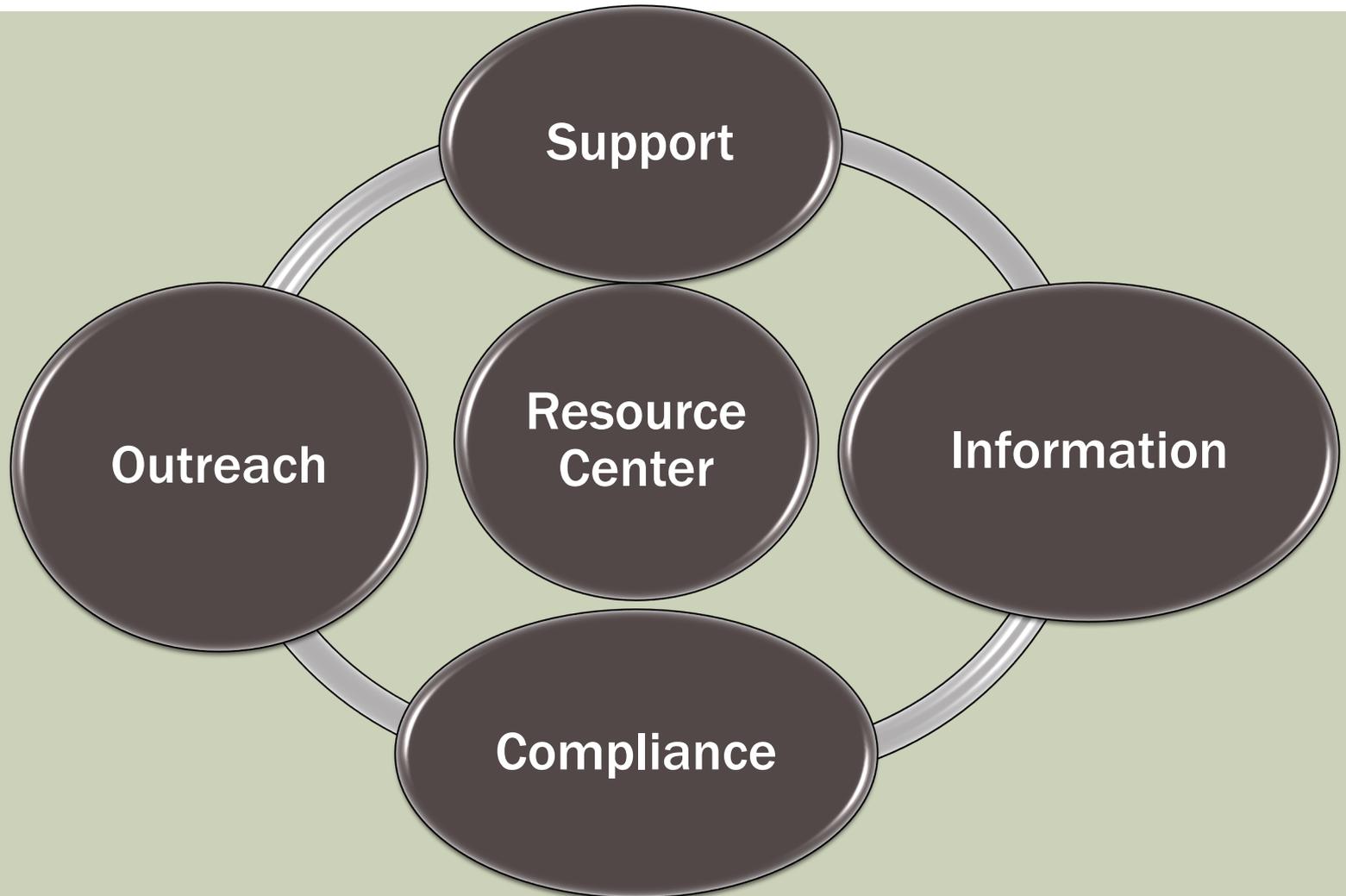


SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS & SCHOLARS IN DIFFICULT TIMES

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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