Considerations When Working With International Students

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International Students and Mental Health, Important Factors:

• Academic difficulties (different academic system, own expectations about performance, etc.)
• Cultural adjustment and misunderstandings
• Financial difficulties (which can affect academic and immigration status)
• High parental expectations
• Stigma around asking for help
• Lack of support (family far away, difficult to make friends)
• GLBT – coming out in the US can create grave issues at home.

International Students Basic Immigration Requirements:

• Must maintain a full course of study or will lose their visa status, without an approved ISSS exception form for limited reasons. (fear of receiving low grade is not a reason)
• Must maintain good academic standing and make academic progress.
• Have a limited time to complete their degree.
• Have limits on employment - generally only part time, on campus allowed without special permission from ISSS.
• There are limited options for family members living in US with student.

Tips for Working with International Students:

• Provide context: Explain your role compared to others. Explain why you are asking questions or giving information that may seem unrelated to them. Give your business card, explain when/why to contact you or return to see you.
• Be aware that assumptions about your role, relationship, how to get things done, etc., might be different. (eg: In home countries: faculty are highly revered and not usually approachable and student services are often provided to manage and discipline students, not to help and serve.)
• Slow down, pause, rephrase if language difficulties, be patient.
• Avoid or explain idioms, jargon, slang and culturally bound references.
• Point to information on maps, schedules or program descriptions.
• Summarize main points and next step. Write it down.
• Learn from your international colleagues.

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