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MONTHLYDIAGNOSTIC

May 2012

A Whole-Campus Approach to International Students



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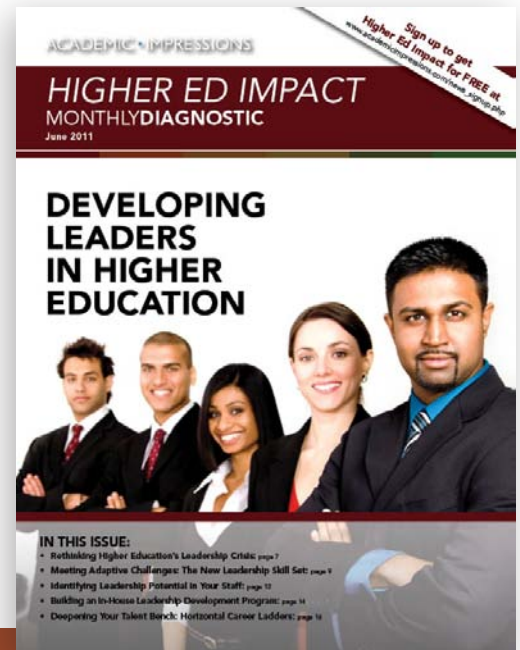
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A LETTER FROM AMIT MRIG PRESIDENT, ACADEMIC IMPRESSIONS

According to the Open Doors report on international education, international student enrollment has increased every year for the past 60 years. With this trend expected to continue, and international students becoming an increasingly important constituent group, it's critical for institutions to take a more holistic view at how they're meeting these students' needs now and in the future.

Beyond recruitment efforts, institutions need to think broadly about integration into the campus community and the academic curriculum to ensure international students persist and succeed. They also need to plant seeds for future support and giving as these students graduate and potentially return to their home countries.

A holistic strategy for approaching the international student market can serve both the students and your institution well. We've asked experts in the field to share advice and insights into recruitment, transition, campus life, the academic curriculum, and moving international students into the donor pipeline. We hope their advice will be useful to you.



FREE WEBCAST: THE INTERNATIONALIZED CAMPUS

APRIL 13, 2012 :: 1:00 TO 2:00 P.M. EDT

SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ACADEMIC SUCCESS

JULY 11 - 13, 2012 :: HOUSTON, TX

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Download this PDF and read this issue's articles online:

<http://www.academicimpressions.com/news/whole-campus-approach-international-students>

AI Contributors



Amit Mrig

PRESIDENT, ACADEMIC IMPRESSIONS

Amit co-founded Academic Impressions in 2002 to provide a variety of educational products and services that help higher education administrators tackle key, strategic challenges. Since 2002, AI has designed and directed hundreds of conferences and has served representatives from over 3,500 higher education institutions. Besides designing and leading events for cabinet-level officers focused on strategic planning, budgeting, and leadership development, Amit leads Academic Impressions' ongoing research into the five- and 10 year challenges facing higher education and plays a lead role in outlining each issue of *Higher Ed Impact: Monthly Diagnostic* to highlight how college and university leaders can take an institution-wide approach to answering those challenges.



Daniel Fusch

DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS, ACADEMIC IMPRESSIONS

At Academic Impressions, Daniel provides strategic direction and content for AI's electronic publication *Higher Ed Impact*, including market research and interviews with leading subject matter experts on critical issues. Since the publication's launch in 2009, Daniel has written more than 250 articles on strategic issues ranging from student recruitment and retention to development and capital planning. Daniel previously served as a conference director for Academic Impressions, developing training programs focused on issues related to campus sustainability, capital planning, and facilities management. Prior to joining Academic Impressions, Daniel served as adjunct faculty for the University of Denver. Daniel holds a Ph.D. in English.



