

DRAFT

**Faculty Instructional Experiences with International Students
at Michigan State University: a Survey Conducted by the University Committee on
Faculty Affairs (UCFA)**

April, 2013

BACKGROUND

Michigan State University enrolled the largest number of international students in its history during the 2012-2013 academic year. These more than 600 new undergraduate and graduate students come from many nations; however, the majority came from China.

The increase in international students created both benefits as well as challenges for some MSU faculty. The University Committee on Faculty Affairs (“UCFA”) was asked to document these benefits and challenges, as well as to document suggestions for maximizing the international student educational experience.

The overall goal of the survey was to solicit information about MSU faculty experiences with and opinions about the international students they may have in their classes.

METHODS

The survey instrument was developed, reviewed and approved by the University Committee on Faculty Affairs. Draft versions of the instrument were sent to MSU administrators. Their feedback resulted in a total of 9 revisions of the survey instrument.

All MSU East Lansing-based faculty with a 60% or greater faculty appointment were surveyed electronically via Survey Monkey. The roster of faculty was provided by MSU’s Information Technology Services. A total of 2,704 surveys were sent electronically on March 29, 2013, with a second request sent on April 9, 2013. Ninety-five surveys were returned with an “Out of Office” reply. The return messages stated the faculty members were either on sabbatical, out of the country, or on leave during the survey period.

All quantitative survey items were analyzed by Survey Monkey. Open-ended survey items were analyzed using IBM SPSS Text Analytics software, provided by MSU’s Master’s Program in Marketing Research. For all survey items, the respondent’s identity was kept confidential and only group data are reported.

RESULTS

To date, a total of 1,213 surveys have been completed and returned, for a response rate of 46.5%.

Respondents were mostly tenured or tenure system (73.8%), Caucasian (74.7%), males (58.2%) who had taught at MSU for an average of 13.7 years.

Selected survey items are presented in this report. A link to the complete report of results (with all open-ended responses) is below:

[Click to view all survey results](#)



If you have questions about survey results, please contact William A. Anderson, PhD, Chair, University Committee on Faculty Affairs at William.Anderson@hc.msu.edu

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS





The University Committee on Faculty Affairs would like to acknowledge the following MSU faculty and staff for their contributions to the development, implementation, and analysis of this survey:

- John Williamson, MA
Office of Medical Education Research and Development
College of Human Medicine
- Richard Spreng, PhD
Department of Marketing
College of Business
- Tom Davis, MA
Information Technology Services
- Katherine Ball, MS
Information Technology Services

1. Do you currently have (or last semester had) international students in the classes you teach?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		76.1%	924
No		23.9%	290
		answered question	1,214
		skipped question	0

2. What level of classes do/did you teach with international students? (Check all that apply)

		Response Percent	Response Count
Undergraduate lower division		38.0%	315
Undergraduate upper division		43.3%	359
Graduate/Professional		61.5%	510
Other (please describe)		3.4%	28
		answered question	829
		skipped question	385




3. In what settings do/did you teach international students? (Check all that apply)

		Response Percent	Response Count
large group lecture		47.8%	396
small class/group		74.6%	618
laboratory/field		15.8%	131
online/hybrid courses		11.0%	91
Other (please describe)		5.3%	44
		answered question	828
		skipped question	386




4. Compared to last year, has the number of international students in your classes increased this year?

		Response Percent	Response Count
No		31.4%	258
Not Sure		32.8%	269
Yes		35.8%	294
		answered question	821
		skipped question	393



5. Have your classes benefitted from the presence of international students?

		Response Percent	Response Count
No		16.9%	139
Not Sure		37.1%	306
Yes (please describe below)		46.0%	379
answered question			824
skipped question			390




6. Have international students presented challenges to you in the classes you teach?

		Response Percent	Response Count
No		32.2%	265
Not Sure		6.2%	51
Yes (please describe below)		61.6%	506
answered question			822
skipped question			392




7. Have you changed your course content, instructional, or evaluation methods to accommodate international students?

		Response Percent	Response Count
No		67.3%	547
Yes (please describe below)		32.7%	266
answered question			813
skipped question			401

8. Have you found certain types of instructional or evaluation methods more advantageous for instructing international students?

