Chinese Students, American Classrooms: Lessons Learned from a Teaching and Learning Circle at Iowa State University

中国学生，美国课堂：教学相长学习交流圈

Ann Marie VanDerZanden, Jay Newell and Aili Mu
Iowa State University
Presentation Overview

• ISU Context
• Issues international students face
• How to help international students be successful
## Top Countries for Sending Students to ISU

### Fall 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China, People's Republic of</td>
<td>1917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea, South</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China, Taiwan</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Fall 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China, People's Republic of</td>
<td>1849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea, South</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China, Taiwan</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## ISU Chinese Student Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Undergrad</th>
<th>% Change per year</th>
<th>Grad</th>
<th>% Change per year</th>
<th>Total Chinese Students</th>
<th>Total Intl Students</th>
<th>% of Intl Students</th>
<th>Total Students</th>
<th>% of Total Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2006</td>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
<td>554</td>
<td></td>
<td>609</td>
<td>2113</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
<td>24923</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2007</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>130.9%</td>
<td>601</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>728</td>
<td>2244</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td>26160</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2008</td>
<td>422</td>
<td><strong>232.3%</strong></td>
<td>621</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>1043</td>
<td>2497</td>
<td><strong>41.8%</strong></td>
<td>26856</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2009</td>
<td>876</td>
<td><strong>107.6%</strong></td>
<td>664</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>1540</td>
<td>3017</td>
<td><strong>51.0%</strong></td>
<td>27945</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2010</td>
<td>1104</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>-6.0%</td>
<td>1764</td>
<td>3327</td>
<td>53.0%</td>
<td>28682</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2011</td>
<td>1212</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>-3.5%</td>
<td>1849</td>
<td>3424</td>
<td>54.0%</td>
<td>29887</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2012</td>
<td>1270</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>647</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>1917</td>
<td>3510</td>
<td>54.6%</td>
<td>31040</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chinese Students at ISU

• Fall 2008: Departments noticed change
• Academic issues
  – Many Chinese undergrads had failing GPAs
  – Poor language skills in classes
  – Not participating in classroom discussions & activities
• Behavioral Issues
  • Residence halls- roommate and cleanliness issues
  • Students indicating “too cold to go to class”
  • Not understanding/following US laws
Chinese Student Concept of Self

• Confucianism
  – Collectivism vs. Individualism
  – Respect for teacher
Issues International Students Face at ISU

- Separation and loss
  - Family, friends, culture/customs, social status
- Language barriers*
  - Feeling less intelligent
- Cognitive stress
  - Information overload
- Loneliness and social isolation
Confusing local norms
  - Relationship with authority
  - Communication

Identity and value confusion
  - Sense of self is not endorsed by familiar setting

Discrimination and prejudice
  - First experience as member of minority group
Issues Continued...

- Difference in educational system
  - Self-directed
  - Grading
  - Communication with professors and classmates
*Limited English Proficiency*

- Speed of lectures
- Accents/enunciation
- Slurred and Slang
  - “jeet”
  - “hereortogo”
- Irony or sarcasm
Dealing with American Values

- Achievement Mentality
- Directness
- Equality yet Individualism
- Informality
- Privacy
- Rule of Law
- Strong Time Orientation
What American Students Already Know...

• American English
• US educational system
  • Grades
  • Testing requirements
• Class norms/etiquette
  • Syllabi
  • Interacting with faculty
  • Group work
Key Ways to Help Students

• Explain how to communicate with professors
• Help them understand a syllabus
  • Prerequisites
  • Course requirements
  • How test scores correspond to a letter grade
    • In some countries a 70% is an A!
• Class attendance policy
• Due dates
Key Ways to Help Students

• Explain how to prepare for US exams
  • In China exams are
    • Infrequent
    • Not multiple choice
    • Not timed

• Explain Academic Misconduct
  • The many forms of plagiarism
Key Ways to Help Students

• How to access campus resources
  • Writing Center
  • Health services
  • International Students and Scholars Office
• De-stigmatize using these resources
Questions

vanderza@iastate.edu

Acknowledgements:
James Dorsett, Director
ISU International Students & Scholars Office