Courtney Gulden

CONFERENCE DIRECTOR, ACADEMIC IMPRESSIONS

Courtney is responsible for creating online and in-person conferences in the area of advancement, including needs research, program design, and subject matter expert recruitment. Her focus within advancement is targeted at alumni relations, annual giving, social media, and development communications. Courtney has been with Academic Impressions since 2008 and is currently writing her dissertation on the story of Samson and Delilah. She has taught several courses on subjects such as apocalyptic literature and translation theory and was a Teagle-Wabash Teaching and Learning Fellow at The Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, CA, where she honed her practical teaching skills and curriculum design capability with a mentor professor for one academic year. She is an occasional giver to her alma mater, Colgate University, and is a Federal Club Member of HRC Colorado.



Lisa Wexler

ASSISTANT CONFERENCE DIRECTOR, ACADEMIC IMPRESSIONS

Lisa currently works on researching and designing online and in-person conferences in the area of student affairs. She focuses her research and programming in the areas of academic advising, support services, study abroad, and programs for international students, peer mentors and first year students. Previously, she was a faculty lecturer at the University of Denver's English Language Center. In addition to teaching, she served on the curriculum committee and coordinated orientations and a conversation program for international students. She completed her MA in English and BA in English and minor in Education at the University of Colorado – Boulder. She also holds a graduate certificate in ESL Education from the University of Northern Colorado and is currently working on her MBA. Lisa has presented at state and national conferences on best practices in literature and writing instruction and using technology in the language classroom.

Contributors



Gretchen Dobson,

GLOBAL STRATEGIST, GRETCHEN DOBSON GO GLOBAL

Gretchen travels the world to help educational institutions and nonprofit member organizations facilitate alumni engagement and advance international programs. Additionally, she works with officers at US embassies to engage alumni of government-sponsored exchange programs. Gretchen also provides professional coaching for international advancement and academic officers. Alongside consulting, Gretchen manages international special events and meetings for clients with particular needs outside their home country. For the past decade, Gretchen served as Tufts University's senior associate director for domestic and international programs. Gretchen is the author of a new book, *Being Global: Making the Case for International Alumni Relations* (CASE Books, 2011). Gretchen received her B.A. and her M.A. from Boston College and is currently pursuing a doctorate in higher education at the University of Pennsylvania.



Darla K. Deardorff

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ASSOCIATION OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION ADMINISTRATORS

Darla Deardorff is executive director of the Association of International Education Administrators. Additionally, she is a research scholar in the Program in Education at Duke University; a visiting professor at Leeds-Metropolitan University in the United Kingdom; an adjunct professor at North Carolina State University and the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill; and on the faculty of the prestigious Summer Institute of Intercultural Communication in Portland, Oregon. Darla has worked in the field of international education for more than 15 years and receives numerous invitations from around the world to speak on her research on intercultural competence and assessment (including in Europe, Latin America, Australia, and Asia). She is the author of *Beneath the Tip of the Iceberg: Improving English and Understanding U.S. Cultural Patterns* (University of Michigan Press, 2011).



Norman Evans

PROFESSOR, LINGUISTICS AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT,
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

Dr. Evans is currently researching how campuses across the country provide academic and linguistic support programs for international students. He coordinates curriculum and service courses for international students and the English Language Center at Brigham Young University. In his previous professorship at BYU-Hawaii, he chaired a committee on helping students be successful after graduating and returning to their home countries, and he was named teacher of the year in 2003. He has spent much of his career working with international students in a variety of capacities as an English language teacher, writing center coordinator, ESL program administrator, and TESOL teacher trainer. He presents on these topics regularly at national and international conferences, roundtables, and speaker engagements.



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BOB JOHNSON CONSULTING

Bob's specialties include Customer Carewords research to create Web content that engages visitors, personal website reviews, and interactive communication plans for advancement and enrollment activities. He is a partner with Gerry McGovern at Customer Carewords Ltd. in Dublin, Ireland.