		Response Percent	Response Count
No		38.8%	318
Not Sure		33.8%	277
Yes (please describe below)		27.4%	224
answered question			819
skipped question			395

9. Have international students impacted students in your class(es) in other ways?

		Response Percent	Response Count
No		27.7%	226
Not Sure		40.9%	334
Yes (please describe below)		31.5%	257
answered question			817
skipped question			397

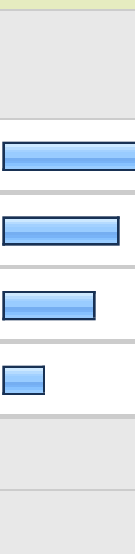
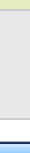
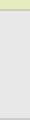

10. What advice do you have for other faculty teaching international students at MSU? (Please describe)

	Response Count
	467
answered question	467
skipped question	747


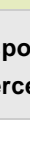
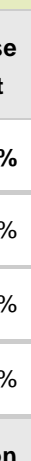

11. How can Michigan State University be helpful to you in teaching/evaluating international students? (Please describe)

	Response Count
	536
answered question	536
skipped question	678





12. What training have you had in teaching and evaluating international students?

		Response Percent	Response Count
no training		64.1%	645
very little training		16.8%	169
some training		13.5%	136
extensive training		5.7%	57
	answered question		1,007
	skipped question		207






13. How well prepared do you feel about teaching and evaluating international students in your classes?

		Response Percent	Response Count
not at all prepared		7.4%	74
somewhat unprepared		15.7%	157
somewhat prepared		53.3%	532
completely prepared		23.6%	236
	answered question		999
	skipped question		215






14. How interested are you in learning more about teaching and evaluating international students?

		Response Percent	Response Count
not at all interested		9.7%	97
not very interested		24.3%	244
somewhat interested		48.6%	488
very interested		17.4%	175
		answered question	1,004
		skipped question	210







15. How would you describe your teaching role at MSU?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Least rewarding part of my job		0.3%	3
Not a rewarding part of my job		0.6%	6
Just a part of my job		7.3%	72
Somewhat rewarding part of my job		52.7%	522
Most rewarding part of my job		39.2%	388
		answered question	991
		skipped question	223




16. What is your current academic rank/title?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Instructor		5.4%	55
Assistant Professor		27.6%	279
Associate Professor		28.1%	284
Professor		35.3%	357
Other (please specify)		3.7%	37
answered question			1,012
skipped question			202




17. What is your ethnic background?

		Response Percent	Response Count
American Indian/Alaskan Native		0.4%	4
Asian or Pacific Islander		11.8%	115
Black		3.2%	31
Caucasian (White)		74.7%	731
Hispanic		4.5%	44
Other (please describe)		5.4%	53
answered question			978
skipped question			236

18. What is your gender?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Female		41.6%	409
Male		58.1%	571
Other		0.2%	2
		answered question	982
		skipped question	232

19. Are you a tenure system faculty member?

		Response Percent	Response Count
No		26.3%	262
Yes, but not yet tenured		17.5%	174
Yes, I am tenured		56.2%	560
		answered question	996
		skipped question	218

20. How many years have you taught at MSU?

		Response Average	Response Total	Response Count
Years		13.74	13,563	987
		answered question		987
		skipped question		227

21. What is your primary academic unit?

	Response Count
	858
answered question	858
skipped question	356

22. What final comments do you have about teaching/evaluating international students at Michigan State University?

	Response Count
	413
answered question	413
skipped question	801

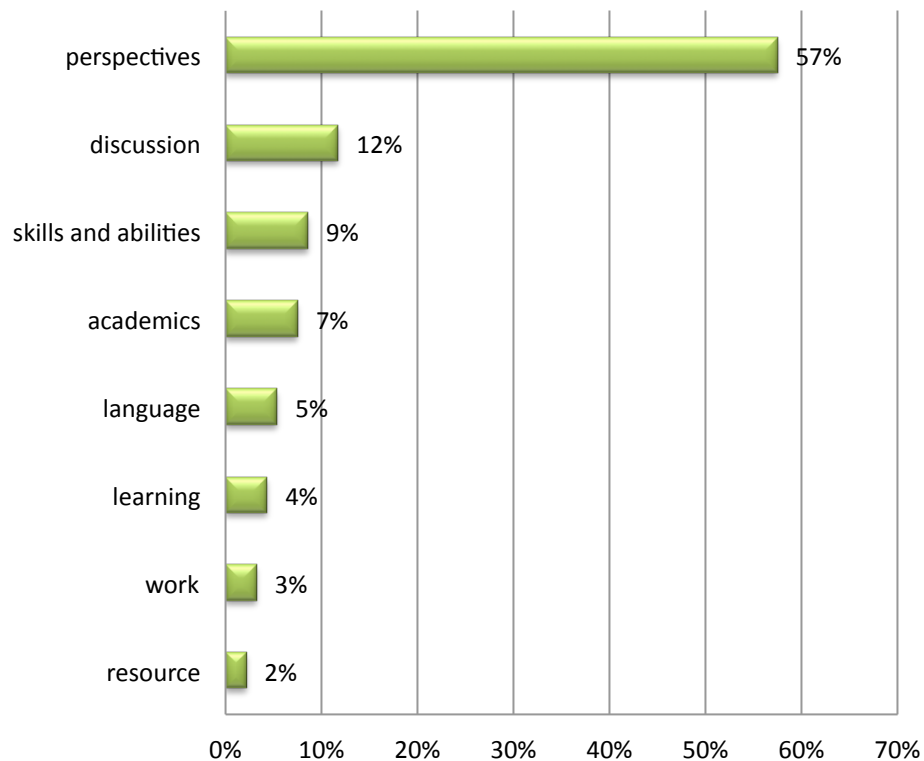
Analysis of Open-ended Text Responses
for the
UCFA Survey of Faculty on International Students

