

Inside Independent Learning

International Students

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The advantageous flexibility of the Independent Learning Program continues to attract a diverse group of learners. One of these groups is comprised of international students. Like many other IL students,

international students may be UW-Madison or UW System students. It is also possible that these students are not affiliated with the UW-system at all.

Like other IL students, international students take IL

courses while living in the US or abroad. They may be especially attracted to IL courses because of the flexible nature of the courses; if a student is planning to travel home or abroad, they can take their IL course with them. In this issue of Inside IL, we focus on skills and strategies for dealing with international students.

IL Instructor Meeting Date Change!

Announcing the Third Quarterly DCS IL Instructor Appreciation and Professional Development Meeting: A Working Lunch

FRIDAY, May 22 from 1-3 pm
Room 7045, 21 N. Park Street
Madison, WI 53715

The May DCS IL Instructor meeting will be a listening session. We would like to hear from you about your ideas, questions, and concerns. We will do our best to address these questions either at the meeting or through e-mail and the Inside IL Newsletter in the coming months. We are dedicated to improving the IL program as an academic team and we value your feedback. Your ideas, feedback, questions, and concerns will help us in planning topics for instructor orientation and profession-

al development. **Please RSVP with Sarah by May 11.** If you would like to participate but are unable to attend the meeting, please feel free to submit your comments and questions to Sarah via email, interdepartmental mail, or postal mail.

Remember, the new date and time for the May DCS IL Instructor meeting is:
FRIDAY, May 22 from 1-3 pm



If you plan to park in the garage at 21 N. Park Street, please let Sarah know at the time of your RSVP. Thanks to our Dean, Jeff Russell, parking passes are available to those who request them in advance.



Culture Shock!

One challenge that international students face is life in a new and different culture. Many traditional undergraduate students face common challenges, such as living (far) away from friends and family, managing time independently of parental supervision, and completing adult tasks such as laundry, cooking, and cleaning. For any international students, these common challenges can be even more difficult because they must be achieved in a different culture. As IL instructors, we can help our international students adjust to the academic culture in America in a variety of ways. First, we can clearly define student responsibilities and tasks. The more clear we are about our expectations, the easier it is for students to meet those expectations. During your next course revision, think about how you could add even more clarity to the course syllabus and assignments. If you

are not currently revising a course, but you notice that many students are struggling with some aspect of the course, contact Sarah to discuss options to resolve this confusion.

Second, in your welcome email, offer to



clarify any details of the course. Telling international students that it is ok to contact you via email for help or clarification can break down any cultural

barriers that might otherwise prevent the student from asking for assistance.

Third, give international students the benefit of the doubt. If an international student has misunderstood the syllabus, your email, or the assignment, it might be because of cultural differences. Sometimes, what constitutes academic misconduct in the USA is viewed as positive teamwork in other cultures. When approaching a misunderstanding, it can be helpful to assume that the international student interpreted something in accordance with their own cultural norms and to explain what they need to do differently in very concrete terms.

Finally, discuss any issues or concerns with Sarah. She is happy to email, Skype, or meet with students to ensure that their Independent Learning experience is as enjoyable and productive as possible.



Another major challenge international students face is a linguistic one: many speak English as a second language. This means that the language of instruction and the language of their textbook is likely not their first language. International students have varying degrees of proficiency with the English language. Independent Learning courses can help international students improve their English language skills, particularly their written skills, because most communication is done in writing. Written language is often easier for second language learners to understand because they can take additional time to process (reading vs. listening) and respond (writing vs. speaking) to the material.

One of the most important things we can do to support our students is to strictly model the type of communication that we would like to receive. If we want our students to use a certain

tone or structure in their communication, it is important that we, as instructors, model that tone and structure in every piece of communication ourselves.

Some ESL students benefit from direct instruction in structure. For example, it can be helpful to explain writing conventions for email communication and essay responses.

Because many international students are ESL speakers, it can also be beneficial to give specific examples of how they should phrase standard emails. If you want your students to use an opening, body, and closing to all emails and to include their name and course in the email, providing a model email can set students up for success in meeting your standards.

Microsoft Word and many other word processing programs have tools such as spell checker and grammar checker that can be especially useful to international students. If you find a student's essay to be riddled with spelling and grammar errors, a reminder that using these tools is ok can help the student polish their English language usage. (Note: If you teach a foreign language and do NOT want students to use these tools in the target language, be sure to make that

known.)

Many international students are enrolled as students on an American university. Suggesting that students visit their campus writing center for individual tutoring or specific writing mini-courses can make international students aware of resources they may not know about.

You may also always contact Sarah for tips or suggestions in dealing with ESL issues. She is willing to meet with students in Madison or via Skype to discuss writing conventions and tips for improving writing style.



Good Practice Reminder: Share Your Success!



