

Advising International Students

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International Student Support Team



Anne Berry (Multilingual Student Language Support Specialist)



Megan Carmès (Student Immigration and Off-Campus Studies Coordinator)



Jenny Howenstine (Associate Dean of Admissions, Director of International Recruitment)



Emiko Oonk (Assistant Director, Center for Multicultural and International Engagement)

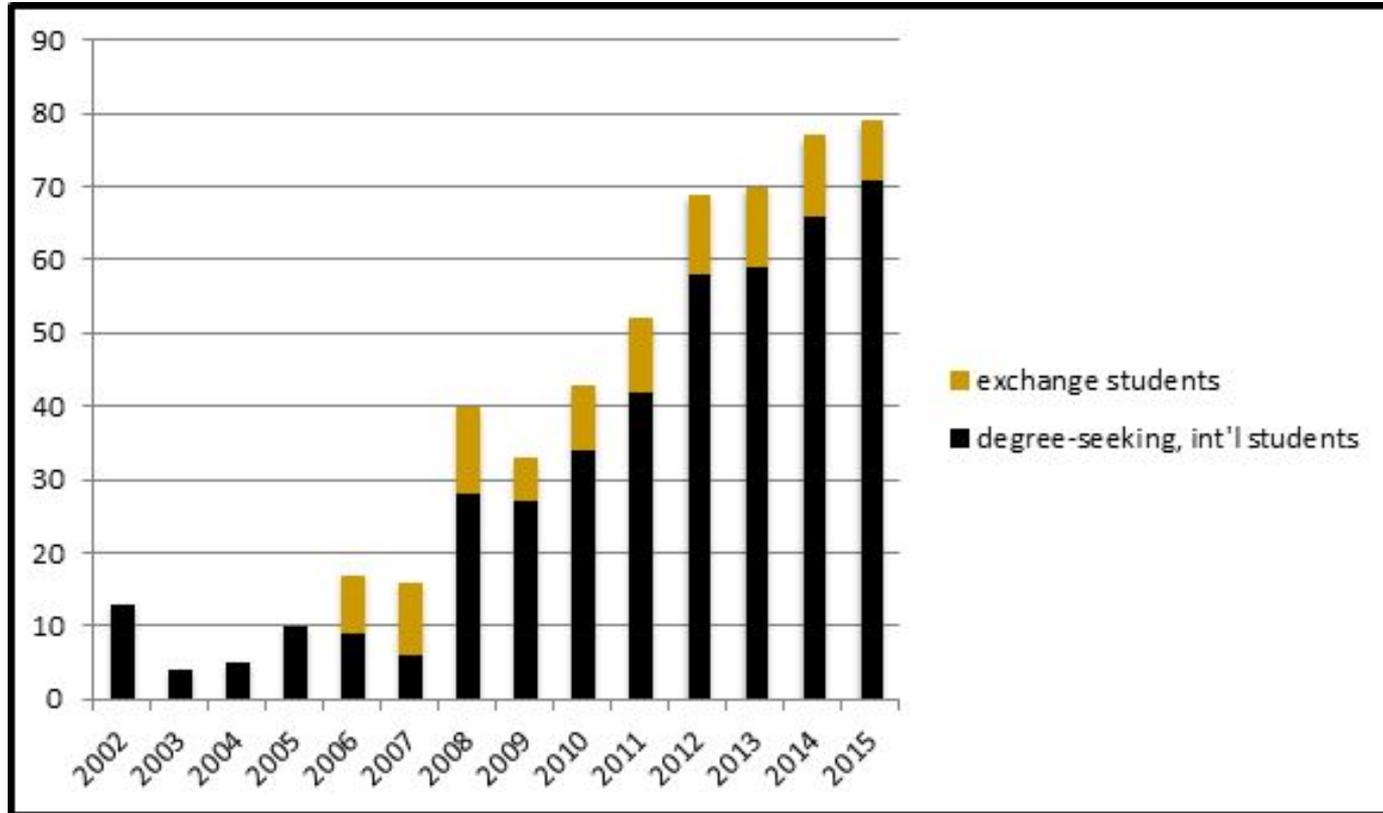


Tim Schroer (Associate Dean of Students -- International Students, 1st and 4th Year Students)

