

intead

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION ADVANTAGE, LLC

Pre-Arrival Communication:
Help your admitted students
make the transition to *your* school

Presented at



Region XI
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Stowe, VT

Benjamin Waxman, Intead

Contents

- **Digital Orientation Perspective – A Case Study**
 - Goals
 - Process
 - Results
- **Handouts**
 - ICEF – Student Retention Begins with Orientation
 - Digital Orientation Planning Grid
(sample and blank worksheet)



Two Elusive Birds

Successful
Transition

Higher
Yield

- Adjustment to new environment
- Comfort with / trust in new hosts
- Choosing between multiple acceptances
- Looking for ways to share their pride

On average, students are receiving between 2 and 4 acceptance letters AND they are waiting 2 to 4 months from the time of acceptance to arrival on campus. We want to be sure they feel confident about their enrollment decision AND confident as they arrive on campus.

The Digital Orientation helps international students build a stronger bond with the institution they already know, applied to, and were accepted by. Now they have more information for themselves and their parents and friends. They get to show off where they might choose to go by sharing links to a digital orientation. Those people in their lives who most influence their decisions can participate in the decision making. The pride in making the choice can be shared. Those things that differentiate your school can be shared that much more prominently. And the orientation process can begin immediately during a very anxious waiting period.



ONE OF THE NATION'S TOP UNIVERSITIES

Case Western Reserve, a leader among independent research universities, offers world-class academic programs in Cleveland's culturally vibrant University Circle.

This turn-key implementation required very little support from the institution.

This digital orientation is a customized micro-site to engage and enroll prospective international students.

The site follows the institution's branding standards, making the orientation pages look and feel exactly like the current institutional website. However, Intead hosts the content on our servers to avoid typical technology integration challenges.

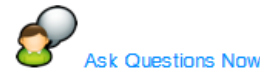
Using our deep content library, coupled with the institution's information, Intead creates a portal for admitted students to learn about what it means to study in the U.S. at your institution. Note the 3 language options (upper right).

Search [input field]

Picture Yourself at Case Western Reserve University



Students & Parents Forum



Poll

What are your biggest concerns about studying in the U.S.

- Finding friends
- Understanding English
- Finding an apartment
- Being away from home

[Vote](#) [View Results](#) [PollDaddy.com](#)

Income and Finance

Bank Accounts You should open a checking and savings account with a bank. These accounts are places to store

The American Classroom

The American classroom is very unique. Many international students have never seen anything like it. Lectures There are

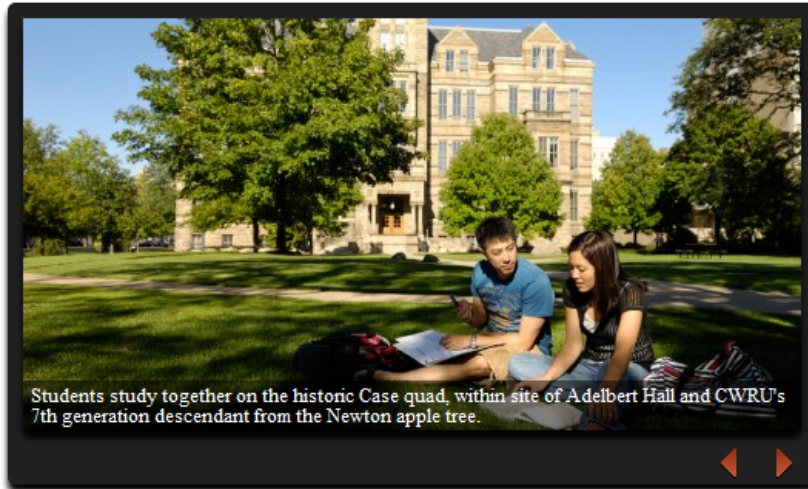
ONE OF THE NATION'S TOP UNIVERSITIES

Case Western Reserve, a leader among independent research universities, offers world-class academic programs in Cleveland's culturally vibrant University Circle.

The information presented covers getting established in the U.S., campus life, the American classroom, banking, healthcare, safety, and other topics international students want to understand before they make the enrollment decision.

