lead to a school structured around only a superficial experience of China in an American bubble. Indeed, students and professors at both NYUSH and DKU had noted that some people went through their time at the JV schools without any real interactions or experiences outside the classroom. To be clear, however, a student's experience at a JV school is largely based on choice. Some students go through learning very little about China because that is possible, but many others have sought out in-class opportunities or opportunities in the city to get an immersive experience.

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<sup>86</sup> "NYU Shanghai Undergraduate Bulletin 2016/2017" (NYU Shanghai, January 2016).

<sup>87</sup> #15, Interview by Erica Weston.

<sup>88</sup> (Student #12 France/USA, Female, NYUSH), Interview by Erica Weston, Personal Interview, Shanghai, September 29, 2017.

<sup>89</sup> #15, Interview by Erica Weston.

### **5.1.2. International or Chinese “feeling” of the school**

NYUSH’s current dilemma centers around the number of scholarships offered to international students – should NYUSH maintain the current number and miss out on maximizing profits, or should it decrease the number and risk a dip in international applications? On the other hand, DKU has accepted that it will not have an even split of international to Chinese students, so their challenge has less to do with finances, and more to do with the school environment that will have a majority of Chinese students. DKU’s identity is significantly more “Chinese” than NYUSH’s, and many professors I talked to at DKU specifically expressed their appreciation at the way the school was valuing its JV character and embracing its Chinese side more than other ventures. The greater proportion of Chinese students in DKU certainly helps to maintain the Chinese character. DKU is also located in Kunshan, which is a mid-sized Chinese city with far fewer expats and much less expat/international life than Shanghai, so there is a greater likelihood that international students at DKU may come away with more Chinese experience. The downside to having less international students is that Chinese students may have less of a diverse “Duke” experience – some Chinese students at DKU said in the interviews that they did not have a lot of opportunities to interact with international students since there were so few international students (of course this was before the undergraduate program had begun operating)<sup>90</sup>.

### **5.1.3. Recruiting Chinese students**

With regard to the recruitment of Chinese students, many of the students I talked to at both NYUSH and DKU wanted to come to these JV schools for the career opportunities that they thought would be available from graduating from a reputable American school and an English-speaking environment. One appealing thing about JV schools in China is that they are much less expensive than schools in the US for Chinese students. Also, Chinese students do not have to take American standardized tests to apply to these JVs – Chinese students typically prepare for the Chinese standardized test, the Gaokao (The National Higher Education Entrance Examination – mandatory for Chinese high school students to enter into undergraduate programs), and

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<sup>90</sup> (Student #29 China, Female, DKU), Interview by Erica Weston, Personal Interview, Kunshan, November 21, 2017, 33.

can apply to the JVs with the Gaokao. Aside from these practical concerns, however, many Chinese students talked mostly about wanting to come to these schools because they wanted a different style of education, being dissatisfied with the Chinese style of education while they were in high school.

Although opinions varied about the US liberal arts approach in general, almost every Chinese student I interviewed was very positive overall about their experiences with learning at NYUSH and DKU. Specifically, the students spoke highly about the interactive style of learning with their professors. Some students intended to go abroad in the future whether for work, graduate school, or other reasons; in any case, everyone I talked to seemed happy to be still living in China for the moment. However, in a Duke market study which researched whether a school like DKU would have enough appeal for Chinese students, many families and students said that going to a place like DKU would not be as valuable as going abroad for school. These families believed that students would not get the immersive cultural and linguistic experience of living in an English-speaking country from DKU; therefore, many families were not willing to pay DKU as much as a school like Duke<sup>91</sup>. As it happens, DKU ended up charging Chinese students tuition fees that are comparable (although slightly higher) to other Chinese universities and much lower than the Duke tuition fees in the US.

## **5.2. Financial aid and tuition differences**

The fact that Chinese and international students are charged different amounts for tuition is an institutionally set policy which does not really have flexibility. For international students, who are charged higher tuition fees, financial aid is a primary concern. In my interviews with American students at NYUSH, financial aid seemed to be a testy subject, with many students expressing that they had not received as much as some of their non-American peers. This was because, they said, wealthy international students from other countries outside the US had lied on their FAFSA forms (“Free Application for Federal Student Aid” for students to determine their eligibility for student financial aid) and inflated their financial need, thus receiving more financial aid than the American students. Americans cannot get away with the same misrepresentations, since FAFSA can correctly audit their financial statements. These students believed that

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<sup>91</sup> “101224 CMR China Duke Report Final Docx (Recovered).”

admitted students who had falsified their financial need took away aid from US students who actually needed the assistance<sup>92</sup>. One American student said that financial aid distribution was unfair because

“NYU just groups the students from different countries, so... coming from the US, I’m automatically marked, like, well you’re probably one of the students who can afford to pay tuition... but then my friends who are from Eastern Europe, and their families are absolutely loaded, well they’re in the Eastern European bracket where they are probably just dead poor and so just getting a full scholarship”<sup>93</sup>.

These complaints by the American students are, naturally, unverifiable, as I cannot gain access to the details about the way financial aid is assigned. Whether or not the unfair distribution of aid exists, it is clear that some of the American students perceived they were in a disadvantaged position because of the way the school allocated aid. This is interesting because some of the same students who complained about the financial aid also said that they did not think many more international students would come to NYUSH if the school stopped giving out large financial aid packages, which the university seems very likely to do soon. So even within the current student body, there exists the sentiment that while the JV school offers a very worthwhile experience, it is difficult to believe prospective students would take a chance on such an odd institution unless there is financial incentive<sup>94</sup>.

### **5.3. Rising tuition fees and student debt**

The issue of student debt in the US and various other Western countries is becoming a huge issue for the millions of students who are attending or have attended HEIs; student debt will likely become an economic crisis for the present generation. JV universities outside the US, like NYUSH and DKU, are not immune to the problem of student debt. As many studies have shown, the prices of university tuition fees have risen drastically in the past few decades: “The published tuition and fee price in the public four-year sector was 3.13 times higher in 2017-18 than it was in 1987-88. The tuition and fee price in the private nonprofit four-year sector was 2.29 times higher in

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<sup>92</sup> #11, Interview by Erica Weston.

<sup>93</sup> #12, Interview by Erica Weston.

<sup>94</sup> #12.

2017-18 than it was 30 years earlier. The price in the public two-year sector was 2.25 times higher<sup>95</sup>. Non-loan aid has not kept up, forcing more and more students to take out huge loans, and rack up untenable debt<sup>96</sup>. While students from upper class, wealthy families continue to have an easy access to higher education and face no to little financial repercussions after graduation, students from lower and middle class families face considerable difficulties attending a university because of the high costs. Many lower and middle class students who attend university end up taking out loans and working part-time jobs in college, which can affect their ability to graduate. Large numbers of graduates have been left with crippling amounts of debt, prompting many studies that question how useful an education is, if students will be financially hindered by large debt. If debts are not reliably paid back, then the issue of bad credit puts people in even worse financial situations in the long run. Beyond finances, as Marez notes, privatized education and student debt also hinder intellectual richness and personal fulfillment because “debt confines students to the status quo by colonizing the future, tying present activities to plans for servicing its imperatives and limiting time for reflection, experimentation, protest, or any other unprofitable endeavors”<sup>97</sup>.

The exorbitant (and ever-increasing) tuition costs, coupled with the lack of financial aid, seem to be widening the gap between the social classes in the US, even though universities laud themselves as great equalizers, giving educational opportunities to all in a supposed meritocracy<sup>98</sup>. Karabel and Astin, among others, point out how the university system of admittance and university tuition fees are biased towards the wealthy and privileged class. Currently, schools like DKU, NYUSH, and NYUAD give out much more aid than their US counterpart campuses, making these schools much more affordable for the students who choose them. From all accounts, however, this is only a temporary reprieve: financial aid packages will likely decrease as the reputations of these JV schools increase. These JV schools may struggle to be financially sustainable, balancing the lower tuition costs of Chinese students and the financial incentives available for international students. However, providing a more affordable education to

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<sup>95</sup> Rick Seltzer, “Net Price Keeps Creeping Up,” *Inside Higher Ed*, October 25, 2017, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/10/25/tuition-and-fees-still-rising-faster-aid-college-board-report-shows>.