Bob is the editor of the popular email newsletter, "Your Higher Education Marketing Newsletter," sent monthly to 4,100 subscribers, the @highedmarketing Twitter site with more than 3,500 followers, and "Bob Johnson's Blog on Higher Education Marketing." He is also the author of chapters in *Advancement and the Web: Thriving in a New World* and *Transforming Your Web Site into a Collaboration Marketing Tool*, and co-editor of *Integrated Marketing Communication, A Practical Guide to Developing Comprehensive Communication Strategies*. Both are CASE publications.



Marjorie Smith

ASSOCIATE DEAN AND DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ADMISSION, UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

Marjorie has directed international recruiting strategies at the University of Denver for more than 25 years. She took her first recruitment trip to Asia in 1988 with Linden Tours when there were 479 international students on her campus. In 2010, DU welcomed its largest-ever international enrollment: 1,182 students, or 10 percent of overall enrollment. Marjorie has presented numerous workshops on international student recruitment and has made presentations on all aspects of international student admission at national AACRAO and NAFSA conferences.



Kevin Spensley

DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL ENROLLMENT AND SENIOR INTERNATIONAL OFFICER, SAINT MICHAEL'S COLLEGE

Kevin has overseen a 60 percent increase in international student enrollment at Saint Michael's since coming to the college in 2008. He previously served as director of business and program development at American Councils for International Education, and he has also worked for the US Department of State. He lived for several years in Russia and the Ukraine. In 2005, Kevin founded Education-SI, which promoted US and Canadian boarding schools in Russian-speaking countries. In the first two years of the program's operation, more than 50 full-pay Russian and Kazakhstani students enrolled in US boarding schools as a result of Kevin's work.



Gayle Woodruff

DIRECTOR FOR CURRICULUM AND CAMPUS INTERNATIONALIZATION, UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

At the University of Minnesota, Gayle provides leadership for efforts to internationalize the curriculum and develop co-curricular learning experiences for students. Gayle also provides leadership to the field of international education for curriculum integration of study abroad, and has served as the chair of the Teaching, Learning & Scholarship Knowledge Community of NAFSA: Association of International Educators. She has been an invited speaker on numerous topics in international education and has published in the field.

CONTENTS

Does Your Curriculum Serve
International Students? 10

Recruiting and Admitting International
Students: Key Considerations 13

The Transition In: Setting International
Students Up for Academic Success 16

The Transition Out: Moving International
Students into the Donor Pipeline 22

A Whole-Campus Approach to International Students



DOES YOUR CURRICULUM SERVE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS?

Too often, integration of international students into the institution is not viewed systemically. The institution may be recruiting international students to increase diversity, to increase revenue, or for some other goal ... but you rarely see the globalization of the campus conceived of as a systemic effort.

Gayle Woodruff, University of Minnesota

Recruiting international students without ensuring that the curriculum itself is internationalized is an unsustainable effort. Providing international students with an education that will equip them for success whether in the US or in their countries (and simultaneously providing domestic students with a truly global education) entails the integration of international content and perspectives across the curriculum, as well as a careful look at biases in pedagogical design and delivery that may make the learning experience less accessible to all students.

To learn more, we interviewed Gayle Woodruff, who directs a system-wide curriculum and campus internationalization initiative at the University of Minnesota, one that she has modeled closely on successful examples from universities in Australia that have conducted extensive research on internationalization, such as the University of Melbourne and the University of South Australia. Woodruff

advises that institutions enrolling high numbers of international students take steps to:

- Focus on internationalization in curriculum design
- Prepare faculty to take a more international perspective on their content and a universal design approach to their course design and delivery

CURRICULUM DESIGN

Curriculum is the heart of the effort. It is both the central issue and the deciding factor in internationalization.

Gayle Woodruff, University of Minnesota

“Look at the whole of the curriculum, not just parts,” Woodruff advises. Identify guiding questions that will help you identify and prioritize opportunities for internationalizing your curriculum, such as these three questions used at the University of Minnesota:

- What skills, knowledge, and attitudes do we want our students to learn?
- What are our definitions of global citizen, global learning, and global competency?
- What skills, knowledge, and attitudes do the faculty and staff need in order to help students develop their competencies?

