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Adjustment problems of foreign students attending colleges and universities in the United States and recommended actions for student services professionals

Margaret Koczan Washut
University of Northern Iowa

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Abstract

The United States is the leading host nation for foreign students in the world, with more than 325,000 students from other nations enrolled in our schools (Altbach, 1986). The largest and fastest growing group by region of origin is the group of Asian students in the U.S. (Agarwal & Winkler, 1985). Over half of the foreign students in the U.S. today can be included in this group. For the purposes of this paper, a foreign student is defined as 11 a citizen of another country pursuing education in a U.S. school requiring a high-school diploma or its equivalent" (Agarwal & Winkler, 1985, p. 510). The spectrum of needs of these foreign students includes emotional, physical, intellectual, financial, and career concerns. Student services professionals on college and university campuses must develop special skills to be effective with this group of non-traditional students. The following review of the literature is supplemented by summaries of interviews conducted with foreign students enrolled at the University of Northern Iowa in the Spring of 1987.

ADJUSTMENT PROBLEMS OF FOREIGN STUDENTS ATTENDING COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES IN THE UNITED STATES AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR STUDENT SERVICES PROFESSIONALS

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Margaret Koczan Washut

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Jack F. Kimball

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Thomas W. Hansmeier

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Date Approved — Second Reader of Research Paper

Norman McCumsey

4/10/87 _____

Date Received — Head, Department of Educational Administration and Counseling

Definition

The United States is the leading host nation for foreign students in the world, with more than 325,000 students from other nations enrolled in our schools (Altbach, 1986). The largest and fastest growing group by region of origin is the group of Asian students in the U.S. (Agarwal & Winkler, 1985). Over half of the foreign students in the U.S. today can be included in this group.

For the purposes of this paper, a foreign student is defined as "a citizen of another country pursuing education in a U.S. school requiring a high-school diploma or its equivalent" (Agarwal & Winkler, 1985, p. 510).

The spectrum of needs of these foreign students includes emotional, physical, intellectual, financial, and career concerns. Student services professionals on college and university campuses must develop special skills to be effective with this group of non-traditional students.

The following review of the literature is supplemented by summaries of interviews conducted with foreign students enrolled at the University of Northern Iowa in the Spring of 1987.

Emotional Impact

Culture Shock

Adjustment to the experience of living in a new environment is a priority demand on the foreign student. In the words of

Selltiz, Christ, Havel, and Cook (1963), adjustment is

1. the extent to which the students had specific difficulties in becoming established in new surroundings or meeting the demands made on them;
2. the extent to which they felt, at the end of the first year, that they had reached the goals they had had in coming to the United States;
3. their satisfaction with various aspects of their experiences in this country;
4. and more general emotional reactions, such as feelings of loneliness, homesickness, of being in good or low spirits. (p. 254)

Though most foreign students eventually adjust to their new environment (Selltiz, et al., 1963), some degree of "culture shock" is a common experience. Culture shock frequently appears in predictable stages, according to Foreman (1981), beginning with a fascination with the novelty of the host culture. As the initial excitement diminishes, students may develop a hostile and aggressive reaction to the new environment and unfamiliar customs. After a time, adjustment leads students to accept the host culture as just another way of living.

Research by Surdam and Collins (1984) indicated that the foreign students who are most likely to adapt successfully to life in the U.S. are those who:

1. spend more leisure time with Americans than with

their fellow citizens,

2. believe their English is adequate on their arrival,
3. come from better educated families,
4. maintain their religious beliefs and activities, and,
5. have not perceived a problem of discrimination.

Interview With a New Student from India: Cultural Adjustment

Ms. B. G. feels she was well prepared for life in Cedar Falls, Iowa when she arrived in January 1987. The community, the University of Northern Iowa, and the climate were all that she had expected.

Her home is in one of the major cities of India, but knowing that she was coming to a small city helped her prepare for the change in the pace of life. The difference in climate has been another dramatic change for Ms. G. She is accustomed to temperatures of 85° to 100°F all through the year. Having been warned about the cold winters in Iowa, she brought adequate clothing. Still, she was surprised to experience sub-freezing temperatures. Nonetheless, she has experienced no major adjustment difficulties in her first semester in the U.S.

Nearly everything in her life centers around the university and her studies, so the effects of being in a new community, or even of being in a new country, have not seemed significant. Having completed an undergraduate degree in India, she is

accustomed to university life. Her adjustment involves continuing her student lifestyle in a new environment.

She has studied English since she was a child, and feels confident speaking and writing in English. Language has not been a barrier for her, and she feels this is an important factor in her successful adjustment thus far.