Professor Richard A. Spreng
Department of Marketing

**5. HAVE YOUR CLASSES BENEFITTED
FROM THE PRESENCE OF
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS?**

“Perspectives” was the most common reason for saying that international students benefit the class

Have your classes benefitted from the presence of international students? - Yes



“Perspective” Terms

- perspectives
- Diverse
- Broader perspective
- International perspective
- Global perspective
- Insights
- Cultural perspectives
- International contexts

Most “Perspectives” comments were about the positive aspects of having students in the class with different perspectives.

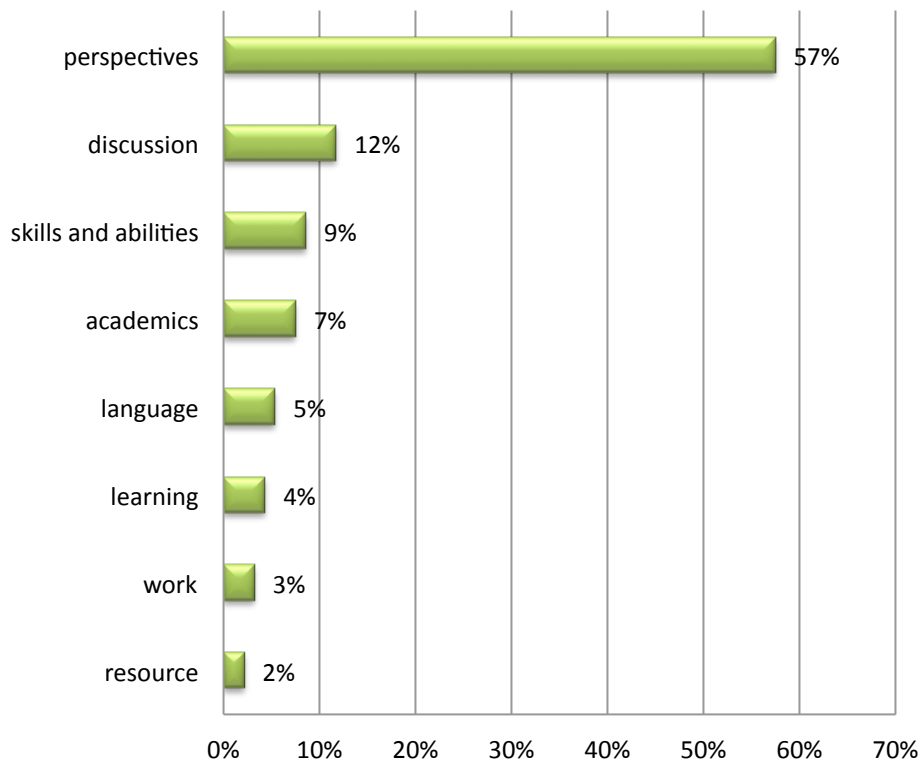
- “Many come to MSU with inspiring stories and *alternative viewpoints* which add to the total class.”
- “It is good for students to have people with different perspectives on studying, learning, lifestyles etc.”
- “Enriched the discussion and bringing a *global/cross-cultural perspective* to discussions and presentations.”
- “Globalization is here to stay. Regardless of whether a student hails from Detroit or Okemos or Bad Axe or Shanghai, he or she will live in an increasingly international, *multicultural world*. It is useful for our students to prepare for their future in this global village by having an undergraduate experience that involves contact with people from other cultures and countries.”

