

# ACADEMIC ADVISING FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS:

WHAT YOU CAN DO  
TO MAKE THE WORLD SMALLER

ERIC COMINS

ACADEMIC ADVISOR

UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO

SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING AND APPLIED SCIENCES



# OVERVIEW

- CHALLENGES FACED BY INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS
- WHY DO THEY DO THAT?!?!
- TIPS FOR ACADEMIC ADVISORS
- CULTURAL TIDBITS
- TIPS FOR DEPARTMENTS
- FINAL THOUGHTS
- QUESTIONS
- RESOURCES



# GETTING TO THE U.S.

- TAKE STANDARDIZED TESTS (TOEFL, ETC.)
- APPLY TO UNIVERSITIES
- PAY SEVIS FEE
- TRAVEL TO U.S. CONSULATE TO APPLY FOR U.S. VISA, APPLICATION FEES
- AIRFARE TO U.S.
- INCONVENIENT CAMPUS ARRIVAL TIMES



# INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' STRESSORS

- LANGUAGE BARRIERS
- CULTURE SHOCK
- FOOD DIFFERENCES
- SOCIAL ISOLATION
- PRESSURE TO ADAPT TO U.S. CULTURE
- DISCRIMINATION
- CLIMATE CHANGE
- HOMESICKNESS
- FINANCIAL STRESS
- RESTRICTIONS ON WORK
- RESTRICTIONS ON TRAVEL

\* STRESSOR ATTRIBUTES PROVIDED BY UB'S COUNSELING CENTER



# CHALLENGES IN THE CLASSROOM

- INITIAL JETLAG
- LANGUAGE BARRIERS
- CLASS PARTICIPATION
  - EMBARRASSED ABOUT LANGUAGE SKILLS
  - BRINGING ATTENTION ONTO THEMSELVES
  - ADDRESSING PROFESSOR
  - SAVING FACE
- HOMEWORK VS TESTS
- ACADEMIC INTEGRITY



# CHALLENGES TO MAINTAINING STUDENT STATUS

- 12 CREDITS PER SEMESTER (CANNOT BE PART-TIME\*\*)
- KEEP IMMIGRATION DOCUMENTS UP-TO-DATE
- FINANCIAL PRESSURE
  - DEVALUATION OF CURRENCY
  - CIVIL UNREST/GOVERNMENT CONTROL OF FUNDS
  - CANNOT TAKE OFF-CAMPUS JOBS
- OFTEN TAKE HEAVY COURSELOADS TO GRADUATE FASTER
- AFRAID TO MAKE MISTAKES
  - PERSONAL CONSEQUENCES
  - HOW DOES IT REFLECT UPON THE GROUP



# BEHAVIORS/TACTICS: *WHY DO THEY DO THAT?*

- EMAIL SAME QUESTION TO EVERYONE IN THE DEPARTMENT
- **W**AITING UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE
- **P**ARANOID/**S**EEKING **C**ONFIRMATION
- “**W**HAT **I**F” **Q**UESTIONS
- **A**SKING FOR **S**PECIAL **E**XCEPTIONS
- IT’S “***URGENT!!!***”
- **S**CARCITY **M**ENTALITY



# **PRACTICAL TIPS FOR ADVISORS**



# PRONUNCIATION

- **ASK HOW TO PRONOUNCE NAMES CORRECTLY**
  - **IF YOU GUESSED, ASK IF YOU WERE CLOSE**
  - **WRITE THE NAME PHONETICALLY IN YOUR NOTES SO YOU CAN GET IT RIGHT NEXT TIME (WITHOUT ASKING)**
  - **ASK!**



# PRONUNCIATION, CONT'D.

- CHINESE NAMES
  - X IS PRONOUNCED LIKE “SH”
    - EX: LAST NAME XU IS PRONOUNCED LIKE “SHOO”
  - Q IS PRONOUNCED LIKE “CH”
  - AN AT THE END OF A WORD IS PRONOUNCED LIKE “ENN”
    - EX: THE NAME QIAN IS PRONOUNCED LIKE “CHEE-ENN”
  - C (BEFORE A VOWEL) AT THE BEGINNING OF A WORD IS PRONOUNCED AS “TS”
    - EX: THE NAME CAI IS PRONOUNCED AS TSAI, NOT LIKE “KAY”
  - LAST NAMES WANG AND HUANG
    - A IS PRONOUNCED LIKE THE O IN “BLONDE.” THESE NAMES DO NOT RHYME WITH “SLANG.”
  - LAST NAMES ZHOU, ZHANG, ZHENG, ZOU
    - PRONOUNCED AS “JOE,” “JAHNG,” “JUNG,” AND “ZO,” RESPECTIVELY