Ms. G. chose to live off campus in an apartment about one-half mile from the university. She lives close to a supermarket, where she shops for her groceries. If she wishes to go to other places in town, she calls on an Indian friend who has a car. He is very willing to transport her, and frequently invites her to accompany him on errands.

The telephone system in the U.S. is particularly impressive to Ms. G., who frequently uses her phone to contact friends locally or out of town. Once a month she calls home to India. Although this is her first experience away from home, she has not felt homesick since the first week after her arrival. She calls upon friends frequently to seek and lend support.

Because her Hindu religious observances can be practiced privately without formal services, she easily and comfortably continues her religious life.

As a 21 year old student in the Master of Business Administration program at the University of Northern Iowa, Ms. G. feels much younger than her fellow students. In India, children start school at the age of three, and have finished their secondary

education by the age of sixteen or seventeen. Before coming to Iowa, Ms. G. had earned an undergraduate degree in criminology from an Indian university.

As long as she keeps busy with her studies, Ms. G. thinks that she will not feel strong effects of culture shock. In her first few months in the U.S., she has been absorbed in her studies. Her intercultural experiences thus far have been positive and fun. She suspects, however, that she will not feel the true impact of her stay in the U.S. until after her return to India. At that time she believes she will come to realize the great contrasts between the two cultures.

Language Shock

Related to culture shock is "language shock," which is the "distress from disorientation which results from inability to understand or to communicate in the language of the host environment" (Foreman, 1981, p. 74). The primary factor in language shock is not the actual ability of the student to speak English, but rather the student's perception of his or her own competence (Selltiz, et al., 1963). A student's lack of confidence in his or her own ability leads to feelings of inferiority and depression. The trauma of both culture shock and language shock have considerable affect on the student's self-concept and identity. Social adjustment can be greatly inhibited by these complex feelings of inadequacy.

Foreign students have indicated that one of the most difficult adjustment tasks is learning which topics are appropriate for conversation (Hartung, 1984). Not only are many students unfamiliar and uncomfortable with the attitudes of openness and familiarity between many of their American peers, but they also feel unable to find topics of common interest. The fear of making mistakes and starting confrontations prevents many foreign students from initiating social interactions (Hartung, 1984).

Students who are experiencing culture or language shock may exhibit such symptoms as a short attention span, unusual quietness or shyness, hostility, anxiety, confusion, dependency, or psychosomatic illness (Foreman, 1981).

Other adjustment difficulties reported by many foreign students are connected with American customs, diet, and pace of living (Selltiz, et al., 1963).

Interview With a Japanese Student: Language Shock

When Ms. S. W. arrived in the U.S. from Japan three years ago, she had no confidence in her ability to speak English. She was nervous about her accent and about finding the right words to use in conversation. Fearing that she would be thought of as "stupid," she did not initiate conversations. In fact, she did not like to talk at all.

Over the period of a year, she tried very hard to think and speak in English. She concentrated not only on vocabulary but

also on word context. Colloquial expressions have been especially difficult to master. Ms. W. feels she has a "good ear" which has helped her, though at times she feels her comprehension lags behind during conversations. When she hears a new expression, Ms. W. will use it in her own speech, notice the reaction of her listeners, and make any necessary corrections based on this trial and error approach. After her first year in the U.S., Ms. W. began to feel comfortable with the English language. She did not utilize an English tutor. However, she now asks a professional in the Learning Skills Center to proofread her written compositions.

The shyness and sense of inferiority that Ms. W. suffered had a negative impact on her daily life. She frequently withdrew from social situations and was cautious in all of her interactions. She feels that the language shock that she experienced can affect Asian students more severely than students from other parts of the world. Asian students, she noted, often feel inferior and shy. They tend to be less outgoing than other foreign students. In addition, Ms. W. has noticed that the Asian accent is harder for Americans to understand than European or South American accents. This communication barrier dramatically compounds the adjustment problems of foreign students. Ms. W. believes that perseverance and determination have been essential to her success in this country.

Social Activity

Foreign students' social activity may range from virtual isolation with few American friends to a total immersion in American social life. Selltiz, et al. (1963) identify three major influences on these variations among students:

1. individual differences in students which incline some to be sociable and some to be more solitary;
2. national background and social customs which may be more formal than in the U.S.;
3. previous international experience which exposes some students to other ways of living.

