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The Culture Conundrum: Training Faculty and Staff for Effectively Working with International Students

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McKenna Pencak – PIM 72
The Culture Conundrum: Training Faculty and Staff for Effectively Working
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Over the past five years, the number of international students studying at the University of Notre Dame has increased by 30 percent. The increase in the numbers of undergraduate international students, as well as Chinese international students, has been even more significant. This rapid growth in the number of international students has created challenges for University faculty, staff, and administrators, both inside and outside of the classroom. International students typically face different challenges adjusting to an American university from their American peers, stemming from differences between their home country cultures and American culture. When an international student is facing a challenge, faculty, staff, and administrators often struggle to support them because they interpret the students' challenges based on their American cultural experiences and values. The author administered a questionnaire to ten international students at the University of Notre Dame regarding their experience adjusting to American culture and how faculty and staff can better support their needs. The results suggest that students' adjustment depends largely upon where they are from, their cultural values, and their experiences in the United States. Nearly all of the students also expressed a desire for faculty and staff to learn more about their students' home countries and cultures. This paper provides a plan for implementing a four-part training program for faculty and staff that will provide them with the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to become more interculturally competent and more effectively support the international student population at the University of Notre Dame.