Agenda:

- International student support team members on campus
- Introduction to our international students
- What faculty need to know about immigration regulations
- Support systems in place for new international students
- Common cultural and academic adjustment issues
- Q&A and Discussion

International Student Population, 2002-2015



What we mean by “international”

- At St. Olaf, **international students** are defined as students who do not have a U.S. passport nor a “green card”/permanent resident status.
- All of our **degree-seeking** international students, who will be at St. Olaf for all four years, are on an F-1 student visa.
- There are also **non-degree** students (“**exchange students**”) here for a semester or year, applying through an exchange program or independently, who are on a J-1 exchange student visa. This year there will be 7 non-degree students on campus.

What we mean by “multilingual”

- Some international students come from countries where English is the (or an) official language (the US, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, South Africa, India).
- Some international students identify English as their first language even if it's not an official language in their country of origin.
- Some domestic students have a first language that is not English
- Many domestic and international students are multilingual
- **Many students on campus have a solid understanding of college-level academic culture and are fluent in *academic* English; some are still acquiring these skills.**

Where our international students come from

- There will be nearly 250 international students on campus this year, representing 81 countries of citizenship.
- When considering US students from overseas, dual citizens, or students in the US with strong ties to another country, our student body represents over 90 different countries.
- Most represented countries: China, South Korea, India, Nepal, Vietnam, Nigeria, Norway

Where our international students come from

Albania	Germany	Malta	South Sudan
Argentina	Ghana	Mexico	Sudan
Australia	Greece	Myanmar	Sri Lanka
Bangladesh	Honduras	Namibia	Swaziland
Belarus	Hong Kong S.A.R.	Nepal	Sweden
Bermuda	Hungary	Netherlands	Tanzania
Bosnia and Herzegovina	India	New Zealand	Thailand
Brazil	Indonesia	Nigeria	Timor-Leste
Burundi	Iran	Norway	Trinidad and Tobago
Canada	Israel	Pakistan	Tunisia
China	Italy	Peru	Turkey
Colombia	Jamaica	Poland	Ukraine
Congo (Brazzaville)	Japan	Portugal	United Kingdom
Costa Rica	Jordan	Russia	Venezuela
Czech Republic	Kazakhstan	Rwanda	Vietnam
Egypt	Kenya	Serbia	West Bank
El Salvador	Kosovo	Sierra Leone	Yemen
Estonia	Lebanon	Slovakia	Zimbabwe
Ethiopia	Lesotho	Slovenia	
Finland	Libya	South Africa	
France	Maldives	South Korea	

Where our international students have studied

- United World Colleges (“UWC”): 2 year IB international schools
(We have 73 students who attended a UWC, 23 in the first year class)
- International Baccalaureate Diploma
(4,000-word Extended Essay)
- A-Levels/Cambridge A-Levels
- American/International Schools with a US curriculum (usually AP or IB)
- National schools with an “overseas” or “international” track for those intended to study abroad
- National schools with the international curriculum
(A resource for national curriculum info: <http://www.educationusa.info/>)
- 14 of the incoming group of intl students are coming directly from a U.S. high school and others have studied in the U.S. and returned home

Our international students

The 85 students arriving this fall include:

- 72 degree seeking students
- 2 transfer students
- 6 non-degree/exchange students
- 5 US citizens from overseas

Why international students choose St. Olaf

- Liberal Arts curriculum: Ability to choose, combine, and be undecided
- Meaningful contact with professors
- Residential experience and extracurricular activities
- School reputation: rankings, word of mouth, social networks---- positive experience of friends and classmates
- Safe, small town environment with access to a metropolitan area and international airport
- Financial Aid

Before you meet your students...