Adelegan and Parks (1985) found that older international students have more difficulty adjusting to new social relationships, food, climate, and the morals of the new locality than do younger students. Contributing to this difficulty is the fact that many older students are married, and the time they spend with their families takes away from the time they could spend interacting with Americans (Adelegan & Parks, 1985). Foreign students' families may feel that their values are challenged by a society where family obligation seems less important than in their home countries, and where the higher status of women and the freedom of the children seem to make the American individual's wishes take precedence over those of the family (Selltiz, et al., 1963).

Interview With a Nigerian Graduate Student: Social Adjustment

Mr. S. O. had a very difficult period of adjustment when he

arrived in the United States in 1979. Originally, he was enrolled in a large university in Oklahoma. He had studied English since childhood, but the English taught in Nigeria is British. Mr. O. was surprised to find a significant language barrier between him and the U.S. students. This barrier, combined with the demands of his studies and the experience of racial discrimination, created a very stressful environment for Mr. O. But the most painful situation for Mr. O. was the difficulty he had finding friends who hold the same values that he does.

Mr. O. describes himself as a "born again Christian." He follows his religious beliefs strictly. The students in Oklahoma with whom he had the most contact socialized in ways that were unacceptable to Mr. O. Their social activities frequently centered around alcohol, drugs, and sexual activity, and Mr. O. had no intention of participating. Although Mr. O. had some friends from his church, he felt very lonely and isolated. The strict upbringing he had experienced did not prepare him for the greatly different attitudes of many of his American peers. He missed the support he received from his family and friends back home.

After many hours of work in the library and "lots of prayer," Mr. O.'s English language skills improved and his confidence was strengthened. Mr. O. received exceptional support from his teachers, who took him to social activities and helped him meet people in the community.

In 1984, Mr. O. married a Nigerian classmate whom he had earlier encouraged to come to the U.S. to study. Two years later, they came to Cedar Falls where they are both pursuing advanced degrees. Although his travel is restricted now that he is married, Mr. O. does not notice much change in his social life, except that their friends tend to be other married couples now.

The foreign student adviser at the University of Northern Iowa has provided considerable help and support to Mr. O. and his family, and they feel comfortable in Cedar Falls. Even so, Mr. O. remembers the first years in the U.S. as being very difficult. A number of foreign students, he recalls, could not make it in the U.S. Many are just "hanging on." Foreign students who stay and succeed in the U.S. are "very special people getting special grace from God."

Student Housing

Housing

Perhaps as important as any other factor in the successful adjustment of foreign students is the quality, location, and cost of their housing (Blegen, et al., 1950). Students need accommodations which are comfortable, affordable, and close to campus and shopping. In addition, the students should have appropriate, quiet study areas as well as places to meet socially with other students (Blegen, et al., 1950).

Interview With a Brazilian Undergraduate: Housing

Mr. C. C. has been working on his bachelor's degree at the University of Northern Iowa for four years. For the first year after his arrival from Brazil, Mr. C. lived in a residence hall on campus. This was the least complicated housing arrangement available to him as a newcomer; the cost was known in advance, and the reservation could be made ahead of arrival. Universities in Brazil rarely maintain housing for students, and Mr. C. was attracted to the experience of living on a university campus.

At first, Mr. C. was very outgoing and made efforts to meet other students. As an on-campus resident, he became immersed in university life. His daily life centered around the university so that his impression of life in the U.S. was almost exclusively that of life on campus.

As time progressed, Mr. C. began to feel "claustrophobic" and insulated from the community. He felt out of touch with events in other parts of the country and the world. Adjustment, which involved adapting to university life, understanding a new culture, and becoming accustomed to a much smaller community, became more difficult and began to take a toll. Eventually Mr. C. became very depressed by the limitations of his environment. But, because he is determined to complete a U.S. college education, he has learned to accept the differences between Rio de Janeiro and Cedar Falls.

After his first year at the University of Northern Iowa, Mr. C. was ready to move to off-campus housing. He was not as open

and eager to meet new people as when he first arrived, becoming more selective in his friendships. He and four other students have moved to a house in the neighborhood surrounding the campus. Mr. C. likes this arrangement much better because he feels more comfortable living with his choice of friends. The five of them looked carefully for inexpensive housing; as a result, their living expenses are less than in the residence hall. Although he shares his living area with others, he feels he has more privacy, because he is not surrounded by a large number of strangers.

Health

Health Concerns

Foreign students commonly experience a number of frustrations when they seek medical attention, including:

1. finding health practices and beliefs that are very different from those in their backgrounds;
2. requiring attention for illnesses which are not common to domestic students;
3. trying to overcome a language barrier which makes it difficult to discuss concepts such as stress or depression; and,
4. feeling the disorientation of culture shock (Ebbin & Blankenship, 1986).