<sup>96</sup> Marez, “Seeing in the Red.”

<sup>97</sup> Marez. p. 265.

<sup>98</sup> Karabel and Astin, “Social Class, Academic Ability, and College ‘Quality.’”

all students, so as not to discriminate based on financial means, would perhaps be the most ethical course of action. It would be quite a feat if these schools could afford to pioneer a more equitable form of Western higher education.

#### **5.4. The importance of finances and recruitment to a university**

Recruiting international students is challenging; in its attempt to recruit international students, NYUSH is branding itself as an invaluable “international education” experience and giving large amounts of financial aid. This is important to the question of what is gained or lost with these international education ventures - when a school has to focus so much on recruitment, it risks falling into the trap of corporate behavior that privatization encourages. In terms of finances, tuition fees are capped for Chinese students and significant financial aid is given to international students. This is an ideal scenario, as it makes NYUSH more accessible to everyone, with less of a burden of student debt. Realistically, NYUSH probably cannot maintain that level of financial aid for an indefinite period of time. Without significant financial aid offered, the student body at JV schools may become less diverse – we are already seeing that outcome at DKU to some extent.

## Chapter 6. Academic Freedom

Academic freedom is a hotly debated issue online with regard to JV universities. It became clear to me early on in the research, however, that the fear Westerners have that JV campuses censor their classroom material is completely unfounded. From my interviews and observations, professors at both NYUSH and DKU were clearly able to teach and talk about whatever they wanted to in their classes, and students could read, write, and discuss anything they wanted to, including various controversial, sensitive topics in China. Indeed, JV campuses were established with the explicit agreement between the JV universities and the Chinese government that these JVs would have special privileges of academic freedom in China.

The more nuanced engagements with the concept of academic freedom are worth closer examination, however. Concerning academic freedom, I want to understand what might be gained or lost by establishing these US universities in China, and whether this new model of a university can ‘do everything a university should ideally do’ other than simply give its students degrees. With this in mind, the issues of self-censorship, freedom of expression off campus, and visa restrictions are central to my discussion with regard to this new kind of university in China.

### 6.1. Definition of Academic Freedom

The term ‘academic freedom’ is thrown around a lot without an exact definition, and its definition has been called into question in relation to a JV university recently. The controversy over two Shiite professors from NYU being denied visas to teach on the NYUAD campus has resulted in a huge number of articles and arguments over whether or not the campus truly has academic freedom<sup>99</sup>. While some believe that the incident is indicative of NYUAD’s lack of academic freedom, others argue that while the professors should ideally have obtained visa rights to teach, the ability to obtain a visa does not actually fall under the umbrella of academic freedom. The story broadly illustrates the

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<sup>99</sup> Mack DeGeurin, Sayer Devlin, and Jemima McEvoy, “NYU Journalism to Sever Ties with NYU Abu Dhabi,” *Washington Square News* (blog), November 3, 2017, <https://www.nyunews.com/2017/11/03/nyu-journalism-to-sever-ties-with-nyu-abu-dhabi/>.

need for a standard definition of academic freedom. The CAUT (Canadian Association of University Teachers) defines academic freedom this way:

“Academic freedom includes the right, without restriction by prescribed doctrine, to freedom to teach and discuss; freedom to carry out research and disseminate and publish the results thereof; freedom to produce and perform creative works; freedom to engage in service to the institution and the community; freedom to express one’s opinion about the institution, its administration, and the system in which one works; freedom to acquire, preserve, and provide access to documentary material in all formats; and freedom to participate in professional and representative academic bodies. Academic freedom always entails freedom from institutional censorship”<sup>100</sup>.

This is a reasonable and accepted definition, so I will ground my discussion of JV campuses on this definition.

The ability of professors to come and teach on campuses in authoritarian states does not come up in standard definitions of academic freedom. The issue of visas is somewhat more complex. It is important to talk about the issues of discrimination for visa approvals, and what that means for schools in various countries and how the schools should handle such issues; however, I do not think that cases of visa refusals automatically mean that schools in authoritarian countries do not have academic freedom.

## **6.2. Academic Freedom Criteria at NYUSH and DKU**

### **6.2.1. Self-Censorship**

As I said, as an institution, NYUSH and DKU both have the rights and freedom to discuss anything on campus. However, self-censorship complicates this notion. In my interviews with students, none of them ever said that they felt pressured to censor their ideas. The professors expressed that they could talk about anything – but some professors did give some caveats. When I asked a newer professor at DKU about academic freedom, for instance, he replied, yes, the institution had freedom, but then, seemed to be slightly confused over what was a good idea or not a good idea to talk

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<sup>100</sup> “Academic Freedom: Policy Statement on Academic Freedom,” CAUT, November 2011, <https://www.caut.ca/about-us/caut-policy/lists/caut-policy-statements/policy-statement-on-academic-freedom>.

about. Specifically, he had some reservations about a student's research project, which was going to be critical of the DKU campus. The student wanted to interview some of the Chinese workers involved in the construction of the campus, and those potential interviewees had demanded that the student get their professor's approval to conduct the interview. The professor said that he had permitted the student to go ahead with the interview, but that he felt somewhat uneasy about the result of the project and unsure about how best to handle the situation. He also stated that he knew he *could* talk about whatever he wanted to in class, however:

“One thing I notice is that... sometimes I'll say something like ‘oh gosh the air is bad today,’ or something like that – and then a student will say ‘the air is also polluted in the US,’ or something equivalent, so I'm periodically reminded that I am a foreigner, for lack of a better term, [and] this is not my turf. The kind of criticalness of institutions [...] that I think is very commonplace in the US or at least in universities, is a little bit different here, and I don't know if that's because of [this place] or because of my particular set of students, but that is a consideration”<sup>101</sup>.

This professor teaches English academic writing, and did not have a particular need to include sensitive topics in his curriculum, but he felt that he did not want to upset his students with remarks about China.

Hearing two such stories from one professor was not the norm; I only heard such caveats from two other professors I interviewed, and in more moderate language. Most professors said that they spoke in class just as if they were in any other school. Some were cavalier, but others seemed to sense that they were under slightly sensitive circumstances and should be somewhat careful. In the case of the latter group, the professors were self-aware enough that they might end up self-censoring themselves once in a while, even though no one had told them they needed to do this<sup>102</sup><sup>103</sup>. It seems different people have different perceptions of the censorship of speech within the JV schools; ideally, every incoming professor (and student) should have some type of specific induction when they arrive, clearly laying out the freedom that they have, so their perception of censorship will not be informed by their own vague paranoia. Many people

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<sup>101</sup> (Professor #30 Academic Writing, USA, Male, DKU), Interview by Erica Weston, Personal Interview, Kunshan, November 22, 2017.

<sup>102</sup> #30.

<sup>103</sup> (Professor #26 Global Learning Semester, USA, Female, DKU), Interview by Erica Weston, Personal Interview, Kunshan, November 16, 2017.

who do not have a background in China have general ideas about its government and censorship without clear facts, so it makes sense that some professors might feel uneasy. If these JV universities want to be sure their campuses are places of free and unimpeded speech and learning, then they should be purposeful in giving their faculty peace of mind and minimizing self-censorship.

