

**CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE CLASSROOM:
CELEBRATING THE DIFFERENCES AND
OVERCOMING COGNITIVE BARRIERS**

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ABSTRACT

Due to the globalization of the marketplace, particularly among the younger generation, the number of foreign students that are attending American universities is predicted to increase significantly in the years ahead.

There are many issues facing foreign students that can make their time at an American university very stressful. Unfortunately, many faculty who want to be good teachers to our international students are often at a loss as to what to do to enhance the learning experience and reduce the stress on foreign students, while enhancing the educational experience of domestic students. Some faculty even worry that they may dilute the challenges of the domestic students while catering to foreign students. The purpose of this paper is to present some insights into some of the factors that cause stress for international students and to present simple, yet useful tips for reducing stress and heightening the learning experience for our foreign visitors, as well as native-born Americans.

Most of the international students were good students and high achievers at home, and it

comes as a shock to many of them when, although they spend a great deal of time studying, they do not earn high grades. Most of their difficulties stem from problems with language, but differences in culture, cognitive framework, and social experiences also contribute to their difficulties. Additionally, many students bring with them very different attitudes to learning and knowledge as well as different study styles and habits.

Since faculty play a key role in the learning experience of students studying here from foreign countries, it is extremely important for us to be sensitive to the differences, the special needs, and unique learning styles of students from other countries. It is also important for us to understand how these differences manifest themselves in the cognitive perceptions and learning activities of the students.