The stress of living in an unfamiliar environment is frequently manifested in physical problems. Foreign students are more likely to turn to the student health center for help with their stress-related complaints rather than risk the stigma of going to the counseling center (Ebbin & Blankenship, 1986).

Interview With a South African Student: Health Concerns

Mr. S. R. is a 29 year old South African student who has been working toward a bachelor's degree in accounting at the University of Northern Iowa since 1984. Shortly after Mr. R.'s arrival, he became ill and sought medical assistance from the student health center on campus. Although Mr. R. was not displeased with the medical services he received, he felt that the professionals did not have the background to diagnose and fully treat his illnesses.

A fellow South African student recommended a Cedar Falls doctor in private practice who had been to Africa and seemed to understand the nature and treatment of illnesses which affect Africans but which are uncommon to Americans. Mr. R. now seeks medical attention exclusively from this private physician.

The quality of medical services in the U.S. is somewhat better than in South Africa, but the costs are considerably higher. Comparable service in South Africa is much cheaper, in Mr. R.'s estimation. His health insurance, provided by his sponsoring agency, has covered his medical expenses in the U.S. to date.

Mr. R. has not found language to be a barrier in getting appropriate medical assistance. In one-to-one situations, such as in a doctor's office, he feels that communication is successful. He has been able to communicate his needs to medical staff, and has been satisfied that he understands the response.

United States Educational System

Academic Adjustment

Academic success is of considerable concern to foreign students; but after completing the first year of study, only a fifth of the foreign students questioned by Selltiz, et al. (1963) were worried about their academic standing.

While many foreign students report that they are impressed with the ability of their U.S. teachers to promote creativity and elicit ideas from students in their classes, they are uncomfortable with the familiarity with which teachers and students interact (Hartung, 1984). Because they have backgrounds in educational systems which enforce "rigid and distinct role expectations for teachers and students" (Hartung, p. 39), many foreign students view classroom informality or students' questioning of the teacher as "childish and irresponsible" (Hartung, p. 39).

The vast majority of foreign students, however, express satisfaction with the quality of their academic experiences at U.S. colleges and universities (Zikopoulos & Barber, 1986).

Relevance of Education

Students from colleges with overseas programs "show a more strongly cosmopolitan outlook, have greater understanding of other cultures, are more world-minded, have greater understanding of their own culture, and are more interested in overseas careers" (Freeland, 1986, p. 47). Certainly, these are positive effects. Some researchers argue, however, that the training received in U.S. universities continues to influence foreign students' expectations after they return home (Weiler, 1984). The research, teaching, and curricula in U.S. universities are those of a developed economy and not appropriate for the needs and resources of less developed Third World countries, according to Weiler (1984). Problems for less developed countries have been outlined by Altbach (1986) as follows:

1. English remains the scientific language, even in the home country, putting locally trained researchers at a disadvantage;
2. Research may be geared to international interests rather than to local relevance and need;
3. Students may become used to the U.S. standard of living;
4. Students become dependent on host nation academic and research systems which may not be accessible at home.

Furthermore, Weiler is concerned that less developed nations are perpetuating their dependence on the U.S. by continuing to "train engineers rather than the trainers of engineers, planners rather than the trainers of planners" (p. 179).

Interview With a Doctoral Student from Wales: Academic Adjustment

Gaining admittance to graduate school in Britain is far more difficult than in the U.S. This is the primary reason that Mr. A. T., doctoral candidate from Wales, applied to the University of Northern Iowa. Mr. T. says that students must have the equivalent of a 3.98 grade point average to be considered for admission to graduate school in Britain. From his perspective, then, the level of academic requirements at the University of Northern Iowa is very reasonable. His greatest difficulty in being admitted was finding funding, as no graduate assistantships were available at that time. After being denied admission to the University of Northern Iowa for financial reasons, Mr. T. worked as a teacher in London for two years. Finally he obtained Rotary funding, and came to Cedar Falls in 1981 to begin a master's program in the College of Education.

Mr. T. found the facilities at the university exceptional for the size of the institution. In addition, the professionals who staff these facilities, particularly the library, are superior to those he had known in Britain.

The rapport that Mr. T. developed with his professors has been a tremendous encouragement to him. His adviser has acted as a "mentor," encouraging Mr. T. to work toward a doctorate after completion of his master's degree. His professors have been most supportive, and frequently call upon him in their classes to contribute a comparative dimension. Mr. T. noted that the interactions between U.S. professors and their students are much less formal than in Britain. Students here are treated almost as colleagues.