### **6.2.2. Publishing**

I asked many professors at NYUSH and DKU about the kind of research they published, and whether they published topics that were sensitive in China, and if so, where they published. For the most part, professors I talked to were not researching anything sensitive, but a few were. These professors said that they published in the same international journals they usually would and had not had any issues with the Chinese government publishing these sensitive topics. One professor also pointed out that she would be having the same concerns over getting banned from China if she were not working at NYUSH and just coming to China for her research. As a China field researcher, she could potentially be banned from China at any time, and her life's work would be put on hold – working at NYUSH does not change anything<sup>104</sup>. It appears that so far, the Chinese government has allowed the professors at these JV schools to conduct research and publish without interruption; I have not found any cases of NYUSH or DKU professors being terminated from their positions over publishing issues.

Other than professors' research, there is also the question of student research about sensitive topics. One senior student I talked to at NYUSH was doing his capstone project on corruption in lower level Chinese offices, which had been his focus for quite some time. To do this work, he had to gain access to the somewhat freely available records on officials, but the systematic collection of such material could certainly be seen as suspicious by the government. In any case, beyond the gathering of sensitive material, the completion of his undergraduate capstone project is likely not an issue as the project is within the realm of schoolwork and will not be published. However, if he wants to publish his work later on, it will be an issue. As he explained: "I think for that reason me and the professor I'm working with, we're trying to get that work published in

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<sup>104</sup> Lena #4 Scheen, Interview by Erica Weston, Personal Interview, Shanghai, September 21, 2017.

a journal in the US, or in the UK, so I mean we definitely had to consider that in terms of doing the research. I can't tell, like go into too much detail, when I tell Chinese friends outside of school or people at the place where I go and teach [about my research on corruption]"<sup>105</sup>.

### **6.2.3. Interaction between the school and the public**

The issue of what students could tell people they met in China outside of NYUSH came up a few times. For instance, one student told me about a meeting the students organized concerning Hong Kong's independence when the 2014 umbrella protests were going on. While students were able to hold such an assembly inside their campus, they could not tell people about it outside of campus, and the few non-NYUSH students who did end up hearing about the event were apparently not allowed to attend it<sup>106</sup>. Both these instances of 'secrecy' make sense in light of China's censorship laws surrounding protest and sensitive topics, but also do bring up the question of how much the public can interact with the university, and how much the students can enact their lives and values outside school grounds.

The value of a university education generally does not end at the edge of campus: many students weave their educational background and social and political beliefs on and off campus through activism, for example. Ideally, too, universities are not supposed to benefit their paying students alone, but also the community. Political activities are often a large and important part of life on college campuses in the West and in the US specifically. The freedom of speech in democracies should not be idealized, however. As Chatterjee and Maria and many others have pointed out: political actions and protests have been shut down forcefully in the US, effectively shutting down the voices and freedom of discourse for students who have taken action against their own schools<sup>107</sup>. For the JV campuses in China, protesting is not allowed, although many protests still occur throughout China, for instance the 2009 Uyghur protests (concerning, among other things, ethnic discrimination) and the 2011 pro-democracy protests among

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<sup>105</sup> #15, Interview by Erica Weston.

<sup>106</sup> (Student #14 USA, Male, NYUSH), Interview by Erica Weston, Personal Interview, Shanghai, October 10, 2017.

<sup>107</sup> Chatterjee and Maira, *The Imperial University: Academic Repression and Scholarly Dissent*.

many others. Some protesting and rallying does in fact result in some positive outcomes for the causes being fought for, but the potential personal consequences for such actions is high<sup>108</sup>. Political repression in China is more obvious and extreme than in the US, so students at these JV campuses are therefore forced to be more creative about how they express their political and social beliefs.

#### **6.2.4. Administration sensitivity to student affairs**

When asked whether or not there was any censorship *at* the schools and about their personal feelings regarding their freedom, the students generally felt they could do whatever they wanted on campus. However, I did hear back from a few students who recalled various interactions with the administration, in which the administration expressed concern over the students going too far. One NYUSH student said the school ‘was very afraid of upsetting the government’ and talked about a class project, where students were working on engineering and flying drones, as an example. After checking the regulation for locations where the drone could be flown, a student group flew the drone in a downtown area, where it unfortunately crash landed. They reported the crash to the police, who then informed them that they were not allowed to fly drones at that particular place and height. The schools and the authorities clashed over the punishment for the students; ultimately, the students were told they would have to receive failing grades for this class. The student telling me this believed it was ridiculous to penalize the students when they were simply trying to complete a school assignment and that there was no way they could have found out about those exact restrictions<sup>109</sup>.

I heard several other stories from frustrated students at NYUSH over issues they felt the administration was overly cautious about. All in all, these students felt the school was very worried about the government’s response to potentially questionable activities and did not want to step on any toes. The issue here is not exactly academic freedom and more so relates to the students’ freedom of expression. A main source of confusion seems to come from the blurred line between being “on and off campus” in the life of a student. On campus, students have held protests and discussion forums about issues

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<sup>108</sup> Yongshun Cai, *Collective Resistance in China: Why Popular Protests Succeed or Fail* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2010), 3.

<sup>109</sup> (Student #7 Jamaica, Male, NYUSH), Interview by Erica Weston, Personal Interview, Shanghai, September 23, 2017.

that are censored in China and have done so with no fear of repercussions. However, students' lives and learning are always a combination of being on and off campus, and for these JVs, the special rights of academic freedom granted by the government are specifically for *instances when its students are on campus*. When student activities start to happen slightly off campus, there is a kind of grey area in terms of what students are then allowed to do. Overall, this limits the choices students can make and actions they can take during their university years but, again, is not exactly an issue of academic freedom.

### **6.2.5. Freedom of Expression**

The issues of freedom or restriction off campus are distinct from issues of academic freedom, according to the definition of academic freedom. I am interested in examining the freedom of expression because I want to know, more broadly, if the environment of China in any way infringes on the experience of going to a liberal arts university. The freedom of expression that students have while off campus is an important aspect of their lives while at university. Everyone living in China knows that engaging in protesting and public meetings about sensitive topics can have negative repercussions; the question for the JVs is whether or not these restrictions are hindering the growth of their students. When I asked students how they felt about the fact protesting and other types of expression were not allowed in China, and how that might muffle their voices, I got seemingly apathetic responses. On the JV campuses, there is a lot of debate over various school-related issues, and sensitive political topics in China are in fact discussed within forums and groups on these campuses. In spite of the prevalence of discussions occurring on campus, no one really seemed to mind the fact that they could not address societal issues outside the campus walls.

Chinese students have lived within this system their whole lives, and although the students I interviewed certainly did not agree with the restrictions, they knew these restrictions to be a fact of life. Even the international students, most of whom were used to democratic environments, did not seem bothered by the way of life in China. The international students I spoke with said that they generally tried to stay focused on their school work and lives, and did not see a need to do things that might be acceptable in the US like holding rallies in public. The responses of some students sounded apathetic, but could also be interpreted as being pragmatic – China is China, and there are other

ways of doing things that are within the law. In fact, a recurring observation from both professors and students is that China is strangely open and free in many ways one does not realize until one is here. As one student commented, “It is restricted here, but I as a foreign student in China don’t feel restricted”<sup>110</sup>. Although students in China are not allowed to engage with political or social issues in ways that students in the US can, there are many distinctly “China” ways to speak one’s mind and learn and participate while off campus.

During my interviews, a student and a professor both pointed out that there was more risk for Chinese students to do anything sensitive off campus than there was for international students. This risk for Chinese students could potentially hinder Chinese students from pushing the boundaries politically and socially<sup>111</sup>. I heard a few stories of international students getting into trouble with the authorities off campus, but NYUSH was always able to negotiate with the authorities and take care of things. For Chinese citizens, however, such instances would be treated much more seriously. As several participants noted, while international students had a sense of ‘I can do anything in China, it’ll work out’, Chinese students were aware of their more precarious position. One professor said “for myself, there is zero worry, but I am always conscious for my students – for my Chinese students, I’m not worried about my international students, they’ll be fine. But my Chinese students, that’s a worry”<sup>112</sup>.

