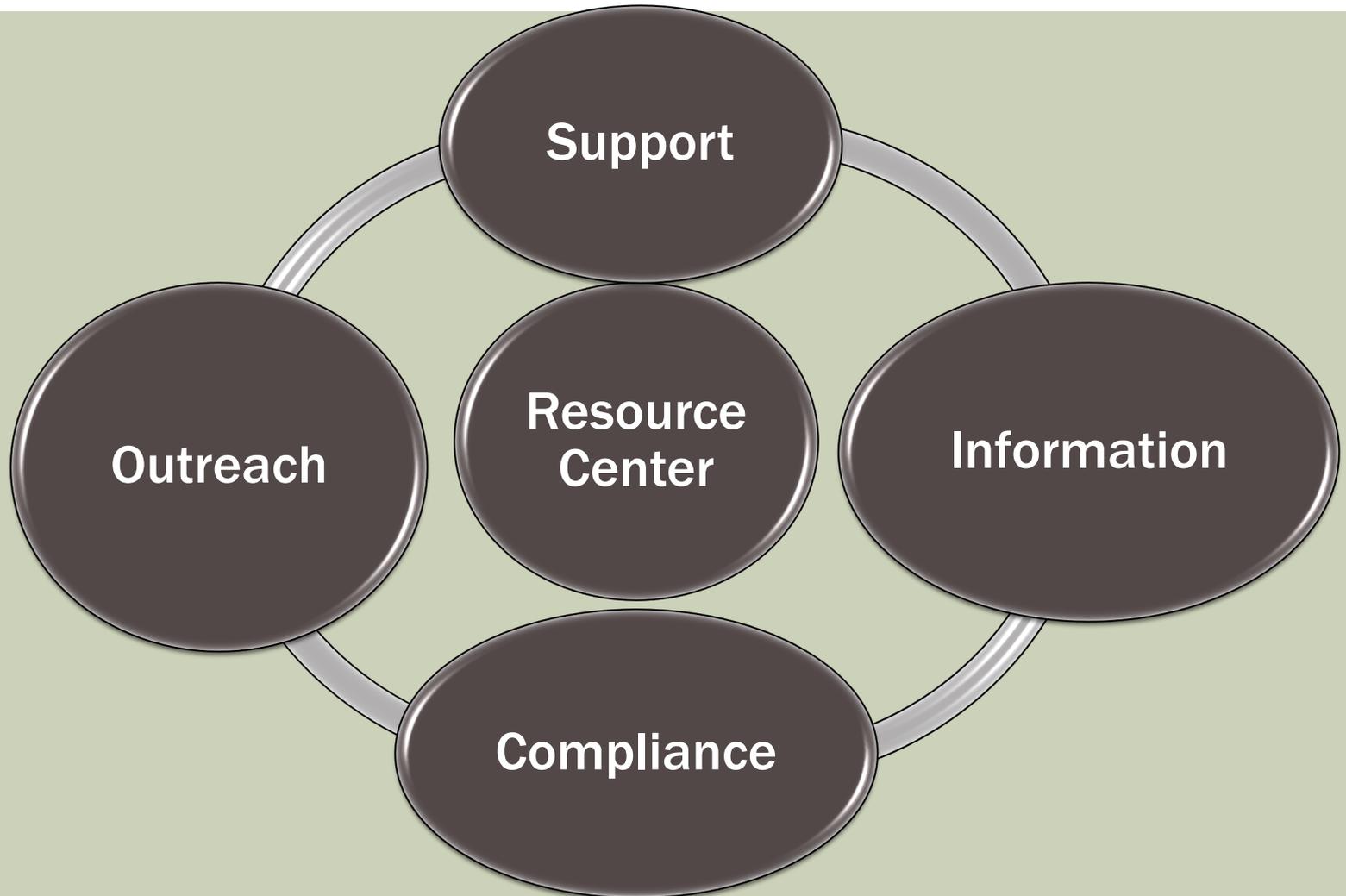


# SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS & SCHOLARS IN DIFFICULT TIMES

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# ISSS: What We Do



# INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS...

- Facilitate global learning and competency
- Contribute to a diverse and global campus environment
- Provide global connections for the institution
- Represent top students, especially in the STEM fields
- Create goodwill and support for the institution, country, and state abroad

# YOUR IDEAS

- What do you think are *common* challenges and stressors that international students encounter at US universities?
- What are you hearing *currently* about challenges and stressors?

# A LITTLE BIT OF A SHOCK

- Write your name. Now, switch to your non-dominant hand. Write your name again.
- Cross your arms. Uncross them. Now, cross them again- with the opposite arm on top.

# COMMON CHALLENGES: NAVIGATION & NORMS

*Navigation: Where to go and how things work*

- Where is the OSH building?
- Where do I get groceries?
- Where do I go if I get sick?
- How do I drop a class?
- What happens if I miss an exam?

*Norms: What, how, and why*

- What is the role of a professor/advisor/staff member?
- What does plagiarism mean here?
- What is group work?
- How are conflicts resolved?
- How do I make friends?
- How do dating/romantic relationships work?