His undergraduate program in Britain provided ample preparation for the master's program at the University of Northern Iowa. His communication skills in particular seemed to be much better than those of his American peers. With this level of academic preparation, Mr. T. has never felt insecure about his academic standing. In fact, he expressed a desire for more rigorous requirements and higher expectations for students at the undergraduate and master's levels.

Mr. T. now questions whether he will return to Britain when his degree is completed. Job opportunities in Britain are "slim." Study in the U.S. would be an asset to him as an administrator in Britain, however. Because curriculum and educational philosophy are different in Britain, the practical application of his graduate education would be limited. However, Mr. T. values his exposure to the U.S. system, and feels that this experience gives

him the ability to compare systems, question tradition, and provide creative leadership.

If a job offer should come from an institution in Britain, Mr. T. might decline it because of the lack of facilities and opportunities for research. Research in Britain tends to be done largely by case studies and observation, with an emphasis on theory. In the U.S., researchers take a more quantitative approach, using measures and experimentation, with an emphasis on application. Easy access to data banks and technology in the U.S. are significant reasons behind this difference. While believing strongly in the importance of developing theoretical knowledge, Mr. T. has come to prefer the latter approach.

Mr. T. expressed concern about one fundamental difference between the British and U.S. educational systems. In Britain, teachers are responsible for teaching values and morals in the classroom. Without this element of social training in U.S. schools, some students seem to be growing up without a sense of responsibility and judgment. The fact that some teachers are in real physical danger in their own classrooms is one of the most alarming things about U.S. society to Mr. T. He adamantly prefers the teaching of morality in the schools.

Financial Needs and Assistance

Financial Impact

The costs to foreign students of obtaining an education in

the U.S. are substantial. A number of problems which are entirely beyond the control of the foreign student may delay funds from home, greatly increasing financial pressures. These complications, which can cause foreign students serious financial hardships were outlined by Blegen, et al. (1950) and include:

1. U.S. dollar shortage overseas, and consequent limitation by foreign governments of dollar purchases;
2. incomplete and misleading budget information in college and university catalogues;
3. national emergencies and catastrophes;
4. inflation of foreign currencies;
5. inflation of the U.S. dollar;
6. family emergencies affecting the source of the student's funds;
7. personal emergencies.

Cummings and So (1985) have found that foreign students are usually not aware that they will have to work their way through school. "Many have a high regard for their academic proficiency and assume they will earn a scholarship after spending some time on campus" (Cummings & So, 1985, p. 417). Scholarships are not readily available for foreign students, and some must turn to work/study. While some students resent having to divide their time between school and work, the opportunity to earn extra income "turns out to be the strong economic feature of the American

system" (Cummings & So, p. 417).

Sources of financial aid to foreign students are limited to institutions, U.S. government and private sponsors, and home country sponsors. Little institutional aid is available for undergraduates, and little is available at the graduate level as well. There is more demand for U.S. governmental and sponsored funds than there is supply. Opportunities for funds from home country sponsors vary greatly from country to country, but certainly merit careful investigation by the student (Slocum, 1984).

A study in California shows that foreign students' tuition payments do not cover the costs of their education (Agarwal & Winkler, 1985). Foreign students tend to major in expensive technical programs which their home countries cannot afford to provide. It is more expensive to educate students in technical and scientific fields than in liberal arts programs; therefore, educating students in technological and scientific fields requires more subsidy from the university.

Although foreign students are costly to the institution, the cost is frequently counter-balanced because, according to Rogers (1984), (1) foreign students tend to be academically low risk students; (2) foreign students are more likely to attain educational objectives in less time than other non-traditional students; and (3) imposing surcharges or extra fees may discourage foreign students from applying to the institution.

Interview With a Sponsored South African Student: Financial Impact

Throughout her five years of study at the University of Northern Iowa, Ms. P. M. has been supported by funds from the Institute of International Education (IIE) in New York. These funds, contributed by corporations such as Ford Motor Company, are used to provide for the travel expenses, tuition, room and board, and modest living expenses of qualifying foreign students pursuing higher education in the U.S. After learning that her application to IIE was approved by their selection committee, she came to the University of Northern Iowa to begin a bachelor's degree program in Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages. Without this financial support, she could not possibly afford the expense of studying in the U.S.

When she arrived in Cedar Falls, she spent some of her personal funds on warmer winter clothing and a few pairs of denim jeans. At that time, the currency exchange rate was much better for South African currency than it is currently. Because of the devaluing of the South African rand in recent years, Ms. M. has asked her family not to send her money anymore. Instead, they send her the actual items she needs.

