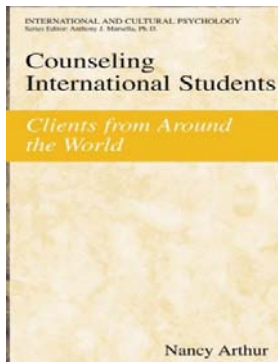


## Counseling International Students: Clients from Around the World

Arthur, N. (2004). *Counseling international students: Clients from around the world*. New York, NY: Kluwer Academic / Plenum Publishers. Pp. vii+ 149, ISBN 0-306-48069-7

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International students have emerged as a student population that plays a critical role in the internationalization efforts of institutions of higher education across the world. Currently, the United States leads the world in the number of international students on local campuses. In 2000, a total of 547,867 international students were enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities. According to the Open Doors report, the number of international students reached 764,495 in 2011 (Institute of International Education, 2012). When considering this growth in the representation of international students on U.S. campuses, it is important to acknowledge that institutions have also acquired additional responsibilities, committing to provide services that can fulfill the academic and personal needs of this student sub-population. In line with this commitment, institutions have witnessed a rising number of students seeking counseling services because of psychological problems (Gallagher, 2011). International students are not excluded from this trend.—Arthur (2004) uses her experiences counseling international students to explore how counselors in higher education can better understand this important student group and develop competencies and skills to provide the support services that will encourage these students to succeed.

Arthur (2004) situates this examination within the context of "cross-cultural transition," considering the unique experiences that international students face when making the decision to study in a foreign country. Arthur's approach is simple and effective. In Chapters 1-4, she takes the reader step-by-step through the general process that characterizes the experience of an international student, and explores how differing cultural values, norms, and expectations can influence how students cope with the stresses of traveling overseas to study; interacting with a new culture, adapting to a college environment, facing the emotional ups and downs of culture shock, and finally returning to their home countries.

In Chapter 5, Arthur explains the current multicultural counseling competencies that must guide counselors. She constructs a direct link to how these core counseling skills can be applied when working with international students. Chapter 6 introduces short but compelling individual case scenarios that illustrate the unique problems and issues that international students can face. These scenarios offer an opportunity to consider and reflect on the role of counselors serving international students, and allow the reader to connect literature presented throughout this book to how transitions in a cultural context shape the experience of international students. The final chapter focuses on institutional guidelines to enhance the services and support that are currently

offered for international students. This chapter emphasizes the need to provide services that keep up with the increasing number of issues that arise when larger numbers of students with rich and diverse backgrounds come together on college and university campuses. The chapter concludes by identifying areas for future research.

The strength of Arthur's work is her focused attention on the student experience. She provides a detailed examination of how cultural transitions and differences can influence the decision of international students to seek counseling services, and the process by which counselors should offer these services. Arthur points out that counselors can rely on core competencies that incorporate flexibility when international students seek counseling services. In many cultures, there is a stigma associated with seeking counseling services and students may be unfamiliar and uncomfortable with the dynamics of seeking help from someone whom they may consider to be an authority figure. Arthur advocates flexibility in counseling style, methods, and ethical considerations. To encourage international students to utilize counseling services, Arthur suggests breaking away from conventional counseling methods and implementing strategies such as including family members or conducting informal sessions outside of the counselor's office. With regards to the counseling process itself, Arthur argues that counselors must develop competencies suited to fulfill the needs of each student. This means taking time to learn about the international student population on their campus as a whole, and understanding the varying levels of acculturation held by international students and their home and host cultures. Her position is that each international student has a unique background and personality, and while they may share a common experience of cross-cultural transition, counselors must be cautious and carefully evaluate bias and stereotypes that can be formed when serving a particular student group.

When examining the impact of transitions on international students, Arthur highlights several areas that can emerge as sources of distress for international students. These areas can include difficulty adjusting to foreign teaching styles, language proficiency issues, understanding different gender role expectations in the new culture, and financial difficulties. International students can also have difficulties when they find that their courses are too challenging or not challenging enough based on their background. Lack of social support is also often a major issue that can be compounded by a lack of intercultural communication competence. Counselors must have a good understanding of how to help international students manage the demands of a cross-cultural transition, where anticipating and helping students confront feelings of loneliness, depression, homesickness, discrimination or racism on campus can be central to a student's personal and academic adjustment to a host culture.

Arthur introduces several approaches that counselors can incorporate to ease this transition for international students. Creating awareness of the types of services provided on campus is necessary, but more importantly, she suggests that counselors continuously reach out to international students to urge them to participate in programs that were designed to help with their transition. Likewise, Arthur believes that designing support groups or psycho-educational workshops (e.g., language support, study skills and cross-cultural orientations) can have a great impact in creating spaces for international students to connect with other students. She suggests that creating a culture where students can utilize counseling services in a group context is a powerful tool to remove the stigma attached to seeking these types of services, thus reaching more students and creating networks of support that can help students manage their transition.

*Counseling International Students: Clients from Around the World* is a must-read for all counselors working at an institution that hosts international students. Nancy Arthur provides the reader with a thorough understanding of the shared experiences of international students, and how these experiences can psychologically affect the well-being and success of students. She offers competencies to assist counselors with their professional development, methods for counseling

sessions, and suggestions for programming. This comprehensive work is notable for its humanistic look at how best to serve this valuable student population.

### References

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