Interestingly, the same professor observed that while freedom of expression was limited in China, students could potentially learn more and think more deeply about politics and society at NYUSH, because the environment of open repression could force them to question their beliefs and values. In places like the US, people can easily take their freedom for granted – though, of course, there are subtle limitations to the perceived freedom in the US. As the professor noted: “Instead of just seeing the limitations for what they are, I actually try to use them as learning moments... [everyone] should reflect for themselves ‘what does it mean that I’m working for an institute that’s funded by an administration that I’m in disagreement with?’ So, the good thing in China is that you are aware of it, the bad thing is that the problems of the government are also

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<sup>110</sup> #11, Interview by Erica Weston.

<sup>111</sup> #11.

<sup>112</sup> #4 Scheen, Interview by Erica Weston.

about freedom of speech, so that is the difference maybe”<sup>113</sup>. That students in the JV schools in China have more opportunities to think about their beliefs is entirely possible – almost every student I talked to seemed to have nuanced political opinions.

### **6.2.6. How Being in China does Affect China**

Professors at these school are very commonly asked about their freedom to publish in China – and are often criticized for not publishing articles that are critical of the country. Many professors from the US feel that professors with Western values (i.e. they support freedom of speech/right to be critical) should always be putting their honest opinions out into the world. Because professors know that publishing articles critical of China in more popular magazines/newspapers/blogs outside of academia could get them kicked out of the country, JV professors naturally avoid doing just that. This issue goes back to the larger question of what a university’s purpose is. Do universities always have to be bastions of free speech and be able to criticize the government or other institutions as they wish? Is putting a US university in China wrong when arguably, the university cannot meaningfully affect China with its research? Brennan argues that a university should help create a knowledgeable, just, and critical society<sup>114</sup>. Universities help create a ‘just society’ when they level the playing field for citizens, by being accessible to everyone and granting everyone an opportunity to move up in the world. In reality, however, higher education can instead act as a “mechanism and the legitimation for class reproduction”<sup>115</sup>. Universities which help foster a “critical society” are ones which allow thinkers and researchers question the norms of society, pushing the boundaries of what and how people engage with the world and society. This is where critics believe JV campuses are failing: JV universities are not a true version of the liberal arts university because of their inability to freely critique certain aspects of society. However, this idea that an institution cannot be a “critical liberal arts” university if it does not publish critiques is a little simplistic.

As one professor I interviewed said, the emphasis on writing critical articles is missing the point of a university. He said it was simply a fact of life in China that

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<sup>113</sup> #4 Scheen.

<sup>114</sup> Brennan, “Higher Education and Social Change.” 387.

<sup>115</sup> Brennan, 388.

publishing a critical article could get someone working at NYUSH banned from the country, and the article they had written would have very little influence anyway – it is not a sword worth falling on. Much more political change could be achieved down the road by doing what the JV schools have been doing all along: educating Chinese students in their own country with the freedom to discuss difficult topics critically. As he pointed out, even if one wanted big change in China, writing a critical article “would be the dumbest thing you could do” and “even if [political change in China] were my goal, the thing to do would be to do what I’m doing - educate young Chinese people to think carefully and critically about the world that they’re in so they can recognize what things need to be changed if they do need to be changed”<sup>116</sup>. A university should not only benefit its students, but also society – to this end, the best course of action for China right now is to continue educating students within the country itself.

### 6.2.7. Visas

A recent controversy over JV campuses does not center around either one of my interview sites; nonetheless, the issue is relevant to the broader conversation about JVs in China and the question of ‘academic freedom,’ and NYUSH has faced similar issues in the past. This controversy, as I have alluded to in previously in my paper, concerns NYUAD, and began to gain traction as a topic of conversation from November 2017. After the United Arab Emirates (UAE) government had denied two NYU professors visas to teach on the NYUAD campus, one of the professors published an article that claimed he and his colleague were barred from teaching in the country because they were Shiite Muslims<sup>117</sup>. The journalism department at NYU then publicly issued a formal letter that expressed the intent to pull their department out of the NYUAD campus until the NYU administration had appropriately addressed what was seen as discrimination<sup>118</sup>.

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<sup>116</sup> (Professor of Philosophy #18 Australia, Male, NYUSH), Interview by Erica Weston, Personal Interview, Shanghai, October 19, 2017.

<sup>117</sup> Mohamad Bazzi, “Opinion | N.Y.U. in Abu Dhabi: A Sectarian Bargain,” *The New York Times*, September 26, 2017, sec. Opinion, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/26/opinion/nyu-abu-dhabi.html>.

<sup>118</sup> NYU Sanctuary, “NYU AAUP Letter to Hamilton on Academic Freedom and UAE Visa Denials to Faculty,” NYU Sanctuary, October 3, 2017, [http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:http://www.nyusanctuary.org/2017/10/03/nyu-aaup-letter-to-hamilton-on-academic-freedom-and-uae-visa-denials-to-faculty/&gws\\_rd=cr&dcr=0&ei=5XyxWqb2Ns6KjwPbro\\_ADw](http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:http://www.nyusanctuary.org/2017/10/03/nyu-aaup-letter-to-hamilton-on-academic-freedom-and-uae-visa-denials-to-faculty/&gws_rd=cr&dcr=0&ei=5XyxWqb2Ns6KjwPbro_ADw).

Previously, NYUSH had also dealt with at least one case of visa denial, but that did not spiral into a controversy of this size. In spring 2015, “star professor and celebrated philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah was unable to speak at a course at NYU’s Shanghai campus because he was not granted a visa to enter China” and had to resort to lecturing through a Skype call with spotty reception<sup>119</sup>. The more recent NYUAD incident seems to have gone viral because of the suspected ethnic/religious discrimination and the professor’s subsequent article addressing the incident.

The conversation over the NYUAD issue has only become more and more messy, as the debate sprawls out to encompass concerns about visas, ethnic discrimination, academic freedom, and proper administrative procedures. Major publications have written articles about the issue, and the NYU administration, as well as the NYUSH campus newspaper, have responded to the criticisms regarding the visa denials. The initial article from the professor who was denied a visa – Journalism Professor Mohamad Bazzi – and the letter from NYU’s journalism department highlight several major concerns. One, having a JV campus in a country with a totalitarian regime, where professors can be denied visas for ethnic/religious affiliations, is inherently problematic. Two, the NYU administration has not responded to the visa denials properly and has not spoken out enough about the instance of discrimination. Three, if NYU cannot guarantee that all professors can come to teach on the Abu Dhabi campus, then NYUAD does not have full academic freedom.

The NYU response to these criticisms can be summed up as such: 1) The university has always tried its best to get all the professors and students to their posts in these JV campuses; 2) Governments may sometimes deny visas to people and this is out of the university’s control; 3) In this case, the university has been actively looking for a workaround; 4) The university has not spoken up publicly about the issue because the matter is being dealt with internally; and 5) The journalism department pulling out of NYUAD is the wrong response because that simply will hurt the faculty members at NYUAD and does not help resolve the problem<sup>120</sup>. The NYUSH campus newspaper

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<sup>119</sup> Emily Roche, “NJ Congressman ‘Blasts’ NYU Shanghai Over Human Rights Violations,” NYU Local, February 22, 2016, <https://nyulocal.com/nj-congressman-blasts-nyu-shanghai-over-human-rights-violations-4b527cb6011f>.