Ms. M.'s sponsor arranged a J-1 visa for her which permits her to work on or off campus as long as she maintains her full-time student status. Most college-bound foreign students come to the U.S. with F-1 student visas which permit them to work only on campus and only if financial need can be demonstrated. To take

advantage of her J-1 status, and to earn some extra spending money, Ms. M. has taken part-time work/study jobs on campus. These have helped her to obtain the resources to travel in the U.S. and to save some money for emergencies.

At the same time, because of stipulations involving the J-1 visa, she is obligated to return to her home country to work for a period of two years. This is fully in keeping with Ms. M.'s plans. She is looking forward to returning to South Africa when she completes her graduate studies in educational psychology. When she returns home, she hopes to teach educational psychology to teacher trainees. This is not a high paying job in South Africa, she concedes; however, she enjoys the field and expects a satisfying career.

Ms. M. has seen the toll that financial problems can take of foreign students. Those who are not sponsored may meet insurmountable difficulties which ultimately force them to return home. A friend of hers just recently encountered severe financial problems and was forced to leave the university. Because she carried an F-1 visa, her only legal employment option was work on campus. Since no campus work was available, she illegally attempted work off campus. The minimum wage that she earned was not sufficient to cover her tuition and living expenses, and finally she was forced to abandon her educational goals at the university.

Ms. M. is deeply appreciative of the financial support which has allowed her to work steadily toward her goals.

Recommended Actions for Student Services Professionals

Student Services Professionals

Student services professionals can play important roles in helping foreign students to enjoy successful experiences on U.S. campuses. The responsibility for helping with adjustment, health care, academic concerns, financial aid, and career planning begins even before the foreign student is admitted.

Recruiting of foreign students by some institutions is increasingly common. Not all recruiting is done ethically, however. Slocum (1984) found that some recruiters charge the students fees for their services, mismatch students with institutions, mislead and misinform students, and promise easy admissions. Certainly, ethical recruiting standards must be followed and enforced.

As much as is possible, admissions personnel must try to apply uniform evaluations of foreign students' school credentials (Cieslak, 1955). Then, decisions regarding admissions must be promptly communicated back to the students. Blegen, et al. (1950) encouraged providing, in addition to the notification of admissions, (1) detailed information on scholarships and financial aid, with a clear statement of the expenses students are expected to bear; (2) instructions on the official procedure at ports of entry, how to get to the institution, and the address and phone number of the foreign student adviser; (3) suggestions about items to pack, and (4) an introduction to daily living at the institution.

Some institutions offer orientation programs for foreign students a few weeks before classes begin in the fall. Students can spend time becoming acclimated to their new setting, while exploring unfamiliar aspects of social relationships, community life, and the academic system. Selltiz, et al. (1963) found that Asian students scored higher on interaction measures when oriented than when not, although European students did not show a significant difference.

A two-day orientation program was offered by Bendersky, Casoy, Felman, and Oppenheimer (1984) to entering foreign students. On the first day of the workshop, the students were helped to get to know each other, to understand the transition experience, to explore and share self-perceptions, and to react to some of the changes they had experienced. The second day involved role-playing in different situations which required coping skills. The workshop closed with a synthesis of the experiences of the two days, and students expressed satisfaction with the results.

Throughout the stay of foreign students, guidance is an important factor. "The more guidance a student received, the better his academic adjustment and the greater his satisfaction with his stay" (Selltiz, et al., 1963, p. 260). The counselor or foreign student adviser should possess a knowledge of Federal regulations pertaining to foreign students such as their rights and responsibilities and recent changes in the laws (Blegen, et al., 1950). The foreign student adviser is frequently called upon

to help clarify these immigration regulations to the student and the institution (Cieslak, 1955).

In addition to being a resource person, the foreign student adviser must be available to help foreign students with a wide range of other problems. Foreign students tend to turn to the foreign student adviser rather than to other student services practitioners with their legal, financial, and personal concerns (Surdam & Collins, 1984). Blegen, et al. (1950) recommended four guidelines for foreign student advisors:

1. Be helpful, but allow the students to solve their own problems.
2. Be easily accessible, but not always accessible.
3. Anticipate difficulties.
4. Encourage students to seek advice from faculty and other students as well.

Older foreign students have special needs to which counselors must be sensitive. Age, marital status, and country of origin can make adjustment more difficult for some (Adelegan & Parks, 1985). Counselors can assist older foreign students by helping them and their families develop social relationships and gain mobility around the campus and community. Since they are less likely than younger students to live in residence halls, they may need additional help in learning how to prepare local foods and in becoming familiar with community life.