Woodruff recommends holding a campus-wide conference and having faculty attendees respond to these or other guiding questions. “Code the responses,” she adds, “then aggregate a draft of definitions for your institution.” In this way, you pool the brainpower of your whole faculty to develop the vision for what internationalization will look like for your curriculum.

Once you’ve had the campus-wide conference:

- Within each academic unit, the dean or department chair can hold sessions to arrive at a vision for internationalizing the curriculum for that unit
- Organize faculty development opportunities to assist faculty, individually and in cohorts, in determining what this will mean for their courses
- Appoint an internal consultant who can champion the effort, serving to advise departments and facilitate planning

FOCUSING ON THE FACULTY

Regardless of who is in the classroom — an international or a domestic student — are the faculty equipped to assess their ability to design universally applicable course materials and delivery?

Gayle Woodruff, University of Minnesota

For Gayle Woodruff, internationalizing the curriculum is, at its core, a challenge of faculty development. Citing Gavin Sanderson’s research on the internationalization of the academic self (<http://jsi.sagepub.com/content/12/3/276.abstract>), Woodruff draws attention to the need to raise faculty awareness of how their teaching may be “culture-bound.”

Gather an interdisciplinary faculty cohort or faculty learning community that will take a structured seminar together. Include intensive learning experiences, readings from current research, and hands-on assignments that require faculty to:



- Check for cultural biases in their pedagogical strategy
- Self-assess and peer-assess their strategy
- Develop an intentional plan for how they will internationalize their curriculum

In order to teach faculty how international students may experience culturally defined and culture-bound learning, help faculty first recognize ways in which their teaching may be culture-bound. Then engage faculty in “backward design” (starting with clearly defined outcomes and designing course content and exercise to help students meet the course outcomes) and in reflection on their teaching. Educate faculty about best practices in universal design — which will help not only international students but all students.

EXAMPLE

Woodruff cites this example of a course with global perspectives and content. A faculty member in environmental science opens one of her courses by having students examine different rivers for levels of contamination. Without being told which rivers they are examining or where these rivers are located, students are asked:

- Would you drink from this river? Would you swim in it?
- Where would you expect to find this river located geographically?

This provides the opportunity for students to examine their own biases about where clean water is to be found in the world. (The cleanest rivers may not be in the US.)

Woodruff adds that when faculty are informed and empowered to take a more international approach to their course content and delivery, international students cease to become pedagogical “obstacles” and become instead resources in the class (as fresh individual perspectives, not as sole representatives of their countries), providing new viewpoints even as they are encouraged themselves to develop global competencies.

RECRUITING AND ADMITTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS: KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Unless you are already enrolling high numbers of international students, it's likely that stepping up recruiting efforts will require significant work in revisiting your admissions communications and processes. Many processes that are "tried and true" in the US may throw unintended obstacles in the way of international applicants, and simply translating your current communications and documents may leave international prospects and parents at a loss to find the information they need most.

To gather some expert advice, we reached out to Bob Johnson, president of Bob Johnson Consulting, LLC; Marjorie Smith, associate dean and director of international student admission at the University of Denver; and Kevin Spensley, director of international marketing, recruitment, and enrollment at Saint Michael's College.

YOUR WEBSITE AND THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT

Web marketing guru Bob Johnson notes that your website is the first introduction many international students will have to your institution; if you have designed your site with only US students in mind, you will miss many of your best opportunities to interest students from other nations. Johnson offers these tips to get your website "recruitment-ready for visits from potential international students":



- Offer a landing page for international students and ensure that the most critical, "can't-miss" elements are easy to spot upon a quick scan of the page (including a search feature for available undergraduate and graduate programs and admissions criteria)
- Invite your current international students to blog about their experiences, and feature these student blogs on the landing page
- Identify student leaders who are willing to serve as resources to interested students from their home countries, and offer a "Contact a Current Student" feature on your website
- Offer links to pages with region-specific information (such as scholarship, grant, and sponsorship opportunities; photos and profiles for students from that region; and visa and English language requirements)

In short, offer the most critical information readily and provide international students with easy ways to connect with other students from their own country.



