



How Can I Support International Students?

Discussion Guide

Discuss

Lia Kelinsky-Jones and Mingzhi Li, both of the Cranwell International Center, offer ten tips for supporting international students on campus and in the classroom. After hearing their presentation, which tips were especially useful or surprising? Have you used any of these tips? Are there other tips to add to this list?

Do you have any personal experiences to share?

One of the tips offered is to **be curious** about students' countries of origin as well as current events occurring in their countries. Are you familiar with opportunities on campus to learn more about the cultures and countries represented by our international students? How can your department or unit demonstrate hospitality to its international students?

Another tip is to **encourage students to get engaged** so they can make the most of their experience on campus. Encouraging engagement is also important for student belonging. International students are especially vulnerable to feeling isolated or homesick. How can your department or unit be sensitive to the emotional and social needs of students who are studying in the United States?

Lia advises that we **don't generalize** about international students—their behaviors, habits, communication styles, and so forth. What are examples of generalizing about international students? Are students from certain countries more likely to be stereotyped than others?

Practice

Rephrase the statements below.

- Would you mind hanging on a minute?
- That's three strikes against you.
- If I were you, I would go to the SSC office and get a tutor.
- Jot down your professor's email and ask if they'll accept extra credit.
- Looks like you missed a deadline, you may want to talk to your professor if you have extenuating circumstances.

Think about a process or concept that we frequently explain to students. If you need to explain to international students, what terminology needs to be pre-taught? Can it be represented visually?

You have an international student who is really eager to learn more about the classes they selected. They clearly have a lot of questions, but their pronunciation is difficult for you to understand and you are not sure you clearly comprehend what they are asking. What do you do?

You just finished explaining how to do “x” to an international student. The student has made eye contact and nodded while you have talked, but you’re starting to wonder if they really understood. What do you do?

Go Deeper

According to a 2018 study in *Nutrients* journal, the prevalence of food insecurity among international students was higher than that of both in-state and out-state students; however, this population is often overlooked in food insecurity discussions. How is your department or unit prepared to intervene when international students are facing financial or health risks? What do we know about the actual lives of international students outside of the classroom?

International students sometimes face discrimination when they choose to speak in their native language. There was even a case at another university where it was implied that students socializing in the student lounge could be denied academic or assistantship opportunities because they weren’t making enough effort to perfect their English. What can be done if you witness language discrimination?

The Pew Research Center’s 2019 report on Race in America found that Asians were most likely to say they have been subject to slurs or jokes. Here at Virginia Tech, 50% of the international student population is from China. What responsibility do we have to protect these students from potential harm? More broadly, how do we maintain a welcoming environment for international students when anti-immigrant sentiment and xenophobia (the fear of foreigners) occurs?

Learn More

The Cranwell International Center offers several signature intercultural trainings through the Professional Development Network site on topics such as Understanding the International Student Experience: From Applicant to Alum; Understanding the Chinese Student Experience; Pronouncing Chinese Names; and Interculturalizing the Classroom: From Study Abroad to Co-curricular.

Additionally, Cranwell staff can administer and debrief the Intercultural Development Inventory or the Global Competence Aptitude Assessment with individuals or groups. More information on Intercultural Training and Assessment is available at: www.international.vt.edu/idi/html.

“Race in America 2019.” Juliana Menasce Horowitz, Anna Brown, Kiana Cox. April 19, 2019. *Pew Research Center*.
<https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2019/04/09/race-in-america-2019/>.

“Why Are Hungry College Students Not Seeking Help? Predictors of and Barriers to Using an On-Campus Food Pantry.” Aseel El Zein, Anne E. Mathews, Lisa House, Karla P. Shelnett. *Nutrients*. 2018 Sep; 10(9): 1163. Published online 2018 Aug 25.