Polls and forums foster discussion and produce marketing insights for future content.

Picture Yourself at Case Western Reserve University



Students & Parents Forum



[Ask Questions Now](#)

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Picture Yourself at Case Western Reserve

- The American Classroom
- Social and Culture
- Where to go for academic help
- Avoiding cheating and plagiarism

Students meet in front of Adelbert Hall with the University Hospital complex in the background.

Students & Parents Forum

[Ask Questions Now](#)

Poll

What are your biggest concerns about studying in the U.S.

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- Being away from home

Vote [View Results](#) [PollDaddy.com](#)

[other polls](#)

Helpful Links

- [2012 Academic Calendar](#)
- [CWRU - Auster Announcement](#)

Developing this took roughly 3 months with about 80% of content from our library and 20% customized for the institution.

They had a few staff involved from the admissions and students services departments helping with content and design reviews.

The roll out involved a series of emails to accepted students with each one highlighting links to specific content from Crime and Safety to deadlines for enrollment.

We also offered a webinar in Mandarin by a Faculty member. We asked students to forward the email to parents since contact information for parents is mostly not available.

The most viewed content was "The American Classroom."

Healthcare
One of the most important things to know is where to go if you get sick or hurt. There are many things you can do to prevent both. But you should be informed on where to get healthcare. Before you leave for the U.S. Make sure you have received all of your medical records from [\[Read the Rest...\]](#)

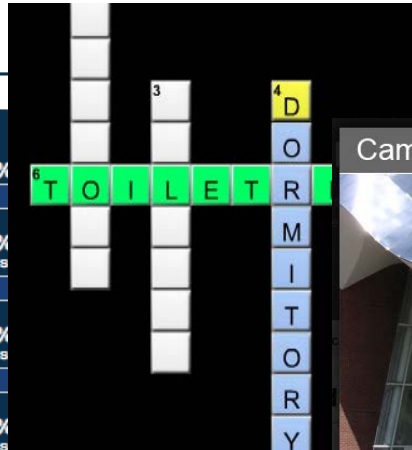
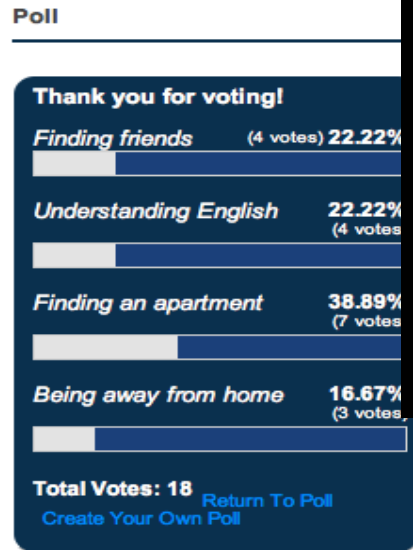
Student Visa Information
Make an appointment as soon as possible because lengthy delays may occur as background checks are performed prior to your appointment. Every prospective student whose initial Form I-20 has been issued on or after September 1, 2004, must pay the \$200 SEVIS I-901 Fee prior to the visa interview. For complete information regarding SEVIS fee payment, [\[Read the Rest...\]](#)

Interactive tools, data collection, forums, chat And Games & Quizzes



What excites you the most about studying in the US

- Academic programs
- Living environment
- Professional experience
- The food

[Vote](#) [View Results](#) [PollDaddy](#)




Campus Life Quiz



Select Language  

The Peter B. Lewis Building, home to the Weatherhead School of Management, was designed by this noted architect.