LEARN MORE

For specific examples of how other institutions in the US, UK, and Australia have provided websites designed for international applicants, read our article “Five Website Tips for International Student Recruitment.” <http://www.academicimpressions.com/news/five-website-tips-international-student-recruitment>

THE OVERSEAS VISIT

Particularly if you are new to recruiting in a given region and are planning to send your own recruiters overseas, do your due diligence in learning as much as you can about the region and opportunities for recruiting there:

- Make sure you're choosing the right event — research the fair organizer or the tour organizer, read reports from previous years, seek references, and ensure that the event is attracting the right profile of students for your institution. What other institutions are attending the event? Are they your peers?
- Evaluate publications in the target country that you can advertise in, considering their distribution and reach into your target market
- Research holiday times, local cultural events and traditions, appropriate methods of address, social conventions concerning gifts, etc.

Sending recruiters overseas is a significant investment, and you need to go in as informed as possible.



RECRUITING IN CHINA: AN IN-DEPTH LOOK

In our article “Recruiting Chinese Students,” (<http://www.academicimpressions.com/news/recruiting-chinese-students>) Tom Melcher, chairman of Zinch China, offers practical advice for how institutions new to recruiting in the Chinese market can define their specific competitive advantage and focus dollars and effort on initiatives that are likely to work, while not wasting time on efforts that likely will not work.

AUDITING YOUR PRE-ARRIVAL COMMUNICATIONS

Don't proceed with the mindset that if you travel to meet applicants, the rest will just happen. Most of the work is after you get back (follow-up and pre-arrival communications) or before you ever go (in terms of having your own shop in order).

Marjorie Smith, University of Denver

“You have to start thinking through your processes for pre-arrival communications,” adds Kevin Spensley. “Otherwise, you'll lose a lot of students just because the application and enrollment documents got lost in the process.”

For example:

- How do you ask students to connect with your institution? (If you use an 800 number, this may not work overseas)
- Do you ask students to send payment in an envelope with an SASE (again, an SASE is not going to work in all cases outside the US)

You need to ensure that your shop is able to adapt its requirements for documentation to the needs of international students, and that your shop is prepared to read international student applications faster and provide quick turnaround on inquiries to accommodate the timeline required by the visa process.

If you can, form a group of volunteers from among your current international students, faculty, and alumni to audit your website and your pre-arrival communications to:

- Note cultural differences
- Note terminology that may confuse international students and parents
- Identify steps in the process that could be improved

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ARRIVAL AND ORIENTATION INSTITUTE

November 28 - 30, 2012 :: Tampa, FL
Improve your welcome procedures to ensure international student success.



THE TRANSITION IN: SETTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS UP FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

A survey conducted in 2011 by three researchers from different institutions (http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2011/04/062/ohio_university_international_student_experience_survey) confirmed that while most international students feel welcomed and at home on their college campuses, many have a low sense of belonging in the US generally and face challenges in making the transition to American culture. These same students voice concern over the lack of support from the institution in making that transition.

One student remarked about the international student services available, “The office helped in all administrative matters, but nothing more. Please, do not get me wrong: they were very helpful, but they did not help in my transition from Mexican to American culture.” Other students cited feelings of isolation and culture shock, as well as difficulties adjusting to the social expectations of the American classroom.

The survey results, though taken from a small sample, raise the question: as colleges and universities enroll more international students, what steps can they take to ensure that their growing population of international students have the peer support and services needed to aid them in acculturation and academic success?