But some “Perspectives” comments were mixed or negative.

- “Their presence has both positive and negative effects. Sometimes they offer information about *how things are done in their countries* and this gives US students *different insights*. Other times they don’t pick up on nuances and their *presence bogs down discussion* and slows everyone else’s learning.”
- “Graduate class - Yes - provide *alternative perspectives*. Undergrad - NO. *Language problems.*”

“Discussions” was a distant second for saying that international students benefit the class

Have your classes benefitted from the presence of international students? - Yes



“Discussion” Terms

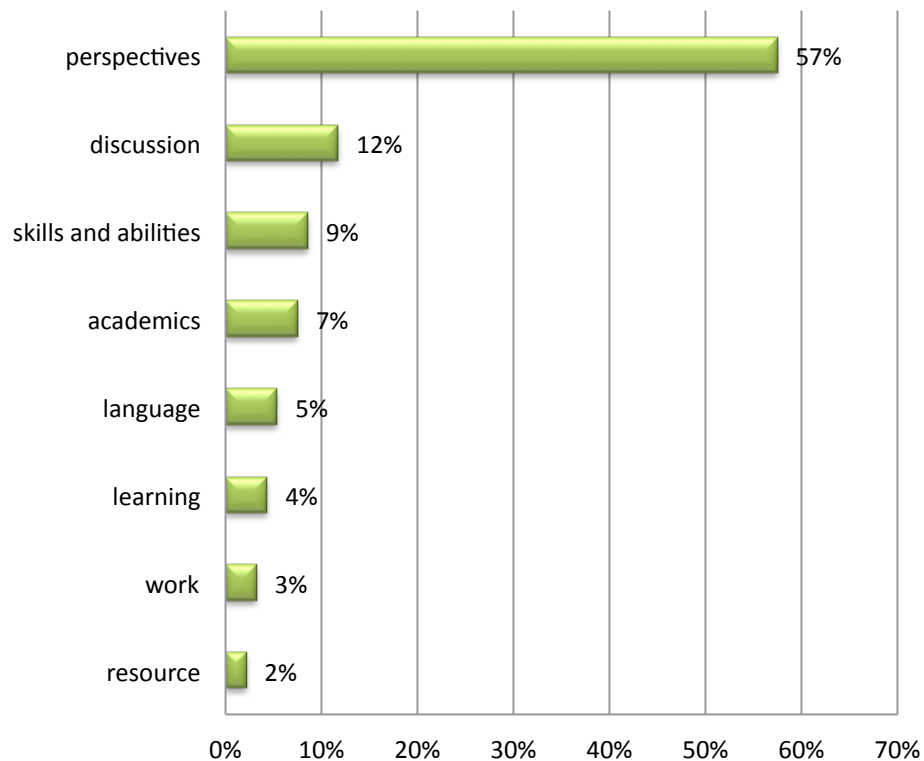
- Class discussion
- Group discussion
- Group interactions
- Enriched discussions

Some “Discussions” comments were about the positive aspects international students bring to class discussions, some were about the negatives, and some were mixed.

- “They are excellent students and contribute very positively to the *class discussion*.”
- “The presence of international students *enriches discussions* by introducing a multicultural perspective.”
- “Sometimes they bring additional experiences to *discussions*. But sometimes they detract by being very passive.”
- “The majority of students are from China. This also hinders *group interaction* and domestic student learning.”
- “No, in that they often don’t add to *class discussion*.”

Comments on “Skills and Abilities” represent just less than 10% of the comments.

