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# **NAFSA 2011 Region III Conference**

## **International Student Adjustment: Using Research to Inform Practice**

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# Session Outline

- Intended Learning Outcomes
- Activity 1 – short writing exercise and brainstorming
- Adjustment issues– the research says...
- Activity 2 – Think, pair, share:  
Implications of research for practice
- Gaps – what don't we know: large group discussion
- Speakers' perspectives
- Resources
- Questions/Discussion

# Intended Learning Outcomes



Define terms used in research

Expand understanding of why international student adjustment is important

Gain understanding of research implications for daily practice

Become familiar with available research and resources

# Definitions

**Adjustment**: The period of time it takes to transition and adapt to a new lifestyle and culture. *Cross-cultural* adjustment refers to adjustments in transition from one culture to another.

**International Student**: students who have come to the U.S. on a nonimmigrant visa to pursue undergraduate or graduate degrees.

# Activity One



Write for 1 minute about the following statement:

I think the biggest challenge international students face in adjusting to our campuses is...

# Psychological Issues

- Feelings of loss (identity, status, self-value, social network, support systems)
  - Loneliness and isolation
  - Homesickness
  - Anxiety
  - Powerlessness
  - Expectations vs. reality
- = Severe emotional distress

# Academic and Socio-cultural Issues

- Differences in educational systems
- Academic workloads, pressure, and requirements
- Fast pace of lectures
- Lack of time management skills
- Difficulties in navigating the system
- Differences in cultural norms and values
- Lack of connectedness to campus environment
- Difficulties in socializing with domestic students



# Other Adjustment Issues

- Language challenges that influence all aspects of academic and social life
- Financial issues
- Arriving unprepared mentally and culturally
- Other worries that add stress: immigration status, working, health insurance, etc.



## Activity 2: Think, Pair, Share

Now that you have heard some of the available information from research, think about what we, as practitioners, might do differently in our work and on our campuses. Spend a few minutes thinking about it on your own, then discuss with your neighbor. Be ready to share with the large group.

# Implications

- Supportive campus environment – how do we create one?
- Academic and career advising
- International student advising office
- Counseling services
- Peer/mentor programs

# Lessons Learned

- International students are not homogeneous – diversity within diversity – cultural and country boundaries.
- How to disseminate information about campus services to international students.
- Different interventions to different groups of students.

# Gaps- Large Group Discussion

Based on the research and discussions in the session today, what do we still not know about international student adjustment? What are the gaps?

What kind of research do you think is still needed?

# Speakers' Perspectives



# Resources, Questions