<sup>120</sup> NYU Web Communications, “Exchange of Letters on Global Mobility at NYU Abu Dhabi (Journalism),” NYU.edu, November 6, 2017, <http://www.nyu.edu/content/nyu/en/about/leadership->

made some similar counterpoints responding to the criticisms, but also specifically argued that this visa denial was not an issue of academic freedom<sup>121</sup>. The newspaper pointed out that although the visa denials were unfortunate, visa issues do not fall under accepted standards and definitions of academic freedom. The article from NYUSH states, “Nowhere in [the] definition... does academic freedom include the freedom of professors to travel unrestricted across national boundaries with no regard for national visa policies”<sup>122</sup>. This is certainly true. Perhaps, the larger issue here is whether or not it is a good idea to have JV campuses in countries that practice discriminatory visa policies, especially when these policies hinder the school’s ability to bring in a diverse range of professors to teach. The article also states that “academic freedom and NYU policies of diversity and inclusion are separate subjects”<sup>123</sup>. This is technically true – however, aren’t diversity and inclusion foundation values for NYU? I personally do not believe that two visa denials adequately show that NYUAD has no freedom and should shut down, but it is worth considering, more broadly, what it means for JV campuses to be inclusive in authoritarian states.

Visa decisions in general are beyond a university’s control, so unfortunately, visa denials could continue to impede the free flow and movement of professors, researchers, and students to these JV campuses. It remains to be seen whether the incident at NYUAD is a random incident, or a part of a larger discriminatory system. Border regulations can be fickle and confusing, so if visa denials end up being few and far between, and if NYU can largely find workarounds to secure entry for professors to NYUAD, the two visa denials do not conclusively point pattern of discrimination. However, if the UAE government continues to bar Shiite professors from NYUAD, for example, then discrimination is obviously at play. In that case, NYU will have to seriously evaluate how it can in good conscience continue providing education and implicitly endorse the discrimination.

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university-administration/office-of-the-president/communications/exchange-of-letters-on-global-mobility-at-nyu-abu-dhabi-journalism.

<sup>121</sup> Allison Chesky, “Response to Recent NYU Abu Dhabi Controversy | On Century Avenue,” *On Century Avenue* (blog), November 8, 2017, <http://oncenturyavenue.org/2017/11/response-to-recent-nyu-abu-dhabi-controversy/>.

<sup>122</sup> Chesky.

<sup>123</sup> Chesky.

The NYU administration and the NYUSH newspaper believe this issue of visas is not serious in the long run, partly because of the many ways NYU can obtain visa approvals. The NYUSH article states that the administration often uses workaround solutions to get 'sensitive' professors into the country to teach, such as applying for different types of visas<sup>124</sup>. The administration can always reapply for initially denied visas and even use their influence on the government to get the next application through. If all else fails, the school may turn to technological solutions, for example, letting professors teach classes through Skype. If NYU largely succeeds in obtaining visas for its professors to teach at NYUAD whether by pressuring its UAE government partners or by finding creative visa solutions, NYU will prove that NYUAD is not vulnerable to the country's government. Too many visa denials and too little pushback, however, will start to erode the global network's credibility.

### **6.3. Soft vs hard view of academic freedom**

The issues of academic freedom for these campuses can be viewed in a very rigid or 'hard' way by being grounded strictly on the definition of academic freedom, or in a more flexible or 'soft' way by considering how the environment of a campus with special privileges in a country with an authoritarian government affects the lives of the participants. In terms of the hard view, the JV schools completely adhere to the standards and values of the accepted definitions of academic freedom, and they aim to foster an environment where critical learning is encouraged. In terms of the soft view, the JV schools experience various challenges: professor self-censorship, mild administration censorship of student activities, questions about publishing, and visa denials. To ensure that students have an atmosphere that encourages freedom of expression, these JV universities have to actively create policies and norms that make freedom and diversity of expression natural, even in these odd environments. If they passively assume that their special privileges with the government for academic freedom is all they need, issues such as self-censorship and visa denials could build up and possibly slowly create an environment that feels overly restrictive to participants.

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<sup>124</sup> Chesky.

## 6.4. China's impact on academic freedom and liberal arts

What then, is gained or lost by being in China? As JV liberal arts universities that value critical engagement with all social, political, scientific issues, is anything important lost by being in an environment that restricts certain freedoms, even with the special privileges on campus? In certain ways, it is harder for students and professors to act out their political beliefs – those must be constrained to the campus. There are also restrictions on how much the public can interact with the school, so the university cannot be as much of a 'public forum' for debate as may be ideal. However, the restrictions themselves force students and staff to think critically about their positionality and beliefs and to find creative ways to act out those beliefs. Although the students cannot always speak out freely off-campus, and the public cannot freely access the JV campuses, as one professor put it: "Everything Chinese students hear here and learn about and discuss, they discuss that back at home. I believe in change from within... Chinese students, teachers and faculty here are part of what I hope and believe to be part of change for society"<sup>125</sup>.

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<sup>125</sup> (Professor #23 Language and Culture Center, USA, DKU, Female), Interview by Erica Weston, Personal Interview, Kunshan, November 10, 2017.

## Chapter 7. Elitism of Higher Education and Purpose of a University

### 7.1. How should the university affect society?

What is the purpose of a university, and what is gained or lost in the unique structure and environment of JV universities when we consider the ideal purpose of a university? In thinking about the university's purpose – are universities being established and run in ways that inherently privilege a certain class of elites and reinforce a social and economic barrier between the highly educated and the rest of the public? Are universities benefiting their whole community and nation? Bringing everything together: are JV universities a step backward or forward for making higher education more accessible, equitable, and diverse?

The most basic task of a university is to matriculate and graduate students. When we look at for-profit colleges, we see how depressingly utilitarian their approach is. A for-profit university is first and foremost a money-making business, enrolling the students who can pay for it and equipping them with degrees and an ability to get jobs, but providing little in the way of an actual education<sup>126</sup>. We tend to understand prestigious (non-profit) institutions like Harvard and Yale as being the opposite – institutions that promote “learning for learning's sake” and the idea anyone can gain admittance if they work hard enough (i.e. scholarships for brilliant students). In reality, however, these institutions may not be all that different from for-profit colleges. Prestigious schools use rigorous (but biased) testing to choose students<sup>127</sup>; charge high tuition fees, which saddle some students with debt and loans<sup>128</sup>; and issue degrees that are often seen as necessary to get ‘good’ careers purely because of their reputational value. As Haigh puts it, ‘Credentialism’ is the idea that a diploma's value is determined by its ‘brand’ and “a nicely ‘branded’ diploma may not correlate with future performance, but it is useful as a screening device for the intergenerational preservation of social

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<sup>126</sup> Mamie Lynch, Jennifer Engle, and Jose L. Cruz, “Subprime Opportunity: The Unfulfilled Promise of For-Profit Colleges and Universities” (The Education Trust, November 2010).

<sup>127</sup> Karabel and Astin, “Social Class, Academic Ability, and College ‘Quality.’”

<sup>128</sup> Marez, “Seeing in the Red.”

elites”<sup>129</sup>. In short, classism is reinforced in a variety of institutions – not just in for-profit colleges, but also in top-ranked, prestigious institutions.

So how can a university move away from these traditional structures of classism and elitism? We need to rethink and reframe higher education for it to intentionally benefit more than one class of people. How can JV universities be part of that conversation of changing higher education? Should a university affect the general public simply by producing graduates that will help their country economically? By providing affordable education to anyone and producing informed and critical graduates? By generating research that adds to the country’s knowledge base? By hosting discussions on social issues to help the public critique power structures?<sup>130</sup> I would argue that ideally, a university should do all these things, but in places like China where activities like public forums and online criticism are restricted, a university may still be able to help create a “just and critical society”, just in different ways. The Chinese students at these JV universities are part of China’s future, and their experiences at these JVs will impact them and the people they know and what they choose to do in the future.