- Frank Lloyd Wright
- Jørn Utzon
- Frank O. Gehry
- Michael Graves

[SKIP QUESTION](#)

 CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY EST. 1826

Your progress  

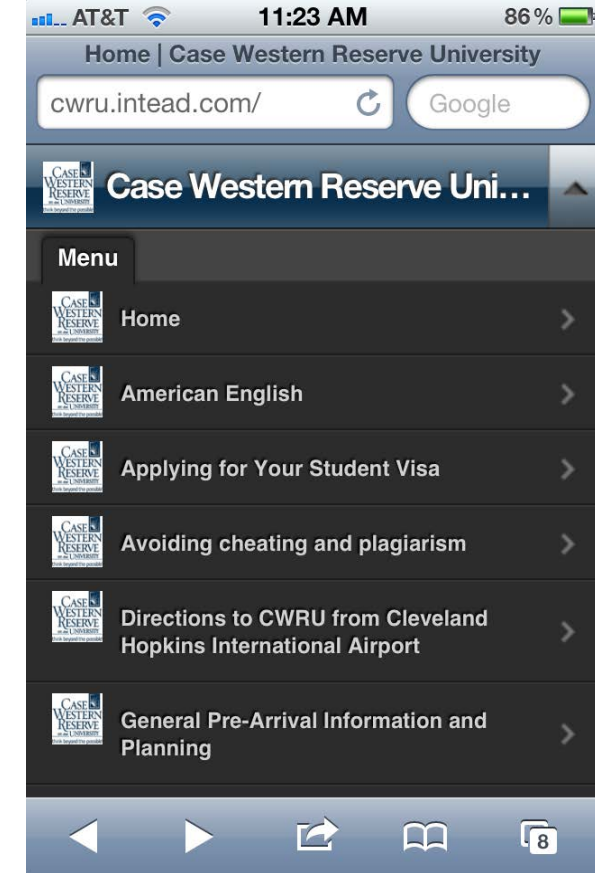
We included interactive tools, data collection, forums, and chat rooms.

Customizable, interactive polls engage students and provide you with valuable information. Forums and chat rooms allow for questions and interaction with students during the decision making process and during their cultural immersion.

We added games to engage students and to reinforce the content. After all, you are working with the “digital natives” generation. The games convey the content in a playful and fun way. Campus and other quizzes can orient students to important locations. You might ask, “Find the building where you need to be at 4 pm this Friday.” The games can push students to complete required orientation tasks and forms.

Online games draw users deeper into your content, familiarizing students with campus and other school features while establishing stronger relationships. Competition among users presents opportunities to offer rewards (t-shirts, caps) and further engage users.

Mobile Is Crucial



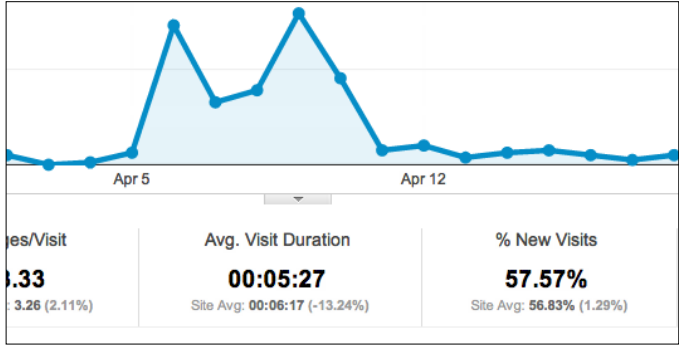
Mobile delivery is crucial. China has 485 million Internet Users and, **916 million mobile users**.

For perspective: the entire U.S. population is just 300 million.

Across all Asian markets the Internet is mostly consumed via mobile handset. 67% of Chinese citizens have smartphones. 33% have tablets – Lenovo being the most popular (source: We Are Social, Nov 2011).

In addition to the microsite on the Internet, we created the digital orientation to be easily accessible via mobile apps or through our mobile-friendly designed web delivery.

Analytics Create A Learning System



					Duration
1.	(direct) / (none)	New Visitor	181	3.16	00:04:58
2.	(direct) / (none)	Returning Visitor	138	3.25	00:09:26
3.	webmail.mail.163.com / referral	Returning Visitor	13	5.31	00:06:57
4.	twebmail.mail.163.com / referral	Returning Visitor	11	3.27	00:04:31
5.	36ohk6dgmcd1n-c.c.yom.mail.yahoo.net / referral	New Visitor	10	2.80	00:03:02
6.	webmail.mail.163.com / referral	New Visitor	10	2.80	00:05:21
7.	twebmail.mail.163.com / referral	New Visitor	7	9.71	00:07:40
8.	cwebmail.mail.126.com / referral	Returning Visitor	6	2.00	00:01:44

All digital marketing is highly measurable. We track the analytics to gain insight into what we should tweak each year. We track usage patterns and student interests including origin of users, digital behavior, and access from mobile vs. web.

