Supporting UCSB’s International Students: Ideas for Instructors

STRUCTURE

On syllabus
- Provide a “checklist” of what is required for the course, with due dates
- Provide pertinent links and information to avoid academic dishonesty
  - Academic Integrity, Judicial Affairs, UCSB
  - Style guides (e.g. OWL at Purdue)
  - Is collaboration allowed? If so, provide guidelines.

During lecture
- Begin (and/or end) sessions with learning objectives
- Model the type of thinking that you want your students to engage in
  - E.g. Structure your lecture like a (term) paper (and make it explicit)
- Provide succinct key points on slides—elaborate verbally
- Turn on the English subtitles when showing a film or video.
- Be aware that the following are challenging for non-native speakers: hypothetical and rhetorical questions, popular cultural icons (including TV shows, slogans, sports & idioms, e.g. “beat around the bush” or “cut corners”)
- Post PowerPoint slides on GauchoSpace

PARTICIPATION

- Explain the importance of participation in your course: how does it facilitate students’ learning?
- Build in a variety of ways of fostering interaction, including some that allow international students ample time to formulate responses:
  - Instructor discusses posts from online forum (that students participate in prior to class)
  - Quick-writes
  - Think/pair/share
  - For in-class activities, provide directions both verbally and in writing
- Rather than asking “any questions” or “do you understand?” Ask students to explain the main ideas, or ask a specific question designed to evaluate their comprehension.
- Repeat and reframe student questions: if a student asks a question that is not phrased properly, repeat it back with the proper phrasing rather than correcting them.
- Encourage students to attend office hours, even if they don’t have a specific question.

In smaller classes…
- Require a 2 minute meeting with all students (in small-med sized classes)
  - Talk about their life/goals
  - Provide resources
  - Give advice: for International students, “Speak up.” This is particularly important if there are group assignments, since most complaints involve the lack of participation by international students.
- Learn students’ names
HOMEWORK, READINGS AND QUIZZES
- Use (online) homework assignments, reflections and quizzes to encourage reading and help guide your students’ learning
  - Ask questions beyond recall that get at things like “what is the author’s thesis and what arguments are used to support it,” or more simply, “What is the point?”
  - Ask questions in different ways, reflecting the type of questions that you ask on exams or writing assignments
- Types of thinking, writing and assignments in the U.S. vary dramatically compared to those in other countries. Help international students understand your expectations by providing outlines, study questions and samples of student work or projects from previous quarters.
- Break down the expectations of assignments to help students understand differences between question cues such as analyze, evaluate or identify.
  - Rather than asking students, “Do you understand the assignment?” which will likely elicit widespread agreement, ask students to explain what is required in their own words.

GROUP WORK
- In composing groups, consider the advantages and disadvantages of self-selection vs. instructor-mixed groups
- Groups should encourage all members to participate. If students working in groups assume specific roles (e.g. scribe, time-keeper, etc.), consider having a member designated to elicit the ideas of students who have not yet contributed.

References


Supporting International Students in the Classroom: A Guide for Faculty & Instructors: http://international.illinois.edu/faculty/resources.html