## **7.2. What is gained and lost for JV universities in China**

The aforementioned questions matter especially to JV universities in authoritarian countries such as China because the students and professors at these universities are discouraged from participating in many public activities that address social/political issues within China. For instance, students and staff cannot hold protests off campus and cannot publish (outside of international academia) about sensitive issues in China. Also, non-students cannot sit in on classes at these schools without special permission. However, despite these limitations, these schools can serve as a good model of an education that benefits society through their efforts to foster an environment for their students and professors to grow and be critical and by making this kind of education more accessible to students in China and the surrounding area.

Some scholars claim that the mission of a university includes pushing for political and social changes in the broader community. Others say the core purpose of a

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<sup>129</sup> Haigh, “Internationalisation, Planetary Citizenship and Higher Education Inc.,” 429.

<sup>130</sup> Tuchman, “The Unintended Decentering of Teaching and Learning.”

university is to equip students with critical thinking skills and prepare them for their careers, which would bring about the greatest change to a country, and the world more broadly<sup>131</sup>. Ideally, as Brennan points out, universities can do all that and more through their research production and development of critical students. However, it is difficult for universities to focus solely on the greater good of society, because almost all universities are under financial stresses. For NYUSH and DKU, they are under pressure to be self-sustaining and not need to draw funds from their home campuses. Universities must also deal with governments' expectations that universities will "serve the knowledge system and the public good" and, implicitly, the government itself<sup>132</sup>. The government's definition of "public good" can be limited, however; for example, the US government has pulled funding from various arts initiatives and environmental causes. Universities do not operate in a vacuum; they operate in conjunction with financial and political realities that shape their goals and focus.

Despite such limitations, I cannot dismiss the value of these JV universities, especially in the way they have been innovating teaching to cater to a diverse range of students. It was clear from my interviews that many professors were rethinking how to teach in ways that would benefit students from all over the world, from different backgrounds and with different competencies in English. For instance, one professor at NYUSH said that we need to throw out the myth of the 'passive Asian student'<sup>133</sup> and he made sure in his classes that he gave students multiple kinds of ways to engage critically with the material and with him. Raising your hand in class is not the only way to be engaged, and he looked for ways that students could take the time they needed to process the information in class and then demonstrate their participation and analysis in different ways that worked for them<sup>134</sup>.

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<sup>131</sup> Brennan, "Higher Education and Social Change."

<sup>132</sup> Brennan, p. 384.

<sup>133</sup> Doherty and Singh, "How the West Is Done: Simulating Western Pedagogy in a Curriculum for Asian International Students."

<sup>134</sup> (Student #34 China, Female, DKU), Interview by Erica Weston, Personal Interview, Kunshan, November 24, 2017.

### 7.2.1. Admissions and tuition: Accessibility

Because the admissions process determines whether a university is benefitting the public as a whole or just the elite few, it is important to consider the admission process and tuition fees of the JV universities. The US has the highest average tuition at both public and private universities out of the 35 OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries, while higher education is significantly more affordable in the other OECD countries. For example, the average cost of a year at a private university in the US is \$21,189, while the second and third most expensive slots go to Australia and Japan at \$8,827 and \$8,428, respectively<sup>135</sup>. Scholarships given by schools or other institutions can level the playing field, but only to a certain extent. Additionally, the practice of funding individual students through scholarships, while HEIs as a whole remain unfunded or underfunded, creates a system where universities must compete for students in a consumerist fashion, which can decrease the quality of education and teaching, according to Tuchman<sup>136</sup>.

Although NYUSH and DKU charge the same tuition fees as their US counterparts to international students, the JV schools have awarded many large scholarships to international students. Tuition fees for Chinese students are capped at a lower price point, making these schools more affordable for Chinese students directly. The large financial aid packages for international students will, however, likely only continue for a short period of time to increase recruitment in the newly-established schools. Scholarships will probably decrease dramatically when the schools are more established. As one professor pointed out, if the JV universities were not attracting a huge number of international applicants to begin with, but reduced their scholarships anyway, they may end up with a larger number of wealthy students who could afford the tuition costs, thus decreasing the economic/social diversity of the student body<sup>137</sup>. Only time will tell if these new JV schools will attract enough interested international students,

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<sup>135</sup> Abby Jackson and Mike Nudelman, "It Costs More to Go to College in America than Anywhere Else in the World," *Business Insider*, September 15, 2017, <http://www.businessinsider.com/how-much-college-costs-around-the-world-2017-9>.

<sup>136</sup> Tuchman, "The Unintended Decentering of Teaching and Learning."

<sup>137</sup> #13 Gow, Interview by Erica Weston.

and whether or not the JVs can afford to (or will decide to) maintain a decent level of financial aid to level the playing field for students from all backgrounds.

In terms of the admissions process, these JVs are fairly similar to their US counterparts, with a few exceptions. In the US, many studies have shown how the standardized tests for college applications and secondary education are skewed to privilege white, middle to upper class students and disadvantage students of color and lower income students<sup>138</sup>. The same biases in college admittance in the US exist for international students applying to these JV schools as they go through the same tests and selection process. However, NYUSH and DKU are more equitable in their admissions process to Chinese students, because they allow students to take the test that is the standard in their country – the Gaokao<sup>139</sup>. In other words, Chinese students do not have to prepare for the SATs ('Scholastic Assessment Test' used in the US) in addition to the Gaokao, unlike many Chinese students who plan on studying abroad in the US. A unique part of the admissions process for Chinese students applying to DKU and NYUSH is the long, intensive interview to test the prospective students' English ability and to apparently screen their 'personality' for 'fit' in the schools<sup>140</sup>. This form of interviewing could be seen as overly rigorous, or it could be seen as a way to judge the students more holistically, rather than just relying on test scores.

### **7.2.2. Global education and study abroad elitism**

The JV schools, particularly NYUSH, brand themselves as international, global, and cosmopolitan. Part of this branding is based on the idea that as the world is globalizing, students need to learn to adapt to globalism to keep up internationally. However, does this concept of a global education and becoming a 'global citizen' promote a new kind of elite status? Arguably, this concept may be further privileging a certain class of people who have the money and resources to get an elite, global education and travel, and gain even more economic opportunities from this type 'globetrotter' social status. Without financial aid, the tuition of NYUSH for an international

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<sup>138</sup> Karabel and Astin, "Social Class, Academic Ability, and College 'Quality.'"

<sup>139</sup> Abdulghani Muthanna and Guoyuan Sang, "Undergraduate Chinese Students' Perspectives on Gaokao Examination: Strengths, Weaknesses, and Implications," *International Journal of Research Studies in Education* 4, no. 5 (June 6, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.5861/ijrse.2015.1224>.

<sup>140</sup> #13 Gow, Interview by Erica Weston.

student is approximately 46,000 per year, the same as NYU, and the tuition for Chinese students is \$15,800 per year (converted from Chinese Yuan)<sup>141</sup>. At DKU, the Global Learning Semester is \$15,000 for international students per semester and \$3,800 for Chinese students (converted from Chinese Yuan)<sup>142</sup>. NYU and Duke are prestigious private universities with high price tags, and for international students, these JVs have approximately the same costs as their home campuses. As financial aid levels go down in the coming years, an education at these schools will be less accessible and will be more of an 'elite' privilege.

If global education, through studying abroad or attending JV schools, becomes the norm for 'what you need in our world today', will a 'good' education be even more unattainable? Is the global education just one more barrier to being 'successful'? As one former professor of NYUSH observed, "Maybe global citizenship is a form of social capital that's peculiar to being part of this transnational, capitalist class... If you look at NYUSH, everybody that goes to that university is already of the mind and has the resources to go after that"<sup>143</sup>. Who has the opportunity to study abroad "is based on a selection system of criteria fabricated by the global elites for the global elites" according to Jorgenson and Shultz<sup>144</sup>. What is concerning is that if 'international education' is now being seen as 'necessary' experience for our global world, then it may be setting up another hoop that the less privileged cannot jump through, reinforcing the barriers to success.