# PRONUNCIATION, CONT'D.

- **INDIAN NAMES**
  - **TEND TO BE QUITE LONG, ESPECIALLY IF A STUDENT IS FROM SOUTHERN INDIA**
  - **EMPHASIS TENDS TO BE AT THE BEGINNING OF NAME**
    - **Ex: MOHIT, AKSHAY, DEVIKA**
- **JAPANESE AND KOREAN NAMES USUALLY SOUND EXACTLY AS THEY LOOK**
- **TRY TO LEARN A FEW SIMPLE PHRASES IN THE LANGUAGES OF STUDENTS YOU SERVE**
  - **HELLO/HOW ARE YOU**
  - **THANK YOU**
  - **GOODBYE**



# SIMPLE WORDS/PHRASES

- **CHINESE (MANDARIN)**
  - HOW ARE YOU = NEE HOW
  - THANK YOU = SHEE-YEH SHEE-YEH
  - YOU'RE WELCOME = BOO KA-CHEE
  - GOODBYE = ZY JEE-ENN
  - BONUS PHRASE: HAPPY NEW YEAR = SHIN NEE-YEN K WY LUH
- **JAPANESE**
  - HELLO = KO NEECHEE WA
  - THANK YOU = ODDI-GOTTO GO-ZY MAHSS
  - YOU'RE WELCOME = DOH-EE TASHI MOSH-TAY
  - GOODBYE = JAH-NAY
- **KOREAN**
  - HELLO = ON-YONG HA SAY-O
  - THANK YOU = GOM SA-HOM NEE-DA
  - YOU'RE WELCOME = CHUN MA NAY-O
  - SEE YOU LATER = DOH BWAH YO



# SIMPLE WORDS/PHRASES

- **GERMAN**
  - HOW ARE YOU = VEE GATES
  - THANK YOU = DON-KA
  - YOU'RE WELCOME = BITTA SHUN
  - GOODBYE = OWF VEEDA-ZANE
- **SPANISH**
  - HELLO = OH-LA
  - THANK YOU = GRAH-SEE-OSS
  - YOU'RE WELCOME = DAY NODDA
  - GOODBYE = AH-DEE-OSE
- **FRENCH**
  - HELLO = BON-ZHOOR
  - THANK YOU = MARE-SEE
  - YOU'RE WELCOME = DUH REE-ENN
  - SEE YOU LATER = OH RA-VWAR



# CUSTOMS, NEWS AND HOLIDAYS

- **WRITE IMPORTANT HOLIDAYS ON YOUR CALENDAR AND LEARN THEIR SIGNIFICANCE**
  - **CHINA: CHINESE NEW YEAR, MID-AUTUMN FESTIVAL, ETC.**
  - **INDIA: INDEPENDENCE DAY, DIWALI, HOLI, ETC.**
- **ASK STUDENTS QUESTIONS ABOUT THEIR FAMILIES, LANGUAGE, CULTURE, ETC.**
  - **THEY WILL BE DELIGHTED THAT YOU SHOWED AN INTEREST!**
- **TRY TO PAY MORE ATTENTION TO INTERNATIONAL NEWS**
  - **NATURAL DISASTERS, SOCCER/CRICKET MATCHES, CELEBRATIONS, ETC.**



# INTERNATIONALIZE YOUR OFFICE

- DISPLAY TRINKETS/TCHOTCHKES GIVEN BY PREVIOUS STUDENTS
- HANG UP PHOTOS FROM COUNTRIES YOU HAVE VISITED (OR COUNTRIES YOU'D LIKE TO VISIT)
- PLACE A MAP OF THE WORLD ON YOUR WALL
  - ASK STUDENTS TO POINT OUT THEIR HOMETOWN; PUT A PIN OR A MARK ON THE MAP TO SHOW IT
- DISPLAY ART FROM OTHER COUNTRIES



# SPECIFICITY

- INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS EXPECT SPECIFICITY
- LET THEM KNOW EXACTLY WHEN THEY CAN EXPECT TO HEAR FROM YOU
  - BAD: “I’LL LOOK INTO THIS AND GET BACK TO YOU WHEN I HAVE AN UPDATE”
  - GOOD: “I’LL LET YOU KNOW BY 4:00PM ON TUESDAY”