As DCS IL instructors, we are committed to the success of our students. Sometimes, in addition to completing the IL student course evaluation, students contact their instructors directly with words of thanks.

If you receive such an email from one of your students, please share it with Sarah. If you are an ad hoc instructor, she will add the email to your HR file so that it can be used as part of your annual review.

Stories of success can also be useful when thinking about marketing our courses. And, most importantly, stories of success speak to the importance of the IL program and your valuable work. Sharing them with the DCS IL team helps to motivate us all to continue to make the DCS IL student learning experience a positive and enriching one.

D2L Gem: Email Notifications

DCS IL instructors are required to check their email at least once every 24 hours and D2L at least every third day during the business week. This ensures that all IL students receive email replies within 24 hours during the working week and assignment feedback within 3 business days.

However, ad hoc instructors are compensated only when they grade an assignment.

Instructors teaching print courses receive student emails and student assignments in their email. Instructors teaching in the D2L platform receive assignments via D2L, not email.

To save instructor time, D2L has an email alert tool that, once set up, sends instructors email alerts when a student submits an assignment, completes a quiz, or posts to the discussion board.

This tool can be a real time saver, since DCS IL instructors teaching courses that make use of this tool

need only log in to D2L when they receive an email notification that there is something in D2L that needs attention.

As courses go through the revision process in the coming years, these email notifications will become standard to DCS-taught IL courses.

If you are teaching a course in D2L and you do not currently receive email notifications, you can request that this function is turned on now. The only drawback is that the first day notifications are turned on, you will receive notifications for each and every assignment that has been submitted. This is a one-time event. These notifications can be deleted, and from this point on, you will only receive notification of new submissions in D2L.

If you would like to begin to receive email notification when students submit assignments, complete quizzes, and post to the discussion board, please let Sarah know. The Extension Design and Development Team is happy to turn these notifications on for us.



Ideas & Suggestions

Remember, if you have any questions or concerns that you think would be of interest to your IL colleagues, please submit them for future IL newsletters.

Email ideas to:
skorpi@dcs.wisc.edu

Save the Date:

Next DCS IL Instructor Meeting:

A Working Lunch

May 22 from 1-3 pm

Room 7045, 21 N. Park St.

Madison, WI

UW-Madison

Distance Teaching & Learning Conference

August 11-13, 2015

Madison, WI

dtlconference.wisc.edu

Andrew Mangham was born in Saudi Arabia to two restless parents. His family moved back to Colorado when he was five and he was introduced to mountains, snow and (under protest) long pants in rapid succession. Over the next couple of decades he followed his family in a series of moves to all corners of the country except the south-east.

Andrew remedied this deficit with undergraduate studies at Warren Wilson College in Asheville, North Carolina. Andrew couldn't really decide what he wanted to study but knew he probably wanted to be an archaeologist so he split his time between History, Political Science and Chemistry. Once he was finished with college, family traditions got the better of him and rather than going straight to graduate school he spent several years living in Japan and then in the United Arab Emirates. This was a wonderful time, not least because he met his wife Britt during this period. However, he eventually felt that it was time to head back to the States and pursue graduate studies.

Andrew enrolled in a Doctoral program in the Chemistry Department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Studying under Dr. Robert Hamers, his research focused on surface modification of semiconductor na-

Coming Next Month: Looking Back and Looking Forward

If you have helpful tips or hints that you would like to share with your IL colleagues, please be sure to let Sarah know by May 15. If you have any questions that you would like to see addressed in future newsletters, just let Sarah know.



Introducing: Andrew Mangham



noparticles, primarily cadmium selenide "quantum dots". He examined ways of tailoring the surface properties of the particles to demonstrate new techniques in self-assembly of nanostructures applicable to the semiconductor industry. In 2009, a freshly-minted Dr. Andrew moved to Richland Washington for post-doctoral research at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, working with Dr. Scott Chambers. His research focused on fundamental studies of titanium dioxide photoelectronics, examining ways in which the incorporation of foreign atoms into the crystal structure affected the sensitivity of titanium dioxide to the visible light spectrum. From there he went onto to two years of work in the light emitting diode industry with Cree, Inc. in Raleigh N.C.

In 2013 Andrew left the semiconductor field, wanting to return to his original goal of working in the environmental field. He returned to UW Madison and is studying Hydrology in the Water Resources Engineering program. The thing that he missed most about Chemistry were the hours he spent as a teaching assistant and the time he spent working with undergraduates in research internships. In 2014 he joined Independent Learning as an instructor for General Chemistry and later also began to serve as the instructor for Microbiology. He has thoroughly enjoyed his time with IL, both helping students understand their material and learning more about both fields when he gets stumped by seemingly simple questions. He is intent on updating the courses with a range of improvements and reviving the dormant second semester Chemistry Class. When not scratching his head over student questions he enjoys spending time cooking, spending time with his wife and being walked by his terrier.