All that being said, for the world, the Western liberal arts education in itself is already put on a pedestal. Students from all over the world leave their home countries/continents to get a "Western" education in the US, UK, and elsewhere. As Doherty and Singh point out, this assumption of Western education as the best education is based on the history of colonialism and Western superiority, which should

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<sup>141</sup> "Tuition, Fees, and Financial Aid," NYU Shanghai, n.d., <https://shanghai.nyu.edu/academics/bulletin/enrollment/tuition-fees-and-financial-aid>.

<sup>142</sup> "Undergraduate Global Learning Semester Tuition Fee," Duke Kunshan, n.d., <https://dukekunshan.edu.cn/en/academics/undergraduate-global-learning-semester/tuition-fee>.

<sup>143</sup> #13 Gow, Interview by Erica Weston.

<sup>144</sup> Jorgenson and Shultz, "Global Citizenship Education (GCE) in Post-Secondary Institutions." 11.

be critically examined<sup>145</sup>. However, bringing that kind of education to other countries might actually break down some of those financial/social barriers to getting an 'elite' education. Increasingly, studying abroad is being promoted internationally, but it is a privileged experience that only some can take advantage of, so a 'global' education provided in one's home country affords some accessibility to students in that country. JV universities such as NYUSH and DKU are certainly more accessible to Chinese students than the home institutions in the US. However, the argument can be made that NYU's "global network" is still catering to the privileged experience of using study abroad as social/economic capital.

An international student at NYUSH pointed out that the study abroad semesters within the NYU global network was a large part of why NYU was able to say it provided a global education. However, he stated, "I don't think it means anything to be able to go to all these countries but still be surrounded by a bubble of NYU kids, I mean, especially for myself, being from a working-class background I can't afford to go to most of these sites"<sup>146</sup>. He went on to explain that should a big group of NYU kids studied abroad and all stayed on a NYU campus, say, in Ghana, and interacted almost exclusively with other NYU students, they would not get any real sense or experience of Ghana, yet might still feel as though they were having a very 'global' experience. Many schools provide surface level experiences of other countries through study abroad, while building their students' social capital - this is not limited to NYU. We must always be examining the power dynamics, intentions, practices, and results of 'globalizing' endeavors such as study abroad because, as Roman says,

"In educational contexts, increasingly globalization has provided the rationale and justification for fundamentally intertwining educational goals with educational experiences that amount to intellectual tourism. The discourse of intellectual tourism... attempt[s] to achieve "cultural immersion" for the sake of promoting diversity and understanding through cultural exposure"<sup>147</sup>.

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<sup>145</sup> Doherty and Singh, "How the West Is Done: Simulating Western Pedagogy in a Curriculum for Asian International Students."

<sup>146</sup> #15, Interview by Erica Weston.

<sup>147</sup> Leslie G. Roman, "Education and the Contested Meanings of 'Global Citizenship,'" *Journal of Educational Change* 4, no. 3 (2003): 269–293.

However, an authentic desire for 'cultural immersion' is not enough to ensure an unproblematic outcome.

Sino-US JV universities like NYUSH and DKU are fascinating new experiments which facilitate a 'global education.' In some ways the rhetoric these schools (particularly NYUSH) use about creating 'global citizens for our global world' may be reinforcing the idea that an elite degree with global experience is needed to be competitive. On the other hand, these universities are also providing a quality education - with room for all students to engage in critical analysis - in new locations, while being more accessible physically and financially to people outside of the West. It will take much more time and research to see what the longer-term impacts of these schools may be in the realm of 'international' education and on our present conception of a liberal arts education.

## Chapter 8. Conclusion

It will take many more years to see whether these fledgling JV schools will be self-sustaining and maintain their academic freedom, and how they will impact international education in China and the US. From my short-term study, however, it is clear NYUSH and DKU have a lot to teach us about liberal arts, international learning, and inclusive education for a diverse body of students.

The initial motivations for schools like NYU and Duke to have a campus in China are likely a mixture of a scholarly impulse to have a presence in an important part of the world, and also strategic planning to advance reputation and branding. Whatever these initial motivations may be, the JV universities are now in operation, and have evolved beyond being merely a 'branch campus' or an 'outpost' of their home universities into distinct establishments. One important question I asked in my research is: how are the schools operating and recruiting students? Recruiting international students and maintaining a balanced ratio of Chinese to international students have been logistically difficult and have had visible impacts on student life. Financially, the schools need to be mostly self-sufficient, without drawing too much resources from their home universities. At the same time, significant scholarships may be needed to maintain the number of international students and allow students of all backgrounds to access this unique opportunity.

The JV schools are often hit with accusations concerning their academic freedom – I do not intend for this thesis to add to the weight of that criticism. From my findings, these JVs operate in a difficult environment, but are constantly evaluating their own efforts and generally work on giving their students the space to be critical. There is always room to improve, and from my interviews, it seems that these schools may need to more clearly and actively express to their students and professors what they are allowed to do on and off the campus, to avoid vague paranoia and self-censoring (although some amount of self-censoring may be inevitable). Visa denials for professors entering China is a potential concern for these JV schools, and may limit the schools' ability to recruit a diverse range of professors. Overall, however, participants at both schools seem to be thinking more critically about their place and positionality in society than the average participant of a Western university, and that may be where institutions

back home in the US and Canada can learn from these JVs. For instance, one student at NYUSH said, “I think that we would also be kind of kidding ourselves to say that in American that we don’t have restrictions on what we can and can’t do, [although] it might not be legally”<sup>148</sup>. Many international students I talked to also had some version of this revelation. Being in China and being confronted with a different culture and political system had caused them to more critically examine their own countries in comparison, and they had found that the distinctions were not as black and white as they had previously thought.

These Sino-US JVs are dealing with the same issues that plague almost all universities in the US such as private education’s corporate behavior, the class system of standardized testing and the college admittance process, and the focus on rankings and research output. In some ways, however, the JV universities may have more space and flexibility to improve on the failings of modern Western education. They are new and in flux and are creatively adapting to their environment, by re-examining how to teach, evaluate student performance, and facilitate inter-cultural discussion. Although the JVs potentially take on a more extreme version of ‘corporate behavior’ in their efforts to recruit enough international students, they are currently more accessible to and affordable for Chinese students than US schools are. NYUSH and DKU also seem focused on student learning and quality of teaching, instead of just research output. One DKU professor in the environmental policy program said they were giving students teaching evaluation forms throughout the whole semester and responding and adapting their classes in response<sup>149</sup>. Western universities should be learning from these JVs’ new, creative ways of teaching across cultures and for students of all backgrounds and different English levels. Although the concepts of ‘international education’ and ‘global citizenship’ are problematic and are often a way to create another tier of privilege, these universities potentially minimize inequality by facilitating genuine cross-cultural exchanges and making education accessible to different types of students.

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<sup>148</sup> #11, Interview by Erica Weston.

<sup>149</sup> (Professor of Environmental economics #38 China, Male, DKU), Interview by Erica Weston, Personal Interview, Kunshan, November 29, 2017.

## 8.1. Student testimonies for the JVs' value

Despite the various concerns over JVs, there is real value to attending these experimental universities. In my interviews, current students noted the many ways their JV schools had benefited them. When asked about classes she liked, a Chinese student at DKU said,

“My favorite one I guess is ‘Writing Across Cultures,’ because it gave me a space to express my emotions and my opinions in a safe boundary... I think the new things that impressed me a lot [in this class] are about gender. You know in Chinese society and internationally, all people talk about gender equality, but actually I think the Chinese opinions about gender equality is not the truth of gender equality after I take my class. Both in [the] writing class and ‘Women in East Asia,’ I find something very different”<sup>150</sup>.