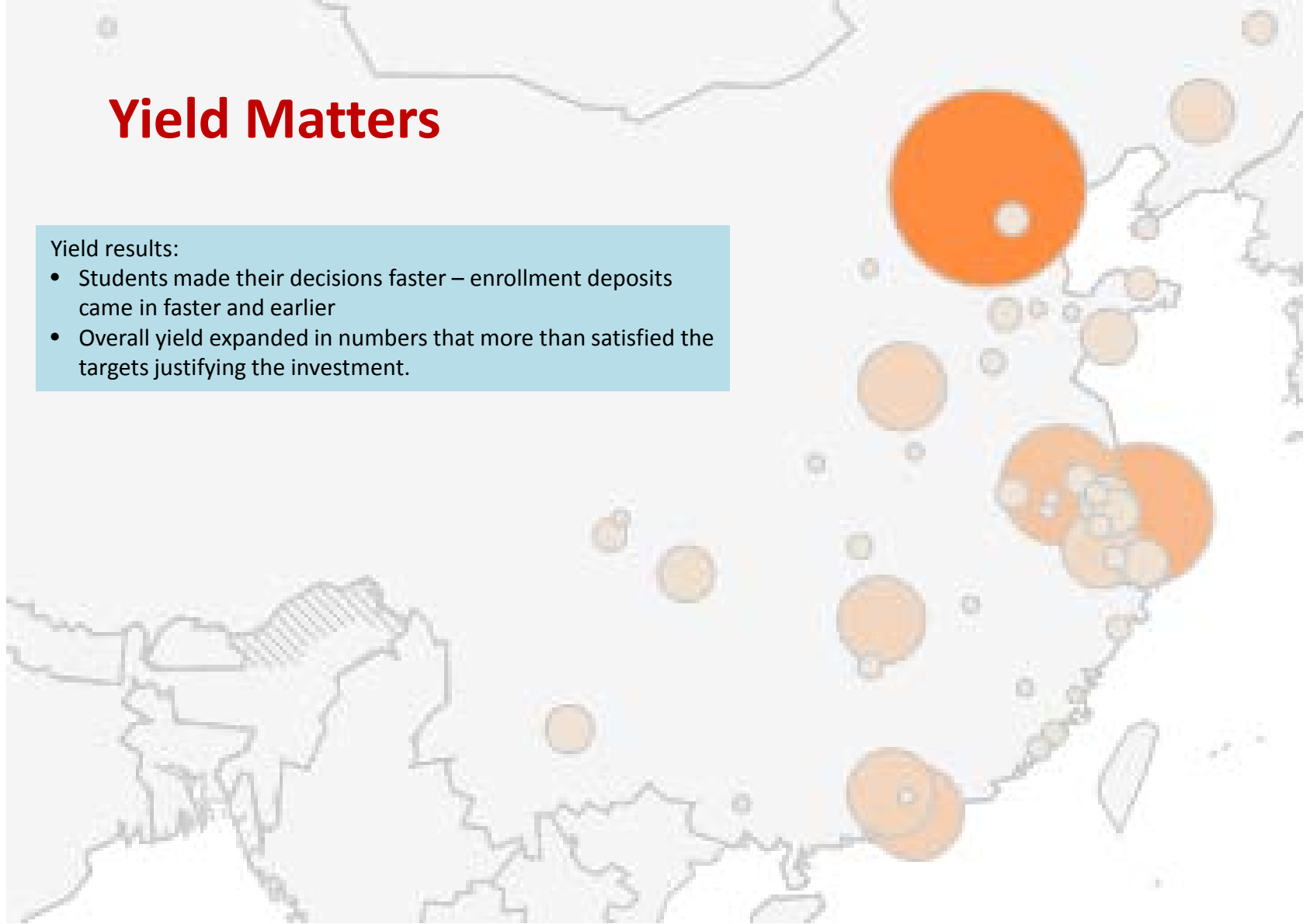
What we learned:

