

ENGAGING WITH VETERAN INTERNATIONALS

There is much to learn about living in a new country. Newly-arrived international student may feel bewildered in America, so it is relatively easy for us to engage with them by helping to meet their tangible needs.

And yet, there are many students and scholars who we don't meet during their first year in America. Now, a year or two after their arrival, they have found ways to survive and thrive beyond their time of transition. It's possible that a certain individual...

- has improved his or her English skills and may no longer need someone to serve as a language partner.
- has received a driver's license and purchased a car and now doesn't need help with transportation.
- is more committed than ever to academics and is now less available to attend parties or events.
- has developed friendships with other Americans and is not especially interested in making another friend.

In light of these possibilities, how can we engage with “veteran” international students and scholars? Consider some of the following ways you might serve international students who have already mastered the basic skills of surviving in academic America. Consider these ways to help them develop advanced skills-and in the process, forge a friendship with them.

- **Presentation Skills** – Help them improve their English writing skills by looking together at job resumes and cover letters. Or help them communicate more effectively in the classroom and marketplace through informal tips or formal training in public speaking.
- **Personality Assessment** – Depending on your own training, you may be qualified to help students gain insights into their personality types. International students are often interested in learning about themselves and motivated to receive personal feedback.
- **Personal Coaching** – Engage in short-term coaching relationships for students' personal and vocational pursuits. Through clarifying their values, writing mission statements and setting goals, you can help them pursue success. Various individuals may also be interested in exploring a “Life Map” and/or developing their “EQ”, emotional intelligence.

- Spiritual Guidance – Conduct a spiritual questionnaire to learn about their spiritual beliefs, and then invite them to engage in a personal dialogue or be part of a discussion group.

How can we initiate such contacts with students?

- Meet students informally or through campus events. Obtain their contact information when you first meet, and phone later to offer your services.
- Tell your current international friends that you are available to offer certain types of expertise to their friends.
- Contact an international student group, such as the Chinese Student Association on campus. If possible, offer your help to some of the key leaders. They will be pleased to refer you to others in their group.
- Make a presentation to an international student group or speak at a seminar offered by the university's international student office.

Through this approach of helping international students develop personally and professionally, we can make many new connections on campus. And perhaps sooner than later, these interactions with students may provide a platform to assist with their spiritual journeys.