There were many other students in the interviews who expressed a similar sentiment: that the school allows for discussion on difficult topics, as per the liberal arts tradition. In addition to the freedom of critical expression, the Chinese experience is explored and different perspectives from many countries and cultures are valued at NYUSH and DKU – an improvement on the traditional US liberal arts experience. Many professors told me that when they started at these JV schools, they made an intentional effort to re-think their curriculum to incorporate perspectives and materials from China and Asia. De-centering the European/Western perspective was important for almost every professor I talked to, no matter their discipline.

A Chinese student from NYUSH told me candidly that he knew there were many critiques that could be made about the school, but for him:

“It’s been kind of life-changing, and the person you see now is not the person from the past, I just completely changed in every possible way. So, I’ve never regretted coming to this school, and I think coming to this school was my only destiny... This school being in China, and a Chinese university, its identity is a game changer for... a lot of Chinese students including me, so it actually changed a lot of people... I think in terms of social change, this school really did a good job in terms of Chinese students, Chinese students are stepping out of their ‘comfort zone’”<sup>151</sup>.

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<sup>150</sup> #34, Interview by Erica Weston.

<sup>151</sup> (Student #10 China, Male, NYUSH), Interview by Erica Weston, Personal Interview, Shanghai, September 28, 2017.

This is the most definitive statement about Chinese students that I heard during an interview, and it speaks to the unique experience of being in a JV university, which takes from the Western liberal arts model and adapts it to the context of China. At its best, this transformative process may serve as a model for more traditional schools moving forward. From these JVs, Western schools could learn how to create a more welcoming and supportive environment for a diverse range of students. Because these JVs have to re-think the liberal arts education for a new context and specifically consider the needs of students from many different cultural and educational backgrounds, they may be finding new ways for students and professors to learn *from* each other, transforming the educational experience. I saw this in action with the professor who continually requested his students' feedback<sup>152</sup>, with a professor who always asked her students to teach her about the class material from their experience<sup>153</sup>, and from the many students who said that they felt their professors valued their opinions and valued them as a person.

## 8.2. What JV universities in China may be contributing

As one professor at DKU put it when asked about DKU's mission in China,

"It's all about the connection across cultures, it's all about who are you, and who am I, and if that isn't happening on the personal level how is it ever going to happen on the political level? ... I am getting deeply affected by the people I'm meeting, and I think I hear that it's mutual, so I can't think of a better mission. Whatever broad mission, if it isn't happening one on one, person to person, I don't think I really understand its impact. So, I know, as long as we stay at DKU with this attitude, where really every single course should be about conversation, I think it's going to achieve that mission"<sup>154</sup>.

Based on a summation of various scholars and my own perspective, a university should give students the tools to think and act critically and independently; make education accessible to as many as possible; and impact the world positively by being a forum for students, faculty, and the public to act out their ideals in an informed fashion<sup>155</sup>. Another crucial purpose of the university is to foster learning from each other and to bridge gaps in understanding, as the quoted professor highlights. For JV schools

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<sup>152</sup> #38, Interview by Erica Weston.

<sup>153</sup> #23, Interview by Erica Weston.

<sup>154</sup> #23.

<sup>155</sup> Brennan, "Higher Education and Social Change."

in China, accomplishing these purposes may be somewhat harder because of the political restrictions and the unique recruitment and financial circumstances; however, in some ways, JV schools in China have an advantage over traditional US universities. For one, students from China and all over the world have a unique opportunity to receive an immersive education at a lower cost than most universities in the US. Students in JV universities study with a diverse group of students from all over the world and learn from professors who are actively considering new ways of making education work for students from different backgrounds. JV schools are an experiment, and like all experiments, they face various challenges. But by their very nature, they are not set in their 'old ways' and are adaptable and inclusive. While there are restrictions on the JV schools within the Chinese context, these restrictions have made the JVs think more critically about their role in society. After all, it is hard for Sino-US JV schools to be passive about the issues of free expression and student integration when every day they have to actively consider their precarious place in-between Chinese and US stakeholders. Above all, these JVs are actively finding new ways to make education an inclusive "conversation."

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## Personal Interviews

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- #2, (Student, Hungary, Female, NYUSH). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Shanghai, September 15, 2017.
- #3, (Student, USA, Female, NYUSH). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Shanghai, September 16, 2017.
- #4 Scheen, Lena. Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Shanghai, September 21, 2017.
- #5, (Student, China, Female, NYUSH). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Shanghai, September 21, 2017.
- #6 Li, Yifei. Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Shanghai, September 22, 2017.
- #7, (Student, Jamaica, Male, NYUSH). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Shanghai, September 23, 2017.

- #8, (Student, Bosnia, Female, NYUSH). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Shanghai, September 26, 2017.
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- #10, (Student, China, Male, NYUSH). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Shanghai, September 28, 2017.
- #11, (Student, USA, Female, NYUSH). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Shanghai, September 28, 2017.
- #12, (Student, France/USA, Female, NYUSH). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Shanghai, September 29, 2017.
- #13 Gow, Michael. Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Shanghai, September 30, 2017.
- #14, (Student, USA, Male, NYUSH). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Shanghai, October 10, 2017.
- #15, (Student, UK, Male, NYUSH). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Shanghai, October 10, 2017.
- #16, (Student, China, Female, NYUSH). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Shanghai, October 12, 2017.
- #17 Kendrick, Anna. Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Shanghai, October 17, 2017.
- #18, (Professor of Philosophy, Australia, Male, NYUSH). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Shanghai, October 19, 2017.
- #19, (Professor, Undergrad programs, USA, DKU, Male). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Kunshan, November 2, 2017.
- #20, (Professor, Global Health, USA, DKU, Male). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Kunshan, November 8, 2017.
- #21, (Professor, Language and Culture Center, USA, DKU, Male). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Kunshan, November 8, 2017.
- #22, (Professor, Global Health, China, DKU, Female). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Kunshan, November 9, 2017.
- #23, (Professor, Language and Culture Center, USA, DKU, Female). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Kunshan, November 10, 2017.

- #24, (Professor, Academic Writing, USA, DKU, Male). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Kunshan, November 9, 2017.
- #25, (Student, China, Female, DKU). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Kunshan, November 14, 2017.
- #26, (Professor, Global Learning Semester, USA, Female, DKU). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Kunshan, November 16, 2017.
- #27, (Professor, Academic Writing, Jamaica/USA, Female, DKU). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Kunshan, November 16, 2017.
- #28, (Professor, Environmental Science, China, Female, DKU). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Kunshan, November 22, 2017.
- #29, (Student, China, Female, DKU). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Kunshan, November 21, 2017.
- #30, (Professor, Academic Writing, USA, Male, DKU). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Kunshan, November 22, 2017.
- #31, (Professor, Global Health, Hong Kong, Male, DKU). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Kunshan, November 23, 2017.
- #32, (Professor of Environmental Health Science, China, Male, DKU). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Kunshan, November 23, 2017.
- #33, (Student, China, Female, DKU). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Kunshan, November 24, 2017.
- #34, (Student, China, Female, DKU). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Kunshan, November 24, 2017.
- #35, (Student, China, Female, DKU). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Kunshan, November 27, 2017.
- #36, (Professor, Global Learning Semester, USA, Female, DKU). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Kunshan, December 1, 2017.
- #37, (Professor of Medical physics, China, Male, DKU). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Kunshan, November 27, 2017.
- #38, (Professor of Environmental economics, China, Male, DKU). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Kunshan, November 29, 2017.
- #39, (Graduate Student, Environmental Policy, China, Female, DKU). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Kunshan, November 30, 2017.

- #40, (Professor, Global Health, China, Female, DKU). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Kunshan, December 5, 2017.
- #41, (Student, China, Female, DKU). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Kunshan, December 1, 2017.
- #42, (Professor, Chinese Language, China, Female, DKU). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Kunshan, November 27, 2017.
- #43, (Student, China, Male, DKU). Interview by Erica Weston. Personal Interview, Kunshan, December 4, 2017.