

**TIPS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS:
RESOURCES FOR YOUR WELL-BEING**
[MSU Counseling & Health Services](#)

Understand Your Challenges as International Students

Your challenges as international students are two-fold: common challenges for college students/young adults (i.e., transition and adjustment issues and developmental issues) and unique challenges related to studying abroad and living in a different culture from your own (i.e., acculturation and cultural adaptation issues)(Araujo, 2011; Brinson & Kottler, 1995; Johnson & Sandhu, 2007; Leong & Chou, 1996; Mori, 2000).

Examples of common challenges

- Living away from your family for the first time, becoming independent from your parents, and taking some responsibilities as adults (e.g., taking care of your own personal needs and managing your finances)
- Learning how to navigate in a new college environment, adjusting to a new college life style, and fulfilling academic requirements at a college level that is more demanding than what you needed to do in high school
- Developing your own identity, exploring and pursuing your personal and career interests
- Expanding your social network and relationships (e.g., getting along with your new roommates/classmates/teammates, making new friends, and having intimate/sexual relationships)

Examples of unique challenges

- Dealing with issues and coping with stressors related to your acculturation and cultural adaptation process
 - Language and communication barriers that may lead you to misunderstanding and being misunderstood
 - Learning how to navigate in a foreign educational system and dealing with unfamiliar rules, customs, and expectations (e.g., faculty-student relationship, teaching styles, classroom activities, group projects, and interactions with American classmates)
 - Experiencing culture shock and dealing with its impact on your worldview
 - Experiencing changes in your socio-cultural and economic status (e.g., from the majority/dominant/affluent in the home culture to the minority/disadvantaged/needier in the host culture) and dealing with its impact on your identity
 - Experiencing clashes of beliefs and values and conflicts in cross-cultural relationships and dealing with being the target of stereotypes/prejudices/discriminations (e.g., your country of origin, race and ethnicity, gender, accents in your English, and religion)
 - Living with restrictions (e.g., limited availability of ethnic foods, personal funds, means of transportation, family support, and diverse religious communities)

- Coping with homesickness and loneliness and overcoming a sense of inferiority/inadequacy that you may experience in your acculturation and cultural adaptation process

Keep a Positive Attitude and Use Healthy Strategies to Cope With Stress

Here are some helpful suggestions based on international students' experiences (adapted from [*Possible Adjustment Issues for International Students*](#)).

- Remember your purpose of studying abroad and your strengths that brought you to be where you are now.
- Continue to improve your English language proficiency (e.g., seek daily opportunities to converse in English, ask tutors to proof-read your writing in English, and keep a journal to express your thoughts and feelings in English).
- Face challenges described in previous section and take risks in small steps (e.g., speak up in class, initiate small talk with American classmates, and be open and curious about diverse cultures, customs, views, and opinions).
- Make friends not only with students from your country but also with international students from other countries and American students.
- Balance work and fun in your life. International students tend to spend more time studying at the cost of social life than American students. Remember good self-care promotes academic success.
- Maintain your cultural heritage and appreciate other people's cultural heritages.
- Learn to seek help and be persistent until you get the help you need. Reach out not only to your family, friends, and staff at International Student Services, but also to your professors, academic advisors, residential hall coordinators and assistants, campus police officers, career counselors, medical and mental health professionals on campus.

Also check out "Big 10 Recommendations" (page 6) in the [*MSU Roadmap for Student Success*](#) booklet.

Dispel Myths and Know Facts about Counseling

International students tend to underutilize university counseling centers (Mitchell, Greenwood, & Guglielmi, 2007; Yi, Lin, & Kishimoto, 2003). A major factor that discourages international students to seek help from counselors is their misconceptions of counseling. Here are some common myths and facts about counseling (adapted from [*Myths about Counseling*](#)).

- *Myth 1: Counseling is only for people who are severely mentally ill.*
- **Fact 1:** Anyone who is going through difficult times in his/her life can benefit from counseling. Counselors are trained to help people to deal with a broad range of personal and interpersonal issues. Common issues reported by international students include: anxiety and depressed mood, academic and career concerns, relational problems, and challenges related to adjustment and acculturation as described in the previous section.