Have your classes benefitted from the presence of international students? - Yes



“Skills and Abilities” Terms

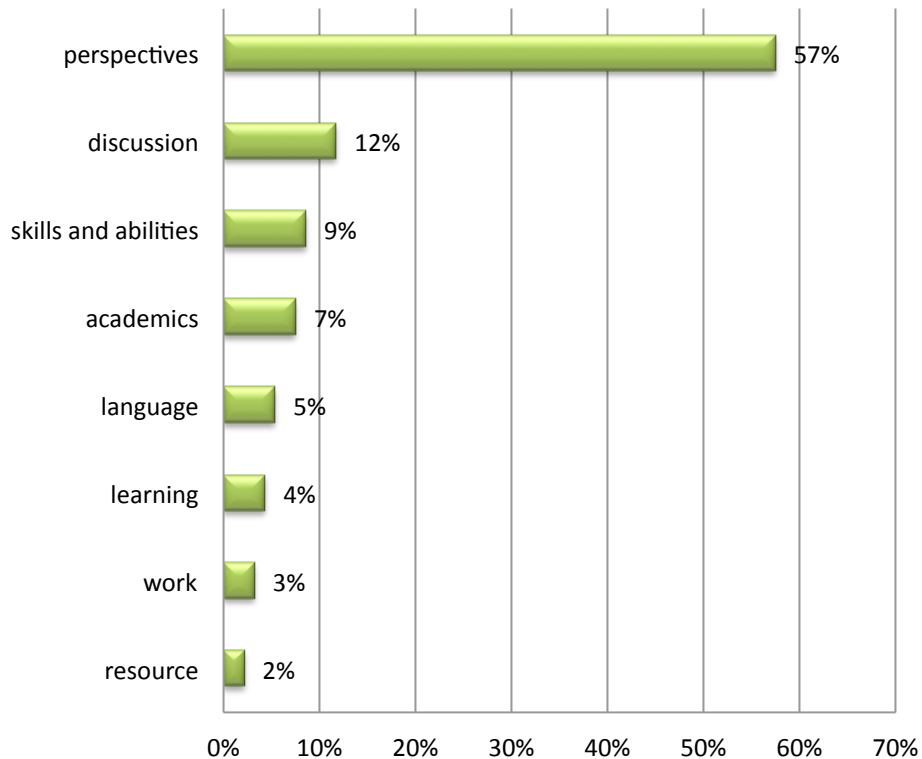
- Skills
- Work ethic
- Learning style barriers
- Strong academic background
- Communication skills
- Critical skills

Some “Skills and abilities” comments were about the positive things internationals bring to the class, while others were about their limitations

- “One of the most important skills we need to foster is the *ability to work with people from different backgrounds*. International students are a great asset for MSU.”
- “They tend to be my best students and their performance tends to *challenge* the other students to work harder.”
- “Their poor language and *critical skills* require much extra work from both classmates and instructors. It’s a trade-off.”
- “The language barrier and *learning style barriers* are challenges.”

The remaining categories of comments represent about 20% of the comments.

Have your classes benefitted from the presence of international students? - Yes



“Academics” Terms

- High achievement
- Level of the class

“Language” Terms

- Poor language
- Language problems

“Learning” Terms

- Learning from students
- Learning style barriers

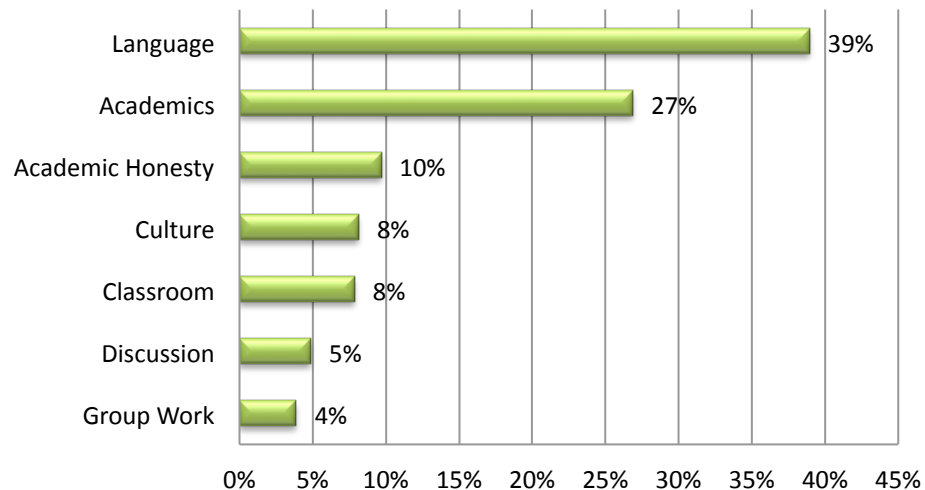
Representative Comments

- Academics
 - “They generally set the standard for *high achievement*.”
- Language
 - “But their unwillingness (often) to participate and their *language challenges* sometimes make it hard to tap into that important resource.”
- Learning
 - “The language barrier and *learning style* barriers are challenges.”

**6. HAVE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS
PRESENTED CHALLENGES TO YOU IN
THE CLASSES YOU TEACH?**

Language and Academic Issues were the two top challenges.

Have international students presented challenges to you in the classes you teach?



“Language” Terms

- English
- Written English
- Language skills
- Written language
- Reading

“Academics” Terms

- Exams
- Assignments
- Understanding
- Lectures

Some international students are perceived to have weak English language skills.