Vocational counseling requires knowledge of the student's

home country, its work opportunities and requirements, and its economic and social characteristics (Blegen, et al., 1950). If the size of the foreign student population at an institution warrants it, a specific career counselor should be assigned to work in this area. Follow-up of returned graduates may provide the most accurate and current information for career counselors.

During their orientation, new foreign students should be introduced to the U.S. health care system, with some of the specific differences and similarities to other systems. Health care providers must be sensitive to the differing backgrounds of foreign students. Ebbin and Blankenship (1986) suggested that foreign students who seek medical attention be asked, "What would you do and how would you be treated if you had these symptoms at home?" Discussion and treatment can then be adjusted to fit better with the students' beliefs.

Effective financial counseling begins with helping the foreign student develop a realistic budget of expenses for the school year, rather than a minimum budget. This more accurate budget would include:

1. emphasis on the need for funds during vacation and break periods;
2. the cost of travel from port-of-entry to the school;
3. the need for clothing in a different climate;
4. the possibility for employment given immigration regulations (Blegen, et al., 1950).

Institutions should be prepared to assist foreign students after their arrival on campus when unforeseen circumstances, such as delays in receipt of funds from home, cause financial hardships. For example, policies may permit:

1. temporary deferment of payments for tuition, room and board, etc.;
2. short term loans for books, supplies, insurance, etc.;
3. part-time employment options on campus.

(Rogers, 1984)

Development of English speaking ability and the development of friendships are interrelated, with one positively influencing the other. Exposure to Americans, then, is important. Foreign students should be encouraged to live in residence halls rather than apartments, attend smaller universities, and to take advantage of access to extracurricular activities, particularly in the early weeks of a first stay (Selltiz, et al., 1963). Increased involvement and representation on campus leads to more opportunities for friendships and for greater cultural understanding.

A community college foreign student adviser initiated a series of four coffee hours for international students which helped them to meet campus and community members (Ozaki, 1985). The first meeting of the semester honored new international students who were individually invited to attend. The second meeting was sponsored by the student government association, and

student government officers met informally with the international students. At the third meeting, sponsored by the Baptist student union, international and American students, faculty and staff socialized. Finally, a community group sponsored the fourth meeting, and people from the vicinity of the campus attended to meet the international students. The participants responded positively to having structured opportunities to get to know one another.

Foreign students can be a valuable resource for the institution and the host community. Faculty can invite foreign students to be "guest lecturers" in order to bring a comparative dimension to their classes. Through the foreign student adviser, students can be contacted to speak in community meetings and to participate in field trips to local sites of interest. All of these activities should benefit the student as well as the institution or group. The concerns of the foreign student adviser are to:

1. examine each request for foreign students' participation;
2. inform the students of the expectations placed upon them;
3. follow up the experience with both the student and the group (Blegen, et al., 1950).

Successful community contact can be achieved through organizing international fairs which highlight the foods, music, and customs of the foreign students' home lands. Students can be

called upon to share their cultural points of view on community projects, or to serve as translators and tutors in various capacities in the community (Reed, 1985).

Interview With a Foreign Student Adviser

The Foreign Student Adviser at the University of Northern Iowa, Ms. G. N. currently assists 138 foreign students. The percentage of foreign students in the University of Northern Iowa student body is lower than other state universities in the midwest. However, the number of students is gradually and steadily increasing every year.

Recruitment for the University of Northern Iowa is done largely through established links with organizations and individuals in other parts of the world. These institutions, governments, and students have specific understandings and expectations when dealing with the University of Northern Iowa. To supplement and expand these links, Ms. N. provides admissions literature to secondary schools world-wide. This literature, which she developed, explains minimum student costs including tuition, room and board, books and supplies, clothing, recreation, and health insurance; financial assistance available to foreign students; foreign student employment prospects; housing; medical care and health insurance; community and campus social groups; and climate.

When a foreign student applies for admission to the university, Ms. N. evaluates her/his academic credentials, and attempts to

determine whether the student is likely to be successful in study in the United States. Grade point average must be high, and courses taken must meet admissions standards. Proficiency in English is required for admission, and test scores to demonstrate proficiency are required of all prospective students. A source of complete financial support must be certain before a student can be granted a student visa and admitted to the university. Ms. N. firmly adheres to guidelines recommended by the National Association for Foreign Student Advisers in order to ensure that her evaluations of students' backgrounds and resources are correct and consistent with the standards of other institutions. Ms. N. emphasizes that accurately predicting a foreign student's chances for success is of critical importance. An unsuccessful foreign student forced to return home without a degree can face social and familial pressures that are devastating. Ms. N.'s judgment on foreign student admissions will have lifelong impact on the students involved. She proceeds on admissions decisions with great care and objectivity, continually updating and expanding her knowledge of educational systems of the world.