Week 0 - New International Student Orientation

- Broad overview of immigration regulations related to study and work
- Brief introduction of campus facilities and Northfield amenities
- Community-building with other international students
- Overview of GPA/credit requirements, “What is a Liberal Arts Education?”, classroom expectations, academic resources
- Campus social culture

Continued support: continuing orientation, International Student Counselors, Staff support/advising

Initial Language and Academic Support

- Placement test
- Writing 107 (Writing 110)
 - Writing, Speaking, Reading, Academic Skills
 - The writing process, and thinking/writing skills
(summarizing, paraphrasing, analyzing, synthesizing,
developing and supporting an argument, locating and
citing sources)
 - Academic Integrity and the responsible use of information
 - Finding and using campus resources

Initial Language and Academic Support

- Writing 107 Supplemental Instruction (SI)
 - extra hour each week, SI leaders
- Writing Desk
 - weekly appointments
- Speaking Space
 - three visits during the semester
- Spring check-in

First-year Requirements

- Spring Writing Support
(non-credit, semester-long course of study linked to a course the student is taking)
- Writing 111
- Religion 121
(course selection -- topics, SI)
- Foreign Language
(native language may fulfill the FOL requirement -- evidence of proficiency, proficiency exam)

Ongoing Language and Academic Support

- ASC - Multilingual Student Language Support Specialist
(one-on-one support for reading, listening, writing, speaking, pronunciation, in-class participation, as well as social and practical support)
(semester-long support with the specialist or with Conversation Partners)
- Other ASC Resources
(SI, Academic Tutoring and Coaching, Writing Desk, Speaking Space)
- [St. Olaf College Statement on Instructional Adaptations to Testing Procedures \(Extended Time and Verbal Clarification\) for Students Whose First Language is Not English](#)
- Support for faculty who work with international students

Advising International Students: Reminders and Tips

Expectations

The advisor-student relationship may be a new experience, so...

- Ask students what they are expecting, what this type of relationship would consist of in at the school where they studied last?
- Explain what an advisor does at St. Olaf, and “train” students in *your* style of advising.
- Describe available resources, help students see whether and when they would be useful, and encourage students make use of them on their own.

Advising International Students:

Reminders and Tips

Language

Students might not be using their dominant language, or they might not be used to the college-level, academic register yet, so...

- Start your interactions in a “low-stakes” way.
- Face the student, consider your word choice and pace, and allow extra time for turn-taking.
- Don't assume that students are familiar with acronyms, systems and documents that are particular to St. Olaf, and when appropriate use visual support (maps, web pages).

Advising International Students: Reminders and Tips

“Culture”

Students, domestic and international, come from different countries, different regions, and different *families*. They may differ from you in terms of ...

- expectations surrounding authority figures (eye contact, turn-taking, forthcomingness)
- preference for directness or indirectness in speaking
- understanding of academic integrity
- definition of private and personal

Stereotypes are unreliable in this ever-more-connected world, so be aware of your own assumptions, keep an open mind, and be patient with students as you learn who they are.

Advising International Students: Reminders and Tips

Non-academic struggles

Students may be experiencing homesickness, jet lag, culture shock, financial complications.

Some may also be going through common adolescent struggles related to identity, autonomy and social connection.

Some may have helicopter parents or authoritative parents, and some may be going through this transition on their own.

Advising International Students:

Advice from Faculty

- Ask students how people think about professors, university/college life, college students in their home country. Ask what expectations they have about these in the US.
- Keep track of students' credits and grades. This is not just about academic standing; it is now also about if the student can remain in the country.
- Really be sure to let the student know about all the resources we have on campus for academic support (particularly writing and speaking). Be really clear that you, the advisor, are also a great resource and are there to help. You want to make sure that the student knows to come to you if any problems occur. There may be a cultural understanding that this relationship is purely formal and you, the advisor, want to make it clear that the student can come to you for help.
- Be aware that international students may have relatively little in common with each other. Try to remember that each international student is different and will be going through cultural, academic, personal, and language adjustment at different times throughout their 4 years
- Try to see if you can set aside time to really get to know your international advisees early on in the year. Are they here for just one year or to earn a diploma? What brought them here? What are their hopes and dreams and fears?
- St. Olaf is lucky to have such a diverse group of international students. The college, domestic students, staff and faculty can learn so much from their unique perspectives and ideas.

