



## SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT OLE MISS

### Communication Tips:

**International students have varying levels of English proficiency**, but many of them can speak very well. You just might be speaking a little fast or using vocabulary that is not familiar to them.

**Even when we think we are speaking slowly**, it might still be too fast for a non-native speaker. If the student looks lost, the rate of your speaking might be the issue.

**It is best to avoid slang, idioms, or complex language.** If you need to use department or field-specific language, it might be helpful to define words/phrases as you go.

**Have patience.** The student might be thinking about or translating what was just said. Waiting just a moment or asking if they need clarification is a good strategy. The same can be true for questions that they may have.

**International students often experience initial culture shock upon arriving in the United States. Their cultural adjustment process is further complicated by having to learn to navigate their host institution's culture and expectations, including enrolling in classes, learning about campus policies and procedures, and overcoming any language barriers that might exist.**

The various units of the Office of Global Engagement provide comprehensive orientations for incoming international students before classes begin. We also continue to advise students and reinforce the below differences and challenges in the US educational system; however, students will come in contact with many different people and offices on campus during their time at Ole Miss. This document provides you with some guidance and contact information for supporting international students at Ole Miss.

### **Struggling Students**

Some international students have trouble adjusting to life in the U.S. including in the classroom.

**There are many reasons a student may be struggling**, and not all of them are language related. They might be struggling with the cultural adjustment which may cause their grades to be lower.

**Many international students who are also learning the English language** find it difficult to balance academics, social activities, and language learning. It can be overwhelming to try to achieve balance.

**If a student is failing, there are many campus resources that can help** – such as the Writing Center or departmental tutoring sessions.

**If a student is struggling with English**, you can refer them to the Intensive English Program on campus. They have credit-bearing classes that undergraduate students are welcome to take, as well as a Learning Center where tutors can help with a variety of concerns.

**If the struggle is personal**, the Counseling Center can help with homesickness, culture shock, and personal matters.

## Plagiarism

**One campus policy that many international students may not be aware of at American institutions** is the institution's definition of plagiarism. It has been found that perceptions of plagiarism are based on historical and cultural assumptions. This is especially true for international students who did not grow up in Western society.

**Given that international students have left their homes and travelled many miles** to pursue their academic dreams, they often feel enormous pressure to be very successful. This pressure, combined with differing cultural assumptions of plagiarism and students' lack of knowledge about plagiarism policies, can potentially lead to scholastic disaster.

**For example, students from Confucian-heritage countries**, such as China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, value their source with the utmost authority, yet do not cite their sources as expected in Western society. In addition, in the Confucian culture, using an author's own words is a form of respect, making it difficult for students to understand Western standards.

**International students in the United States may have difficulty truly understanding what plagiarism is** because it may have been an expected and highly regarded cultural norm in their home country.

**It is also important to note, however, that many international students are well aware** of what they are doing when they plagiarize—just like domestic students. Some may plagiarize due to feeling overwhelmed or because of pressure from home to succeed—again, just like domestic students.

## Academic Cultural Differences

**The classroom etiquette in the United States** is likely going to be different than in their home country.

**For example, in the U.S., professors typically expect students to actively participate** in classroom discussions. Unlike classrooms in other countries where the professors are considered masters of information and should never be challenged, in the United States, many professors welcome scholarly discussions and invite students to give their opinions.

**Another difference may be pair or group work expectations.** Students might wrongly assume that they have to do all of the work, or they may think they cannot go to their professor for help in working with others.

**Faculty in many countries do not hold office hours.** Therefore, academic advisors may need to encourage international students to visit faculty members during their office hours to ask questions about the class.

## We Are Ole Miss

**International students return to their home countries and have the same loyalty to Ole Miss as domestic students.** Advisors and faculty have lasting impacts all around the world through interactions with international students on campus.

**Domestic UM students studying abroad face similar challenges** overseas, so reflecting on how you would want domestic students to be assisted at partner institutions provides guidance for your interactions with international students.

**Please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Global Engagement for additional support.**

### Office of International Programs (OIP)

OIP provides support for degree-seeking international students, visiting international scholars, and international faculty. OIP also provides all immigration-related documents and advice for international students, faculty, and scholars.

**Rachel Leiter - International Student Advisor**  
rleiter@olemiss.edu

**Brandon McLeod - International Faculty Advisor**  
bsmcleod@olemiss.edu

### Intensive English Program (IEP)

The IEP provides credit-bearing intensive English instruction, community English as a Second Language classes, and support for international teaching assistants. For any assistance related to English language proficiency, please contact the IEP.

**Laura Vaughn - Coordinator of Admissions**  
iep@olemiss.edu

### Study Abroad Office (SAO)

The SAO provides support for outgoing and incoming study abroad students. The international students studying at UM through the SAO are not pursuing a degree at UM but have chosen to spend a summer, semester, or year studying abroad at Ole Miss. These students often have specific course requests.

**Hannah Juliff - International Student Advisor**  
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### Office of Global Engagement

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