- Traffic to the orientation was driven by email notifications concerning specific content sections. Traffic spikes occurred within 36 hours of email delivery.
- The average time on the site was between 5 and 7 minutes per visit, meaning visitors are taking time to read the content.
- Chinese do not seem to like posting questions on unfamiliar forums -- So we posted for them and they came to view the information.
- The Chinese and Korean language versions were visited 33% more frequently than the English version.
- The average time spent was 40% higher for the Chinese version than the English version.
- Mobile visitors had the same usage patterns as the Internet browser visitors.
- Visitors did not browse the entire site – roughly 1/3 of the orientation drew visitors.
- Traffic came from across the world.
- Since YouTube is blocked in China and we had videos hosted on YouTube incorporated into the site, we put a Mandarin sentence in the English version “If you are visiting from China, Click here” allowing visitors to view the video on Youku – the Chinese version of YouTube.

Yield Matters

Yield results:

- Students made their decisions faster – enrollment deposits came in faster and earlier
- Overall yield expanded in numbers that more than satisfied the targets justifying the investment.



What We All Want

More well-placed

well-prepared

international students

We get there through clear and compelling information that highlights the best of your institution in an accessible format.



Thank you

Contact Info

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intead[™] INTERNATIONAL **EDUCATION** ADVANTAGE, LLC
Digital technology to attract, recruit, orient, retain international students

Another useful example we found: University of Wisconsin offers a very content-rich micro-site with great orientation material.

- A useful guide to others trying to create this kind of information resource for international students.
- It is very long to try to get through it from start to finish.
- It is entirely in English and the backend coding and overall presentation make it challenging to deliver this information in multiple languages.
- The orientation is designed in a self-contained presentation package that exists on a single webpage. This design prevents a school from creating distinct landing pages that are useful when conducting a sustained email marketing campaign.

Take Away: This site works as an orientation tool to aid transition but is far less effective at increasing yield.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Getting a Student Visa

Maintaining Your Immigration Status

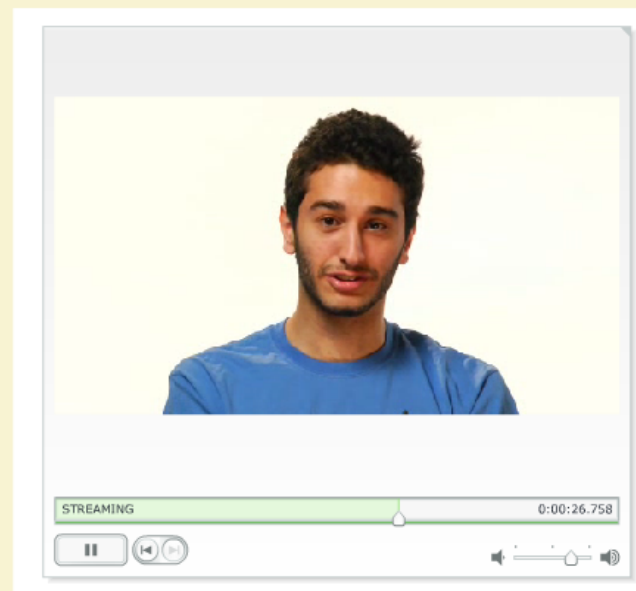
Academics

Employment Options

Student Life

Living in Madison, WI

Conclusion



1 of 16

Romain, France

My name is Romain. I am from Paris, France but I live in Dubai. I am a sophomore here at UW-Madison majoring in Finance and Real Estate. Before your arrival to Madison, one important thing to do would be to get a visa, and to get a visa, you will need to visit a US consulate or embassy in your country and submit an application. During the process, there will be a short interview where you will need to answer some questions, so my advice to you would be, be ready for those questions so you can get your visa easily. One important thing to do upon your arrival to Madison would be to check in with ISS [International Student Services] and to attend their mandatory orientation session to learn more about how to maintain your immigration status.