While international students often come to your institution with an impressive student record, they face significant obstacles in the transition:

- Differing cultural expectations around student/faculty roles, intellectual property and knowledge-sharing, and the nature of academic research
- Gaps in preparedness for academic writing in English
- Difficulties in acculturation not just on campus but in the surrounding community, so that international students do not feel isolated in ways that negatively impact academic performance or student development

For advice, we turned to Darla Deardorff, executive director of the Association of International Education Administrators and a research scholar in education at Duke University, and Norman Evans, a professor in Brigham Young University's linguistics department who is conducting a nationwide study of academic support services for international students.

ORIENTATION

Many of those institutions that admit large numbers of international students each year have begun offering orientations tailored to international students — in the best examples, orientations that are in part designed and led by other international students.

Here are some guiding questions for developing an effective approach to international student orientation:

- Can you leverage peer leaders, selecting and training upperclassmen who are international students to lead an orientation for entering freshmen?
- What resources can you offer online? What makes sense to convey to students via a video tutorial, for instance, and at what points in the process?
- If your institution is investing in growing its international student population from a given region, does it make sense to invest in a pre-arrival orientation held in the students' home country, "meeting them where they are" to help prepare them for the transition?



LEARN MORE

Read our article "Stepping up Orientation for International Students" (<http://www.academicimpressions.com/news/stepping-orientation-international-students>) to learn how the University of Southern California has piloted a seamless arrival-and-welcome process that includes not only an international orientation once students arrive on campus, but also an overseas, summer orientation on-site in Hong Kong to help students from Hong Kong prepare for their arrival in the US.

SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ACADEMIC SUCCESS

July 11 - 13, 2012 :: Houston, TX

Help international students succeed with the right kinds of academic and language support programs and services.

THINKING MORE HOLISTICALLY ABOUT THE TRANSITION TO CAMPUS LIFE

“It’s not enough to just provide orientation and give them the basics,” Deardorff cautions. “We need to look beyond orientation — how do we continue to meet their needs once the ‘honeymoon period’ has worn off? Getting used to a new culture and a new academic system can be quite challenging.”



LEARN MORE

For a briefing on initiatives you can undertake after orientation — such as an acculturation class or cultivating international student leadership — read our article “Steps to Support International Student Success.” (<http://www.academicimpressions.com/news/steps-support-international-student-success>)

Next, plan intentionally for integrating domestic and international students. Integration, if it is to be effective, means more than just living in the same residence halls and attending the same classes. It means more than holding an international or multicultural fair or festival. It means structuring and fostering meaningful interaction in academic learning and campus life. For example:

- Service projects over the break that include a mix of international and domestic undergraduates. A weekend-long service-learning project with a shared goal can help students who would not otherwise have interacted outside of class form lasting relationships.
- A departmental ambassador program for graduate students. Current graduate students volunteer to reach out to new international graduate students with invitations to departmental and community events, and to be available as resources.

Deardorff recommends reviewing:

- Are your student life and student development programs — those aimed at helping students develop leadership, sound health and lifestyle choices, etc. — inclusive of international students and their needs?
- What programs and events do you have in place to help all students, domestic and international, develop intercultural competencies?



ACADEMIC SUPPORT THROUGHOUT THE FOUR YEARS

Many international students face academic barriers, as well — particularly with academic writing. A high TOEFL score may mean some proficiency with English, but it doesn't necessarily mean that students are prepared for the rigors and expectations of academic writing in North America.

Norman Evans of Brigham Young University is in the midst of conducting a survey of the 309 postsecondary institutions with the highest numbers of admitted international students (as cited in the most recent Open Doors report). Evans hopes to learn the extent to which these institutions pre-screen admits, screen arriving students, and offer academic support services tailored to the needs of international students throughout their student experience.