# COMMON STRESSORS

- Language barriers, including different understanding of concepts
- Intense personal/family/government pressure to succeed
- Cultural adjustment/culture shock
- College adjustment: independence, growth, changing ideas, etc.
- Distance from family and friends
- Understanding/following US visa rules
- Financial challenges

# CURRENT STRESSORS

- Perceived anti-immigrant, anti-international student and scholar climate
- Uncertainty about changes to visa policies
  - Travel and re-entry
  - Securing an initial visa
  - Work visas and pathways to citizenship
- Delays in immigration processes
- Global reputation of the U.S., rampant rumors
- Attacks on immigrants and international students/scholars

# CURRENT STRESSORS: OUTCOMES

- Increased anxiety
- Depression
- Split/diluted focus; academic struggles
- Anger
- Battle fatigue
- Early departure
- Family pressure to return home

**WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

# KEY PERSONAL BEHAVIORS

- Self-awareness (including privilege)
- Cultural Awareness
- Empathy
- Listening & Communication Skills
- Understand Limitations & Refer Appropriately

# CULTURAL AWARENESS

- Use basic cultural knowledge as a starting point; allow for personal differences
- Help students understand & navigate US cultural norms
- Be mindful of support systems- may be in home country, in US, non-existent or a combination

# VALUE CONTINUUMS

- Individual/group (China)
- Self agency/fate (Saudi Arabia)
- Family/individual (China)
- Hierarchy/equality (S. Korea)
- Linear/circular time (S. America)
- High context/low context communication (Japan)

# LISTENING/COMMUNICATION SKILLS

- Awareness of indirect communication & saving face
- Body language you normally use as a guide may be different due to cultural differences
- Patience & persistence
- Encouragement & reassurance
- Slow down, speak clearly
- Don't use jargon, slang, or acronyms
- Explain things in different ways
- Clearly and thoroughly explain expectations and processes: don't assume familiarity
- Alternatives: writing, Google translate, interpreters

# WHAT TO WATCH FOR: COMMUNICATION

- Watch for
  - Embarrassment or discomfort
  - Denial
  - Indirect communication
  - Negotiation
  - Inappropriate or unrealistic requests/expectations
  - Verbal acknowledgement followed by failure to act
- What it **could** indicate
  - Cultural norms regarding disclosure
  - Success required: not allowed to have problems or be seen as a ‘failure’
  - Cultural necessity of negotiation
  - Different understanding of roles
  - Misunderstanding of instructions or cultural context of instructions, “inappropriate” or embarrassing actions required

# WHAT TO WATCH FOR: LANGUAGE

- Watch for:
  - Embarrassment
  - Nodding with limited verbal communication
  - Acknowledgement followed by failure to act
  - Inability to articulate instructions back
  - Refusal to communicate in a certain way (i.e. calls instead of responding to emails)
- **Could** indicate:
  - Overall lack of understanding (especially with complex processes)
  - Embarrassment about not understanding
  - Fear of making mistakes
  - Higher proficiency with one communication skill over another
- Keep in mind...
  - Even proficient students may struggle at first; stress exacerbates
  - Reading, writing, speaking & listening skills frequently differ in the same student
  - Language barriers may be more subtle than you expect

# WHAT TO WATCH FOR: MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

- Watch for:
  - Refusal or reluctance to acknowledge
  - Embarrassment
  - Significant time required to get to “real” issue
  - Discussing as “medical” or “academic” issues
  - Reluctance to seek help
- **Could** indicate:
  - Cultural norm to not discuss outside of close friends/family- or at all
  - Families may not acknowledge or may hope it will get “better” when child is abroad
  - Mental hx stigmatized in home culture
  - Unfamiliarity with confidentiality rules (and efficacy of rules)
- Keep in mind:
  - Stress of studying abroad may exacerbate existing issues

# UNDERSTAND LIMITATIONS

- Know when to ask for help/ refer out: mental health issues, immigration questions, areas you are not familiar with
- You can't fix everything: sometimes it's not the right time for a student to be studying abroad
- Common Mistakes:
  - Making assumptions based on US cultural norms (i.e. appropriate next steps, knowledge base student has, etc.)
  - Assuming the surface presentation reflects interior state
  - Not allowing for personal differences within cultural norms
  - Not asking enough questions or clarifying when something doesn't make sense
  - Ineffective hand off and follow through

# GENERAL BEST PRACTICES

- Acknowledge the tremendous accomplishment and competence the student has demonstrated just by being an international student
- Frame as “resources you deserve, so you can be successful”
- Be careful of “helping” (demeaning/ diminishing)
- Write down or email critical info, a summary and follow up instructions especially with stressful situations or complex tasks
- Consult: Check your understanding of the situation with an experienced colleague

# GENERAL BEST PRACTICES

- Provide more hands-on support as needed (you may need to take more direct action than you would with a domestic student)
- Referring out:
  - Connect to a person, not an office
  - Offer to call/email ahead & explain the situation
  - Do as much as you can while the student is there (avoid 'ping pong effect')
  - Write down name, office, & location of person you're referring the student to
  - Explain any access processes
  - Accompany, if appropriate/desired

# RESPONDING TO CURRENT CONDITIONS

- Listen: students may need to “vent” in a safe space
- Facts: know the facts, direct to appropriate resources
- Reinforce available U resources and messages of support
- Empathy: *Care and connect*; put yourself in the student’s shoes
- Be sensitive to the incredible difficulty of having to focus on academics while also dealing with the current climate/policies
- Recognize impact goes beyond students from the travel ban countries (Iran, Sudan, Yemen, Syria

# INTERNATIONAL STUDENT & SCHOLAR SERVICES AS A RESOURCE

- Contact International Student & Scholar Services if you have questions, ideas or need information
- Refer international students to ISSS for help & support

<http://internationalcenter.utah.edu/>

801-581-8876