- *Myth 2: Seeking counseling is a sign that I am weak, a failure, and/or “crazy.”*
- Fact 2: We all experience emotional pains at some points in our lives. And many of us try to avoid feeling emotional pains. This avoidance may give us temporary relief but usually complicates our problems, which makes them more difficult to deal with. When you recognize that you are stuck in this vicious cycle, seeking counseling is a sane choice. It takes courage to acknowledge that you have a problem and need help. Your willingness to learn to deal with the problem in a healthy way despite how unpleasant or vulnerable you may feel is a sign of maturity. It is a first step toward solving the problem or coping with the difficulty.
- *Myth 3: Talking to counselors will not be as helpful as talking to my family or friends.*
- Fact 3: As international students, you have some legitimate reasons for being skeptical about mental health professionals and counseling process. You may have grown up in a culture in which telling strangers about your personal problem is inappropriate and seeking professional help for mental illness is stigmatizing to you and your family. You may wonder if your English is good enough to communicate with English-speaking counselors or how counselors whose socio-cultural backgrounds are so different from yours can really understand you. However, people who have received counseling often report that talking to a counselor was helpful in different ways than talking to their family or friends. This is because of what counselors are trained to do as helping professionals. For example, counselors know how to listen to you with undivided attention and non-judgmental attitudes. Counselors will strive to understand you as a whole person by paying attention to your individual uniqueness as well as your socio-cultural backgrounds. Counselors can apply various therapeutic approaches and techniques to facilitate your process of restoring and promoting your well-being.
- *Myth 4: Counselors will read and try to control my mind, judge me right or wrong and tell me what to do, or just give me a medication to fix my problem.*
- Fact 4: Counselors will not read or control your mind but can help you to understand how your mind works and how to train your mind. Counselor’s job is not to judge you right or wrong and tell you what to do but to help you to learn to help yourself. Here are some examples of what counselors can help you to do: increase your self-awareness and self-understanding; examine your thoughts/feelings/behaviors and change maladaptive patterns; process your emotional reactions; recover from psychological trauma; recover from addictions; explore your choices and make your own decisions; and learn skills to cope with anxiety, depressed mood, and any other stressors in your life, to manage time more efficiently, and to communicate with others more effectively. Counselors will provide you with suggestions and recommendations, but it is always up to you whether to take or leave them (Only exception is when you express your intent to harm yourself or others. See Fact 5 for more explanation.) Taking a

medication does not fix your problem but may help you to deal with your problem by alleviating some chronic and debilitating symptoms. Counselors do not prescribe medications and will not force you to take medications. If counselors think that you may benefit from taking a medication, they will discuss it with you first and refer you to health professionals who can prescribe medications for further assessment and consultation.

- *Myth 5: Counseling is not confidential.*
- Fact 5: Counselors follow strict rules to safeguard confidentiality. Your counselor is not allowed to disclose your personal information with anyone (including your professors and any other school personnel, your family and friends) unless you give your counselor your permission to do so by signing a consent form (or expressing your assent verbally when giving a written consent is not feasible). However, there are some exceptional conditions in which your counselor is ethically and legally obligated to break confidentiality: (1) if your counselor believes that you are likely to substantially hurt yourself or another individual or make a direct threat to do so; (2) if your counselor has reason to suspect that there is a child, spouse, or dependent adult being physically or sexually abused or neglected; or (3) if your counselor is ordered to release information by a court. Do not hesitate to ask questions about confidentiality if you are not sure.

Also check out “[Counseling and Psychotherapy](#)” to learn about MSU Counseling & Health Services staff’s view of counseling.

Consider Seeing a Mental Health Counselor at MSU Counseling & Health Services

International students tend to wait to seek help from professionals until they are in crisis. Do not wait until you receive a failing grade for a class or experience a mental breakdown. Be aware of your physical, mental, and behavioral signs that you may be overburdened by acculturative and/or other psycho-social stressors. Be proactive for your health and consider seeing a mental health counselor to learn how to restore and/or promote your well-being.

- Possible signs of being overburdened by life stressors (Johnson & Sandhu, 2007; Mori, 2000)
 - Anxiety and depressive symptoms (e.g., unusual or increased nervousness, heart palpitations, difficulty breathing, difficulty falling and staying asleep, feeling agitated for no apparent reason, racing thoughts, constant worries, crying spells, chronic fatigue, decreased motivation, suddenly decreased or increased appetite and weight, withdrawal from people, thoughts of self-harm or death, worthlessness, hopelessness, and loss of interest in self-care)
 - Profound sense of loss and grief
 - Gastrointestinal (GI) disturbances (e.g., nausea, stomach ache, poor digestion, diarrhea, and constipation)
 - Nagging negative emotions (e.g., resentment, guilt, and shame)
 - Mental fatigue and lowered cognitive functioning (e.g., difficulty processing, memorizing, or recalling information).