Once admitted, the foreign student receives more information about the university, the community, and student responsibilities. In an effort to reduce the anxiety and confusion of coming to a new country, Ms. N. has assembled a package of materials that address most of the common questions and concerns that foreign students express. Funding needs and the limited opportunities for

financial aid are emphasized. A comprehensive list of "Do's and Don'ts" covers packing suggestions; financial needs on arrival as well as long term; travel instructions; legal documents needed for the student and any accompanying dependents; common first reactions of foreigners to U.S. culture; campus orientation sessions; instructions for making a call from a telephone booth; and Ms. N.'s telephone numbers at work and at home with an invitation to the student to call her for help if the need should arise.

Ms. N. understands the comfort of being met at the airport when arriving in a foreign place, and she offers to arrange for someone to meet newcomers when they first arrive.

The fall and spring semester orientation workshops, organized by Ms. N., are held the week before classes begin and continue with informal meetings through the first week of classes. This introduction to university life is presented as often as possible by representatives from departments on campus. These representatives help the new foreign students become more familiar with student health services; the university billing system; the American system of education; the Office of Learning and Instruction and their tutoring services; U.S. laws which affect foreigners; Social Security and U.S. income tax regulations as they pertain to foreign students; U.S. holidays; financial management; and the university library. Foreign students who have already experienced the trauma of settling at the university act as peer

advisers who maintain contact with the new students to answer questions and respond to concerns that arise after classes begin.

Personal guidance of foreign students at the university is a foremost priority for Ms. N. Students approach her with concerns that range from questions regarding visas to troubles with homesickness. As Foreign Student Adviser, Ms. N. is responsible for knowing the technicalities of current immigration laws, upholding the policies and standards of the institution, and compassionately understanding the profound and complex human reactions of people separated from family and homeland. Her skills in cross-cultural communication are developed from her understanding and sincere appreciation of the differences in the backgrounds of her diverse group of students. She strives to meet foreign students' needs in all areas, technical and personal, yet she realizes that students must learn to cope with some of the adjustment on their own. While remaining accessible to the foreign students on campus, Ms. N. encourages them to seek assistance and support from other sources including their fellow students.

The International Friendship Program provides opportunities for families and persons in the Cedar Falls area to socialize with foreign students from the University of Northern Iowa. Community members become "host families" and sponsor social activities which help foreign students become more familiar with American culture and family life. This program has been in existence for many years, and Ms. N. continues to encourage and support its active

role. She believes that community contact and social interaction are educational and enriching for all participants.

University policy requires all foreign students to obtain health insurance coverage. This mandatory expense, which exceeds $200 per year, is frequently questioned by foreign students who have limited financial resources. Although she is concerned about the difficult financial struggles of many foreign students, Ms. N. insists that all comply with this policy, emphasizing that because health care in the United States is very costly in comparison to comparable care in other nations, no foreign student can afford to be without insurance protection.

Some money is available through the Foreign Student Affairs office for interest-free emergency loans. Ms. N. is responsible for administering these funds. She considers each student's case individually, then depending on the need and the amount of money available, provides short-term loans. In part because Ms. N. is cautious to prevent students from accumulating unmanageable debts, borrowers have always repaid these loans.

In order to strengthen relations between foreign students and university faculty and staff, Ms. N. provides counsel in her area of expertise and frequently seeks information from other professionals on campus. She works closely with department heads when evaluating prospective students' academic qualifications. Financial aids officers ask for her interpretation of regulations that limit foreign student employment. Ms. N. speaks to campus groups

about the special needs of foreign students. She encourages faculty to discuss expectations with foreign students, and to be sensitive to the problems the students may experience.

Although increasing demands on her time and limited resources have been frustrating for Ms. N., she remains sincerely committed to her role as adviser and advocate for foreign students at the University of Northern Iowa.

Conclusion

Dr. Lattie F. Coor, President of the University of Vermont, is an advocate of increasing international activities on college and university campuses in this country. Coor (1983) stated:

> I predict an upsurge in the international dimension on the American college campus. International affairs, once considered remote and somewhat exotic on many American campuses, is now the way of the world and, while we may still be rooted in a nation-state base, many of the world's professionals -- in business, education, and government -- will function in a multi-national setting. (p. 27)

This conviction is held by many administrations in U.S. colleges and universities, and many institutions are actively seeking to increase their enrollments of foreign students. With careful

attention to the emotional, physical, financial, and career needs of these visiting students, the needs of both the institutions and the students will be well served.

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