Immigration Regulations

- **St. Olaf Policy** and **Immigration Policy** do not always match. International students are constantly having to evaluate situations from two points of view.
- As an academic advisor, you counsel and advise students about St. Olaf policy, coursework and academic opportunities. I'm not expecting you to counsel students about immigration issues.
- **Student visa rules and regulations are complex and violations of status result in serious consequences for our students.** Please don't be afraid to say, "I'm not sure how this relates to your immigration status" or even question, "Is this opportunity available to international students?"
- If your students are unable to answer your immigration questions, or you are unsure of their answers, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Immigration Reporting

- Immigration Document Processing
- Semester in-person check-ins and reporting
- Travel (Domestic and Internationally)
- Employment and Volunteering
- Violations of Status
- Reporting
 - Change in major field of study
 - Change of address
 - Extend their students
 - Reduced course load
 - Change in financial situation
 - Transfer out
 - Withdraw or leave the US

Full-Time Student Status

- International students must be registered for a **minimum of 3 credits** each semester.
- St. Olaf students will not graduate in 4 years if they take only 3 credits.
- Studying at St. Olaf for more than 4 years opens a new can of immigration and financial aid worms, which we would like to avoid.
- Its also important to keep the 3 credit minimum in mind, if your advisee wants to switch courses or get into a closed course. **They can not fall below 3 credits after the first day of class.**
- If an international student drops below 3 credits or decides not to register for a January course without authorization, it's considered a violation in status.

Exceptions to 3 Credit Rule

- If they are in their final semester and do not need 3 credits to graduate
 - Illness or Medical Condition
 - Initial Difficulty with English Language
 - Initial Difficulty with Reading Requirements
 - Unfamiliarity with American Teaching Methods
 - Improper Course Level Placement
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- Academic and Language based RCLs are only approved in the student's first year.
 - Although "imminent danger of failing a class" is not a permissible reason for authorizing a RCL, it may be that once facts are gathered, it becomes clear that the student was placed at an improper course level or is struggling with the English language.

On/Off-Campus Opportunities

- International students can work and do research on campus without additional authorization. On-campus research and work is “on-campus” and paid only by St. Olaf College.
- Off-Campus opportunities always require authorization prior to the start date.
 - Students must be in status one academic year before they are eligible.
 - The opportunity must be **related to their field of study.**
 - Curricular Practical Training (CPT)
 - Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Consequences of Unauthorized Employment

- **Unauthorized employment** is the number one reason international students are deported
- By law, employment opportunities for international students in the U.S. are restricted.
- Students are not allowed to work as a private tutor, baby-sit, play an instrument, lead Sunday school, mow a neighbor's lawn, etc.
- Even volunteer positions can jeopardize their student status.
- Off-campus employers may not know the immigration rules ***but students and the College are required to understand and follow them.***

Maintaining their Immigration Status

- As an international student they are required to follow Immigration regulations, U.S. laws, and St. Olaf Policies.
- Many international students feel that some U.S. laws are inconsistent or opposite from the laws in their home country.
- Some things that might be considered "minor" for a domestic student can have severe immigration consequences for international students.
- Activities that violate St. Olaf College's code of conduct affect immigration status.
Ex: alcohol violations, plagiarism, sexual harassment or assault, cheating, theft, vandalism, etc.
- If a student take a **leave of absence or withdraws voluntarily**, they are allowed only **15 days** to leave the country, transfer to another school or change their status.
- If the punishment results in a student's inability to enroll in class, it is required that the student leave the U.S. **immediately**.

Final Thoughts

How would you respond to the students in the scenarios?