◀ Back Next ▶



Student retention begins in, and sometimes before, the first week of class

Published October 16, 2013

<http://monitor.icef.com/2013/10/student-retention-begins-in-and-sometimes-before-the-first-week-of-class/>

For many educators, the memory of the last student intake and last orientation is never far away, especially with a new school year recently underway in many parts of the world. How would you rate your school's effort at welcoming new international students and helping them settle in? What are you thinking of improving for your next intake?

These are not small questions. There is an increasingly clear relationship between an effective orientation – and related services that encourage incoming international students to reach out and connect with new friends – and the level of engagement students achieve with their school and their new community throughout their studies. This level of attachment has been shown in turn to be an important factor in student performance, retention, and even in the student's interest in remaining on in the host country to pursue career or immigration opportunities after graduation.

We have looked at issues and strategies around student retention in previous posts, including features on data-driven enhancements to student support services as well as the impact of culture shock. But for many educators, it seems the path to dealing with these issues – including better retention rates – begins in the first week of class, or perhaps even before.

Preventing homesickness

A recent paper published in the *Journal of American College Health* – “Homesickness and Adjustment in University Students” – notes that many new post-secondary students will suffer intense homesickness.

“The transition to college or university can be an exciting new experience for many young adults. For some, intense homesickness can make this move difficult, even unsustainable.”

“Homesickness – defined as the distress or impairment caused by an actual or anticipated separation from home – carries the unique hallmark of preoccupying thoughts of home and attachment objects. Sufferers typically report depression and anxiety, withdrawn behavior, and difficulty focusing on topics unrelated to home.”

“For domestic and international university students, intense homesickness is particularly problematic. It can exacerbate preexisting mood and anxiety disorders, precipitate new mental and physical health problems, and sometimes lead to withdrawal from school.”

The report's authors, Dr. Christopher Thurber, a psychologist at Phillips Exeter Academy, and Dr. Edward Walton, a professor in pediatric medicine at Oakland University, recommend a number of preventative strategies based on their research in the field:

- “Provide orienting information... The more that incoming students know about what to expect and where to find supports and resources when they arrive, the less anxious they will feel.
- Plan for how and when to maintain connections with home [via] letters, email, video chats, phone calls, and in-person visits.
- Initiate social contacts prior to the first day of school... Social networking websites [such as a dedicated Facebook page or chat room] can be healthy tools for connections between new and returning students or among groups of new students.
- For international students, cultivate host-country friends as well as homeland friends... Establishing a friendship group of predominantly homeland friends impedes acculturation and is usually associated with more intense feelings of missing home.
- Educate new and returning students about the peer and professional supports that are available on and around campus. All students should know where to find resident advisors, dormitory affiliates, health centre staff, and mental health professionals.”

To this we would also add:

- Arrange for your institution’s psychology department to give a workshop(s) to staff on how to discover tell-tale signs of depression or anxiety in advance, and what to do to ensure the student receives help. Include intercultural sensitivity training for staff (and consider extending this to students both domestic and international).
- Pay special attention to international students who arrive late (due to visa delays, personal issues, etc.) and might have missed the formal orientation programme.

Expanded support services

The importance of strong orientation and support services targeted to new international students is looming larger in schools and campuses these days, partly because many international programmes have realised steady enrolment growth in recent years.

“Even at colleges where the raw numbers aren’t jaw-dropping, foreign students’ increased presence is felt,” says a 2011 article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. “International students, or those from particular countries, are no longer showing up in onesies and twosies... As a result, what might have previously been ascribed to the personality or learning style of an individual student is beginning to coalesce into noticeable patterns, although international educators are quick to say that it’s not always possible – or appropriate – to generalise across country or cultural groups.”

And along with that growing presence on campus, the profile of today’s international students is noticeably different than it was even a few years ago. Undergraduate enrolments are growing quickly – this is particularly the case in major destination countries such as the US, where undergraduate enrolments have grown twice as fast as graduate enrolments over the past few years – and students are coming from a greater range of countries than in the past.

As *The Chronicle* reports, American educators are responding with new or expanded support services.