# ENSURE UNDERSTANDING

- SPEAK SLOWLY AND CLEARLY (NOT LOUDLY AND LIKE A ROBOT!)
  - [HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=ANF\\_JM4BNYQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ANF_JM4BNYQ) 8:36 MARK
  - [HTTPS://WWW.DAILYMOTION.COM/VIDEO/X7QOMN7](https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x7QOMN7) 6:08 MARK
- BE MINDFUL OF ACRONYMS
- WRITE IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS DOWN
- DO NOT ASSUME THAT SMILING AND NODDING = UNDERSTANDING
- DON'T ASK "DO YOU UNDERSTAND?"
- ASK THEM WHAT THEY PLAN TO DO NOW (TO ENSURE UNDERSTANDING)



# ENSURE UNDERSTANDING, CONT'D.

- **BE AWARE OF SLANG**
  - **TOUCH BASE**
  - **SILO**
  - **WHEELHOUSE**
  - **DRILL DOWN**
  - **FLUNK OUT**
  - **SOSH**
  - **COUCH**
  - **CHAIR**
  - **DEBBIE DOWNER**



# ENSURE UNDERSTANDING, CONT'D.

- REMEMBER UNIVERSITY/DEPARTMENTAL SLANG
  - HUB
  - HOLD
  - SPINE
  - SEAS
  - FLOWSHEET
  - PRE-REQ
  - STAMPEDE
  - DROP/ADD



# OTHER THINGS YOU CAN DO

- **ASK** HOW THEIR ADJUSTMENT TO LIFE IN **U.S.** IS COMING ALONG
- **ASK** HOW TO SAY THINGS IN THEIR LANGUAGE
- **ACKNOWLEDGE** THEIR BRAVERY TO VENTURE TO A NEW, UNFAMILIAR PLACE
- **ENCOURAGE** THEM TO GET INVOLVED ON CAMPUS
- **CONGRATULATE STUDENTS ON:**
  - **GREAT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**
  - **SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT**



# GET TO KNOW YOUR INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT

- **M**EMORIZE THEIR CAMPUS LOCATION
- **I**NTRODUCE YOURSELF TO THEIR ADVISORS
- **L**EARN ABOUT WHAT THEY DO (AND DON'T DO)
- **L**EARN THEIR LINGO
  - **I-20**
  - **VISA**
  - **CPT/OPT**
  - **I-20 EXTENSION**
  - **EXCHANGE STUDENTS/INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS**
- **B**E CAREFUL NOT TO ADVISE ON IMMIGRATION MATTERS!



# HELP YOUR DEPARTMENT TO BETTER SERVE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

- DISPLAY A WORLD MAP, INTERNATIONAL ARTWORK
- PRINT AND DISPLAY FLAGS OF YOUR STUDENTS' COUNTRIES
- SIMPLIFY LANGUAGE ON YOUR WEBSITE AND IN EMAILS
- BE SURE TO DISCUSS **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY** POLICIES AT ORIENTATION AND HAVE FLIERS/PAMPHLETS AVAILABLE ON THE TOPIC
- INVITE YOUR INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT TO ATTEND ONE OF YOUR STAFF MEETINGS



# INTERESTING CULTURAL TIDBITS

- THROW YOUR RED PENS AWAY!
- HANDSHAKES
- GIVE/RECEIVE WITH TWO HANDS
- EYE CONTACT
- THE CONCEPT OF “No”
- BE MORE FORMAL
- MIGHT NOT BE ACCUSTOMED TO FEMALES IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS
- AVOIDANCE OF UNPLEASANT TOPICS
  - INTERMEDIARIES



# A FINAL THOUGHT

- INCORPORATING SOME OF THESE PRACTICES WILL MAKE YOUR INTERNATIONAL POPULATION FEEL MORE WELCOME, APPRECIATED, VALUED, ETC. MOST IMPORTANTLY, IT WILL COMMUNICATE THAT THEY MATTER, WHICH WILL INCREASE STUDENT SATISFACTION, PERFORMANCE, RETENTION, ETC.



**QUESTIONS?**



# RESOURCE LIST

- CHINESE NAME PRONUNCIATIONS:

[https://resources.allsetlearning.com/chinese/pronunciation/the\\_%22j%22\\_%22q%22\\_and\\_%22x%22\\_sounds](https://resources.allsetlearning.com/chinese/pronunciation/the_%22j%22_%22q%22_and_%22x%22_sounds)

- INDIAN NAME PRONUNCIATIONS:

<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/whitehindu/2016/01/how-to-pronounce-indian-names/>

- INDIAN HOLIDAYS: <https://www.tripsavvy.com/indian-holidays-and-festivals-1458365>

- CHINESE HOLIDAYS:

<https://www.studyinchina.com.my/web/page/8-major-chinese-holidays-festivals/>