- Behavioral problems (e.g., hostile attitudes and behaviors toward others, avoiding people and social situations, and skipping classes and missing assignment dues)
- Social isolation and sense of alienation (e.g., feeling powerless, meaningless, and lonely)
- Increased use of alcohol, cigarettes, or other substances

Also check out “[Staff Profiles](#)” to learn about credentials and backgrounds of mental health counselors and other health professionals at MSU Counseling & Health Services.

Use Campus and Community Resources

First of all, read the most current version of [Eagle Student Handbook](#) to familiarize yourself with MSU policies, procedures, regulations, and various services available at MSU.

You must know by now that you can contact [International Student Services \(ISS\)](#) when you need help, particularly with immigration/visa-related issues. When you have academic concerns, contact your academic advisor. When you cannot figure out who to contact for various administrative issues (e.g., lifting a hold from your account so that you can register for classes), you can seek help from [the Senior Enrollment Services Counselor for International Recruitment](#). Stay tuned with current news, events, and activities for international students (e.g., Coffee Hour) on [International Education Facebook page](#).

The following is a list of other campus and community resources available for you to take care of your physical and psychological health needs, achieve your academic and career goals, and enjoy your student life at MSU. (Most information below was directly taken from the MSU webpages. This is a brief summary for your convenience.)

[Counseling & Health Services \(CHS\)](#)

Receive primary care and counseling services at little to no cost. Here is a step-by-step guide for how to receive healthcare at the clinic.

- To alleviate your financial concerns for receiving healthcare at the clinic, take a moment to read the [Insurance and Billing](#) policies. If you purchased the international student health insurance offered by MSU, there is no deductible to pay out of your pocket, and co-pays for counseling and most medical services are covered by student fees that you have already paid. You may find answers to other questions by reading [Frequently Asked Questions](#).
- To schedule an appointment, come to the front desk of the clinic located at 112 Allie Young Hall, call the clinic (783-2123), or log in “[Online Student Health](#).” Your first counseling appointment must be made at the front desk or by phone. Be ready to provide your MSU student ID when you make an appointment.
- After you made an appointment, complete initial paperwork at home by logging in Online Student Health or arrive at the clinic at least 15 minutes prior to your

- appointment. Take time to read consent forms and answer health-related questions carefully.
- When you arrive at the clinic for your appointment, check in with the front desk. Be ready to show your MSU student ID and health insurance card for your first appointment. Wait in the lobby until you are called in.
 - If you have an urgent need to see a medical or mental health professional during the business hours (Monday-Friday 8 a.m. – 4:30 a.m.), just walk in and request immediate assistance at the front desk. If you have an urgent need to talk to a mental health counselor outside of the business hours (including weekends), call [MSU Police Department](#) (783-2035) and request to talk to a counselor on call.
 - [Sexual Assault Response Team \(SART\)](#) provides victims of sexual assault on campus with a comfortable and safe environment for medical examination and crisis counseling.
 - If you have difficulty meeting your academic requirements to maintain your legal J1 or F1 status due to a physical or mental health problem, contact your academic advisor and [International Student Services](#) (ISS)(783-2096) immediately. Seek advice from your academic advisor on different types of withdrawals (See [Withdrawal from MSU and All Classes](#)) and understand the consequence of your choice before you make a decision. ISS staff can communicate with the immigration officer and assist you with submitting your request for reduced course load due to health reasons. CHS staff can provide a medical documentation if you have received health care and treatment (including mental health counseling) at the clinic.
 - CHS offers a support group for international students. If you are interested, [contact the facilitator](#).

[Camden Carroll Library](#)

Check out [the list of library services](#). You may find assistance and resources that you have never thought of receiving in a library. For example:

- Receive assistance in conducting your research assignment at the [Research Help Desk](#). Check out their online step-by-step guide for [how to conduct literature review for an academic paper](#). Academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, is a serious violation of ethical conduct as a college student and may result in disciplinary action. [Learn when and how to cite your sources appropriately](#) to prevent unintentional plagiarism.
- Receive free tutoring at [Tutoring and Learning Center \(TLC\)](#) to ask questions about a particular class with which you have difficulty. Tutors are MSU students (including international students) who have been selected for their academic excellence in classes that they have taken. Ask your tutor to share some tips for study skills, preparation for quizzes and tests, and academic paper writing in English (Your tutor will not write a paper for you but can proof-read your paper and give you suggestions for how to improve it). [Use TutorTrac](#) to make an appointment with a tutor. Also check out online tutoring 24/7 through Blackboard.
- Access computers with multimedia software and receive assistance in creating a Powerpoint presentation, a website, etc. at [Learning Technology Lab](#).