Speaking with nearly 30 years of experience in the profession, Evans offers these suggestions for institutions that are stepping up enrollment of international students for whom English is a second language:



- Provide a writing center or writing lab with tutorial staff who are trained to assist second-language students and who understand their challenges in developing fluency in academic writing (if you offer online tutoring or an online writing lab, see our article “Improving Your Online Writing Center for International Students” (<http://www.academicimpressions.com/news/improving-your-online-writing-center-international-students>))
- Provide tutorials and workshops on universal design for your faculty
- Hold monthly brown-bag lunches and bring together those people on campus who regularly interact with and support international students to share challenges and opportunities — and make sure to bring international students to those lunches to offer their perspective

Deardorff adds that one initiative that has seen some success at Duke University is to provide student-led workshops to help prepare faculty and staff to better support international students. The conceptual framework for the workshops is developed by the institution, and time is allotted within the sessions for international students to share their experiences transitioning to the campus, what they wish they'd known, what support they wish they'd had, and how staff and faculty can help them better.

THE “SHELTERED COURSES” MODEL

If you have an especially large population of international students, Evans suggests considering a “sheltered courses” model for those courses in which the content may be culturally nuanced. (Political science is a great example, mathematics less so.) In this model, separate sections are taught with the same curriculum, the same objectives, and the same rigor in grading, but one section is taught by a faculty member who is trained and practiced in working with international students. “PolySci 110 might be extremely difficult for overseas students who do not share a basic knowledge of our political system,” Evans notes, “so offer a sheltered course that will address their learning needs and provide a more international perspective on the issues.”

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ORIENTATION: USING PEER MENTORS TO IMPROVE YOUR PROGRAM

SEPTEMBER 25, 2012 :: 1:00 - 2:30 P.M. EDT

Learn how utilizing “cultural peer mentors” can help your international students get off to a strong start.

REVAMPING PRE-ARRIVAL COMMUNICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

June 26, 2012 :: 1:00 - 2:30 p.m. EDT

Are you effectively connecting with international students before they arrive on campus?



UPCOMING EVENTS

FREE WEBCAST: THE INTERNATIONALIZED CAMPUS

JUNE 12, 2012 - 1:00 TO 2:00 PM EDT

REVAMPING PRE-ARRIVAL COMMUNICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

JUNE 26, 2012 :: 1:00 - 2:30 P.M. EDT

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ORIENTATION: USING PEER MENTORS TO IMPROVE YOUR PROGRAM

SEPTEMBER 25, 2012 :: 1:00 - 2:30 P.M. EDT

ONLINE COURSE: INTERNATIONAL PROSPECT RESEARCH

JULY 10, 2012 - 1:00 TO 2:30 PM EDT & JULY 19, 2012 - 1:00 TO 2:30 PM EDT & JULY 30, 2012 - 1:00 TO 2:30 PM EDT & AUGUST 13, 2012 - 1:00 TO 2:30 PM EDT

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ARRIVAL AND ORIENTATION INSTITUTE

NOVEMBER 28 - 30, 2012 :: TAMPA, FL

THE TRANSITION OUT: MOVING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS INTO THE DONOR PIPELINE

With the balance of wealth shifting overseas — and with more colleges and universities increasing their international enrollment — international fundraising is likely to play an increasingly larger role in development at North American institutions. And by cultivating your international students and alumni as lifelong ambassadors for your institution, you not only strengthen and diversify your institution’s donor pool, you also create a network that can serve as a key resource in helping your school keep its curriculum global and current and connect with new students and new partners abroad.

To learn how institutions can get started in such an effort, we interviewed Gretchen Dobson, the senior associate director for alumni relations at Tufts University and the principal and founder of Gretchen Dobson Go Global, a consulting firm focused on helping educational institutions, nonprofit member organizations, and consulate/embassy education officers facilitate alumni engagement and advance international programs. Dobson has also authored the book *Being Global: Making the Case for International Alumni Relations* (CASE, 2011).

INVITING STUDENTS INTO A LIFETIME RELATIONSHIP

Dobson notes that international alumni are “hard enough just to find”; if you are serious about cultivating lifetime relationships with this growing body of alumni, the key is to begin building the relationship while they are still students.