“A growing number of colleges have instituted peer-mentor programmes. At American University, current international students act as small-group leaders during orientation, sharing their own experiences of acclimating to campus life. Colorado State University’s peer advisers, about half of whom are American, reach out to incoming international students, introducing

themselves by email and offering to answer questions before the semester even begins.

Other institutions have variations on the peer-adviser theme. Rice University stations 'international liaisons' in each of its residence halls to serve as informal resources to foreign students, who can drop by their rooms with questions or concerns. George Mason pairs participants in its Access programme, which pairs provisionally-admitted students who work to improve their English while taking college courses with honours students who live on adjacent floors."

Institutions, in the US and otherwise, are also looking at how to improve the effectiveness of their orientation programmes. For some, this means paring orientations down to the basics in order to help avoid information overload for newly arrived students. For others, orientation takes place in extended sessions before the beginning of the school year or even in for-credit courses taken in the first semester of study.

The University of Toronto, for example, offers Green Path, a dedicated 12-week summer preparation course for students from China. Participants get a chance to polish their English and to get a jump on social connections and academic preparation for the school year ahead. The programme's focus on Chinese students, however, can be seen as both a strength and a challenge given the strong interest many international students have in connecting with students from other cultural backgrounds.

"The instinct to form cliques around nationality is something Green Path administrators are keen to guard against," reports Canada's *Globe and Mail* newspaper. "The 'GPer's' all hail from China, often speak Mandarin to each other, and grow tight-knit after 12 weeks together... At the same time, instructors constantly urge them to break out of that bubble and go exploring."

The University of British Columbia, meanwhile, offers a two-week summer orientation programme called Jump Start for new international and Aboriginal students. As the *Globe and Mail* report outlines:

"Starting with a pick-up at the airport, the programme's two intensive weeks mix academic lectures with workshops on living independently and plenty of social events, like talent shows and dancing nights. Many universities offer events like these, but stretching them over two weeks and getting professors involved remains rare, not to mention costly, which may help explain why few schools have followed suit. The programming is free, but students are asked to pay up to CDN 1,240 for room and board."

"Students insist it was worth it. 'It helps a lot, for real,' says Giulio Sucar Pregnotato, 18, who came to UBC from Sao Paulo, Brazil to study biomedical science. 'It removes the sense that you're alone in a huge pond of other people. You just feel inserted more.'"

These examples suggest a new idea about orientation is taking shape – one that starts early, even before the student's arrival on campus, and lasts longer than was the case for orientations past.

They also suggest that formal orientation sessions are increasingly seen as an important part of a broader process, one that includes ongoing information and support services for new students to help ensure they have every opportunity to connect with fellow students, the larger community, and even the country in which they have chosen to study.

Digital Orientation Planning Tool



Step 1: Define IT Platform/Support

- Hosting: University website under International Students tab
- IT Resource: Internal IT staff
- Email Distribution Engine: University admissions email system

Step 2: Define Target(s) For Digital Orientation Plan

- Target Country: China
- Target Audience: Admitted undergraduate students
- Target Results: Increase YIELD from 15% to 20% (admitted → enrolled)

Step 3: Collect Content

- Existing Content Sources: Admissions brochures & videos; orientation materials
- New Content Creation: 2 current int'l students to create video testimonials; consider webinar with international professor in local language
- Translation Resource: Current international students and professor

Step 4: Design Micro-Site

- Website Design Resources:

Marketing communications staff/IT support

Step 5: Define Email Marketing Plan

- Marketing Goal:

Drive increased enrollment (yield) by engaging admitted students with valuable content and driving them and their parents to the university website.

- Primary Audience:

Undergraduate students in China

- Secondary Audience:

Parents of undergraduate students in China

- Tactic:

4-week email marketing campaign starting with admissions letter to int'l students pointing them to micro-site with digital orientation content in local language

- Content To Be Promoted via Email:

Classroom experience, safety, academics, international student social life

- Tracking Plan

Email engine to track open and click through rates. Online registration form for downloadable Chinese language PDFs (sharable with parents) to help capture student email addresses and track engagement

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