

How International Students Navigate Academic Spaces

AAYUSHI HINGLE, ADEBANKE L. ADEBAYO, ASHISH HINGLE

The map to understanding IS experiences involves multiple stops, questions and sometimes it requires further research. The map includes some of the experiences that the authors have experienced and are shared among other students. It is pertinent to note that these experiences themselves can be intersectional. Therefore, this document creates awareness and guides the campus community on how better to support their international student (IS) community and prompt further discussion, research, and action.

Students

Culture Shock

- ▶ Culture shock is an ongoing lived experience for IS.
- ▶ Just because you have never had a slice of pepperoni pizza does not make you any less of a person.

Imposter syndrome

- ▶ IS continuously doubt their presence in various spaces.
- ▶ Contrary to popular perceptions—especially towards second language English speakers who speak English with an accent—language experiences are sources of credibility, not otherwise.

Staff and Faculty

Did you know intl. students can only work 20 hours and only on campus?

- ▶ IS are constantly following regulations set by both the campus and UCSIS. In order to provide effective support to IS, faculty and staff must understand these basic regulations just as any other university policy channeled towards students learning and engagement.
- ▶ It can be stressful and increase anxiety when intl. students often have to inform faculty and staff about these basic regulations. Therefore, understand what your international students need to mitigate undue stress and pressure.

Did you know accepting an opportunity is more than just saying a yes or no?

- ▶ First, there are USCIS regulations that define either the acceptance or rejection of opportunities.
- ▶ Secondly, there are various significant power distance interactions between intl. students and the faculty that can curtail the expression of “self” among intl. students.

Avoid the single story

- ▶ Every intl. student has their unique background, lived experiences, culture, and should be treated as such.
- ▶ Experiences from outside the U.S. should be recognized and considered valid to learning.

Institutions

“Diversity” without representation

- ▶ IS are often spoken for rather than their voices being heard.
- ▶ It is paramount to bring IS into the decision-making conversations.

Existing systems were not built for IS needs

- ▶ IS usually don’t fit neatly into predefined intersections. For example, the use of forms that forcefully boxing them into a single narrative with due representation.
- ▶ Administrators recognizing the use of language in campus community spaces that can be more inclusive of the experiences of IS.

Possible Solutions

- ▶ Build meaningful and thoughtful interactions with the IS community.
- ▶ Be mindful! Do not assume all IS lived experiences are shared.
- ▶ For more details, contact the international office to be better informed on how to support IS.