Building engagement and affinity with international students requires:

- Involving international students in philanthropic efforts early (e.g., in the activities of regional alumni chapters during summer and winter break; as student ambassadors, trained to meet with prospects; and in your annual fund phonathon)
- Taking an intentional approach to transitioning international students to alumni during the senior year



For example, for your international seniors:

- Offer an international capstone program — “You could invite your seniors to mentor first-year international students, advising them on how they can make the best of the next four years”
- Rather than just an exit interview, hold a series of focus groups or workshops that invite international seniors a chance to leave a mark by advising residence life or international program directors — “They’ve invested, they’ve taken a risk in attending a school abroad. Recognize their investment and invite them to continue investing”
- Invite international student participation on the senior gift committee or in your senior campaign — “Offer opportunities for international students to help create an international student summer resource fund or scholarship fund”



TIPS FOR OUTREACH TO INTERNATIONAL ALUMNI

Besides building the relationship with international students before they become alumni, Dobson suggests that soliciting gifts from international alumni will depend largely on your ability to craft an intentional narrative about your institution’s plans for involvement in their region. You need to provide a clear and compelling message about how time and dollars given will make a positive impact on admission of students from the region, the pipeline to future alumni, and your institution’s contribution to the region.



LEARN MORE

To learn more, read our March 2012 article “Transitioning International Students into Your Donor Pipeline” (<http://www.academicimpressions.com/news/transitioning-international-students-your-donor-pipeline>).

Build the story around the specific ways your institution is investing in a global footprint:

- Are there real opportunities for your alumni to help pave the way to increasing access for students from their countries?
- Are there public health institutions for which your institution is providing internships?
- Are you looking to expand an exchange of faculty or research?
- Are you looking to establish a satellite campus?

“Be very transparent about why the institution wants to build relationships here,” Dobson suggests, “and tie the ask to a larger story; invite them to see how you can help them make a contribution they value with their time and money.”



LEARN MORE

To learn more, read our March 2012 article “Engaging International Alumni” (<http://www.academicimpressions.com/news/engaging-international-alumni>).

A CAUTION: YOU NEED A THOROUGH “DATA DUMP”

When researching a region, Dobson suggests, don’t just pull data on prospects; it’s important that your “data dump” also includes asking all the deans about any past history between the academic departments and individuals or entities in the region.

“Find out what informal agreements or conversations have occurred,” she suggests.

Dobson offers this scenario to illustrate the point. Suppose that in the past, a university had benefited from a study abroad program organized and funded by several international alumni. Growing organically over the years, the study abroad program had served to build the university’s name recognition within the region, and in doing so had fed inquiries into the admissions pipeline.

As the study abroad program grew, the alumni eventually approached the chair of the department they’d partnered with and asked the school to take over the program, fund it, and continue to grow it. At the time, the institution was in the midst of a capital campaign, and as study abroad did not fall within the list of the institution’s top priorities, the university did not choose to fund and manage the program. Let down, the alumni have since harbored mixed feelings toward their alma mater. For a development officer planning to reach out to these contacts, it would be critical to know that history.



DEVELOP AN ADVISORY NETWORK TO ASSIST YOU

Tapping the expertise and cultural knowledge of your international alumni is a critical step in assessing your readiness to fundraise in the region. The advisory committee could include public figures or prominent businessmen in the region you are targeting, advisors who have served previously on the alumni association's advisory board, parents of current students, and even faculty from that region. Such a network can assist you in:

- Connecting with key individuals and entities in your target region
- Forewarning you of potential blunders in cultural etiquette (such as scheduling an event during a religious or national festival, or neglecting to acknowledge a particular society's norms concerning age and seniority)

It's a given that you will encounter different social expectations and social conventions related to networking and social introductions. For example, in Hong Kong, a certain seniority is needed in order to be at the table to ask. "Natives to this culture would be unlikely to have an interest in meeting with junior fundraisers," Dobson comments. "They want to meet with deans, presidents. You also need to understand who their gatekeepers are, who to build relationships with."

Invest as early as possible in building and stewarding that network of knowledgeable people who can assist you in navigating the complexities of the social and fundraising culture.