- Use the [Multicultural Room](#) for group study and enjoy art and non-fiction works from diverse cultures.
- Check out the [graphic novel collection](#) and DVDs and audiobooks for fun. If library does not have an item of your academic or recreational interest, you can request it online through [Interlibrary Loan](#) (ILL) for free.
- Have a study break at [Java City café](#).

Career Services

It is never too early to explore your career interests, search job opportunities, and prepare yourself to apply for a job.

- Receive assistance and guidance from career counselors by attending workshops and making an appointment for individual career counseling by phone (783-2233) or by [email](#). They can help you to polish your cover letter and resume in English, search positions for Optional Job Training (for F1 students), and practice job interviews in English.
- Check out donated professional clothing for free at [Suit Bank](#) if you need and cannot afford to buy new clothes.

DREAMS Mentoring Program

This program helps first-year students to be paired with MSU faculty, staff, or graduate students to receive mentoring for your academic success and more involvement in campus activities.

Multicultural Student Services

- Their services include [Cultural Programming](#) in collaboration with the [Office of International Education](#). If you have a good idea for a cultural event on campus, [send your suggestion](#).
- If you are looking for a community and resources for students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual, questioning, queer, intersexed, asexual, and their allies, check out [ALLYance](#).

Office of Diversity Initiative

Your presence contributes to diversifying and internationalizing MSU. Attend the [events to promote diversity](#) on campus and share your thoughts and experiences as an international student with MSU staff, faculty, and American students.

Recreation and Wellness Center

- Check out the state-of-the-art facility to work out, swim, walk on track, play sports, and participate in group fitness classes.
- Have a quiet time in nature or hike on trails at [Eagle Lake](#).

Student Activities, Inclusion, and Leadership Development

- Participate in [social and educational events](#) on campus and interact with American students who may share your interests.
- Find [student organizations](#) that you may be interested in getting involved. For example, [Cosmopolitan Club](#) is a student organization whose purpose is to

promote cross-cultural experiences for both international and American students. [Email](#) your ideas and requests.

Morehead Tourism Commission

Get off of campus and have fun in and around the city of Morehead. Enjoy nature and folk art, eat out, attend local events, and learn about the history of Morehead.

Religious/Spiritual Communities

If you are looking for a religious/spiritual community to practice your faith, check out MSU campus ministries (e.g., [Baptist Campus Ministry](#), [Methodist Student Center](#), and [Newman Center](#) [Catholic]), [Local Churches and Places of Worship in Morehead](#), and [Directory of Religious Centers in Kentucky](#).

Transportation

Check out [Morehead Transit](#). Inter City Bus service is available for a trip to Lexington or Ashland.

If you have any questions about this document or suggestions for other campus and community resources for MSU international students, please [email Masami Matsuyuki, Ph.D.](#)

References

- Araujo, A. A. (2011). Adjustment issues of international students enrolled in American colleges and universities: A review of the literature. *Higher Education studies*, 1, 2-8.
- Brinson, J. A., & Kottler, J. (1995). International students in counseling: Some alternative models. *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy*, 9, 57-71.
- Buffalo State University Counseling Center (2013, June 10). *Myths about Counseling*. Retrieved from <http://www.buffalostate.edu/counselingcenter/x616.xml>
- Johnson, L. R., & Sandhu, D. S. (2007). Isolation, adjustment, and acculturation issues of international students: Intervention strategies for counselors. In H. Singaravelu (Ed.), *A handbook for counseling international students in the United States* (pp. 13-35). Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.
- Leong, F. T. L., & Chou, E. L. (1996). Counseling international students. In P. B. Pedersen (Ed.), *Counseling across cultures* (pp. 210-242). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mitchell, S. L., Greenwood, A. K., & Guglielmi, M. C. (2007). Utilization of counseling services: Comparing international and U.S. college students. *Journal of College Counseling*, 10, 117-129.
- Mori, S (2000). Addressing the mental health concerns of international students. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 78, 137-144.
- Wright State University Counseling and Wellness Services (2012, February 10). *Possible adjustment issues for international students*. Retrieved from <http://www.wright.edu/counseling/diversity/internationalstudentadjustment.htm>
- Yi, J. K, Lin, J. G., & Kishimoto, Y. (2003). Utilization of counseling services by international students. *Journal of instructional psychology*, 30, 333-342.