HSI/INTERNATIONAL WEBINARS

Mexican Students @ UA: Strategies for Instructors & Advisors

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Lo que podemos hacer
Things we can do

In the "HSI/International: Mexican Students @ UA" webinar series in October 2020, eleven panelists shared their personal experiences, analyses of cultural and systemic differences, and many practical strategies for instructors and advisors in support of Mexican and other international students at the University of Arizona. This is our humble attempt at synthesizing these strategies.

Mascha & Nadia

At a Glance
We present strategies following four main themes.

AWARENESS

Learn about Mexico
Avoid accent bias
Know the differences
Become a bridge

RELATIONSHIPS

Create programs
Differentiate
Enact a pedagogy of care
Build connections

INSTRUCTION

Focus on process
Allow flexibility
Foster English
Appreciate first language
Evoke collegiality

FOR STUDENTS

Appreciate your identity
and language(s)
Travel confidently
Connect with peers
Seek opportunity

Instructors, advisors, all who work on campus are cultivating those spaces that are tied to cultural validation for students and foster or inhibit a growing sense of belonging at the University. It is something we should be doing actively, especially as we think about our responsibility of serving as a Hispanic Serving Institution.
Judy Marquez Kiyama, Assoc. VP for Faculty Development

AWARENESS

You are key figures in building bridges for students new to this place.

Acknowledge students' cultural and academic expertise by learning about Mexico's diversity and its rich academic landscape, e.g., via its bilingual conferences.

Support students' long-term objectives that may involve studying in the U.S. at various occasions and seeking a career on either side of the border. Allow their goals to determine their capacity to engage in programs and initiatives.

Explore key linguistic and cultural differences, e.g., English being more direct than Spanish. Counteract stereotyping de to accent bias, i.e. unconsciously associating accent with lack of intelligence or understanding.

Take obstacles into account: Immigration processes take a lot of time, are time-sensitive, and not intuitive. Visa status may impede employment options, but teaching assistantships and internships are critical for cultural adjustment and professional growth.

"You will never be the same when you are confronted with diversity and different points of view. You will understand yourself much better."

Rafael Barcelo Durazo
CONSUL OF MEXICO

RELATIONSHIPS

¡Sí se puede! Yes, we can do this!

"Making students understand what their opportunities are is huge."

Paula Espinoza Martinez
UA ALUMNA

Support and partake in welcome events and other integration activities. Sense of belonging is expressed through t-shirts and sports and feels welcoming. Connect students to programs in the Student Union, Libraries, and other community spaces. Don't hesitate to use Spanish to ease the adaptation process.

Pursue a pedagogy of care and engage with students' questions broadly. Actively and personally connect students to campus support and resources. You may be the first or sole contact for a student and it may take a lot for the student to reach out for help.

Ask Mexican students to share their individual backgrounds and experiences, especially their experiences as living in Mexico before they came to the U.S. in order to advise and mentor them meaningfully, in a differentiated manner.

Offer students opportunities to work as a teaching assistant or student worker for professional growth and to encourage them to apply, even if they may come with sufficient funding of their own.

INSTRUCTION

> "Build common ground using a roundtable effect through open debate, focus on the learning process, and boost the scholar."

Ivan Gaxiola Camacho
UA PHD CANDIDATE

Internationalize and innovate curriculum with your own cultural learning and evidence-based teaching practice. Explain the customizable curriculum to help students plan their degree.

Focus on the process of learning, align assessments with learning outcomes, and guide students toward more active engagement. Teach effective note-taking and peer learning. Be flexible with requirements where possible, e.g. with citation styles and writing style in this educational context.

Guide students to adapt to less hierarchical professor-student relationships. Allow your students to be present authentically by allowing space for their stories. Invite them to speak their minds without worrying about language barriers.

Create cultural pods for group interaction at times and promote learning and support across different cultures of origin.

Encourage students to use English in posters, papers, abstracts, etc., to support second language reading and writing skills.

FOR STUDENTS

Key ways to support students are to (1) share academic resources, such as scholarships at internships, (2) share extracurricular opportunities, such as clubs and on-campus jobs, (3) and practice advocacy with regards to immigration and diversity. Actively connect students through facilitating introductions.

Tell students:

- You are an asset to this university. You belong.

- Confidently move back and forth between your two worlds, your family and support system back home, and those who mentor you and advocate for you at the University.

- Take advantage of campus resources and community activities to become connected.

- Curate ongoing relationships with peers to study, practice, and have social support.

- Ask your mentors about jobs, internships, and scholarships, all of which help with becoming more familiar with the academic culture.

"Appreciate your own sense of identity and unique set of experiences, and use that as your strength to connect with other people."

Ricky Hernandez
UA ALUMNUS