

Building Global Community: Connecting International and Domestic Students

International and domestic students have a unique opportunity for mutual learning, multicultural professional development, and the formation of cross-cultural friendships. The International student body should go beyond mere representation, and feel valued and included as members of the campus community in order for a global mindset to be formed. As Bell Hooks writes, "... while no one can deny the positive power of diverse representation, representation alone is simply not enough to create a climate supportive of sustained diversity" (2013, p. 11) This roundtable has arisen from an observation that although there are many events organized for international students, there are few opportunities that link international and domestic students in a meaningful way. Gresham and Clayton (2011) studied the community involvement of International students and found that "despite seemingly regular opportunities to integrate, many international students report that their interactions with local residents remain superficial" (p. 1).

Making social and professional connections with people from diverse cultural backgrounds is a cornerstone of our field. As counselors, we will need to not only learn about other cultures but also to be comfortable enough to work with those populations. This multicultural topic should not be limited to courses specifically addressing multicultural issues in counseling. Rather, multiculturalism should be encouraged as a way of life.

This discussion will address relations among international and domestic students. What holds International students back from connecting with domestic students, and vice versa? What are the cultural, language and financial barriers for international students? How does systemic racial prejudice play a role for domestic students, even if unconsciously? How can richer, more meaningful connections can be made between International and domestic students – and what each might potentially gain from such endeavors? Our hope is that this discussion will be a starting point for a future research project geared toward forming community alliances across cultural lines.

References

- Hooks, B. (2013). *Writing beyond race: living theory and practice*. Taylor and Francis, New York, NY.
- Gresham, R. & Clayton, V. (2011). Community connections: A programme to enhance domestic and international student experiences. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*. 33, 363-374.