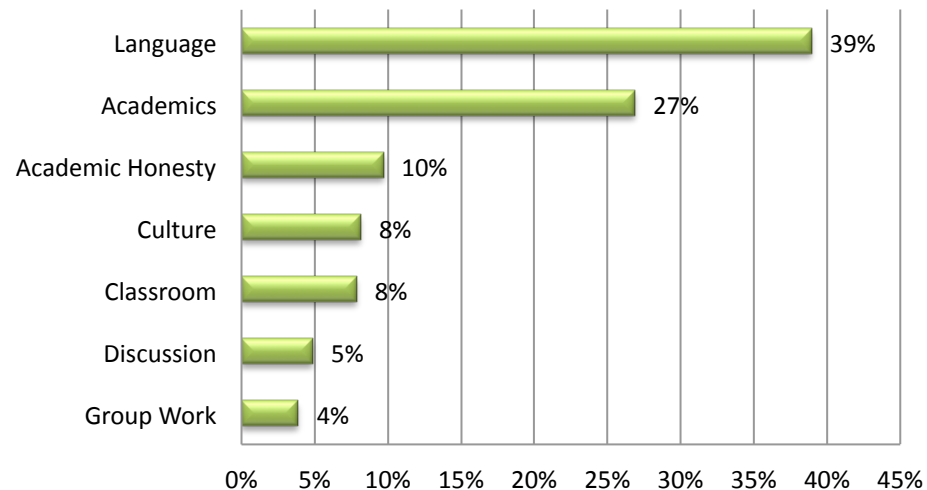
- “The students are not prepared in terms of *English language proficiency*.”
- “Most international students in my courses do not *speak, read*, or understand *English*.”
- “A few students do not have adequate *English skills*, so *reading* and *writing assignments* are a challenge to them.”
- “A significant proportion (I would guess about 1/4 to 1/3) of international students have *weak English reading* and *writing skills*.”

Some students are perceived to be challenged by assignments, lectures, and exams.

- “A few of the international students (definitely not the majority) are not motivated and do not attend class or do *assignments*.”
- “Because they often hesitate to ask questions, it can be a week before I realize that they did not understand an *assignment*.”
- “I feel like I have to teach two different classes simultaneously. The *instructional methods* that help the international students, who in my experience did not have the same level of preparation and had *trouble understanding* me in class, were somewhat remedial for the rest of the students.”

Academic Honesty, Culture and Classroom were each approximately 10% of the challenges

Have international students presented challenges to you in the classes you teach?



“Academic Honesty” Terms

- Cheating
- Plagiarism
- Academic dishonesty

“Culture” Terms

- Culture
- Cultural perspectives

“Classroom” Terms

- Questions
- Participation

Cheating is perceived to be a major problem, particularly among students from certain countries.

- “Some international students are not familiarized with rules regarding *cheating* during exams.”
- “Also, I have to monitor much more closely for *cheating*. My experience has been that an international student, other things equal, is more likely to cheat -- *plagiarize*, copy off another on a test, turn in work that is not actually their own.”
- “Exams are very challenging to proctor, as *cheating* appears to be rampant. This is not just my opinion, but the opinion of my students as well.”
- “*Cheating* is a big issue. I had to take extraordinary steps to attempt to prevent *cheating*.”

There is a concern by some faculty that differing cultural norms inhibit understanding.

- “Different *cultural norms* in how they interact with faculty.”
- “I have to be very careful how I describe things. I don’t use any examples that relate in any way to *American culture* and I rarely try to tell jokes. If I do any of these things, the international students will be at a disadvantage because they won’t understand the references.”
- “*Cultural barriers* also exist in the willingness and ability of international students to seek assistance, as well as seeking out opportunities for extra-curricular enrichment.”
- “Many *cultural assumptions* about writing, about classroom behavior, about small-group work.”
- “I need to make sure my test questions do not use *common American phrases* that international students may find confusing.”

Participation in class and willingness to ask questions are perceived to be a problem.

- “Although it is understandable students have different approaches to learning, quite a few international students are not familiar with a more *interactive classroom*.”
- “At the graduate level it has been hard to maintain and encourage *participation*.”
- “It appears that a lot of the international students I have encountered in my *classroom* have certain expectations of who/ what an instructor is supposed to be, which differs from domestic students. As a result of these expectations, their behavior is sometimes out of line (e.g., disrespectful, dismissive, and/or unengaged).”
- “Then there’s the different expectations regarding professors - many Asian students simply will not ask *questions*, or even clarification, of a professor, leading to problems. “