



# **International and Multilingual Students at St. Olaf**

**Understanding Our Students**

# International Student Support Team



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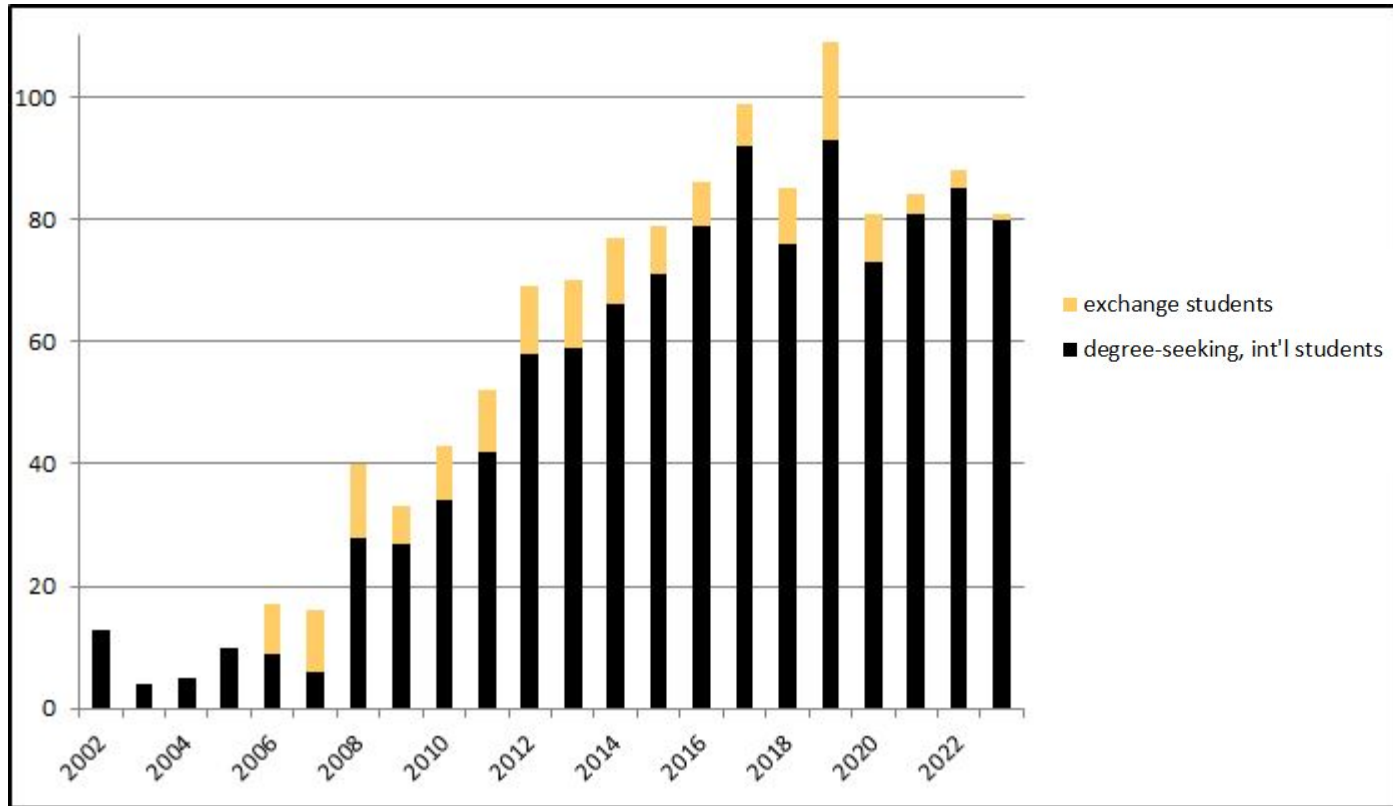


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# Understanding Our Students

## International Student Population, 2002-2023



# Understanding Our Students

## Countries of Origin

Armenia	Czech Republic	Jamaica	Netherlands	Sudan
Australia	Ecuador	Japan	Nicaragua	Suriname
Austria	Egypt	Kazakhstan	Nigeria	Syria
Bangladesh	El Salvador	Kenya	Norway	Taiwan
Barbados	Estonia	Kingdom of eSwatini	Pakistan	Tajikistan
Belarus	Ethiopia	Laos	Palestine	Tanzania
Belize	France	Lebanon	Panama	Thailand
Bolivia	Georgia	Lesotho	Paraguay	Tibet
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Germany	Macedonia	Peru	Timor-Leste
Brazil	Ghana	Madagascar	Phillipines	Turkey
Burundi	Guatemala	Maldives	Poland	Uganda
Cambodia	Guyana	Mauritius	Portugal	Ukraine
Cameroon	Honduras	Mexico	Russia	United Kingdom
Canada	Hong Kong S.A.R.	Moldova	Rwanda	Venezuela
Cayman Islands	India	Montenegro	Singapore	Vietnam
Chile	Indonesia	Morocco	Slovakia	Zambia
China	Iran	Mozambique	Somalia	Zimbabwe
Colombia	Iraq	Myanmar	South Africa	
Congo (Kinshasa)	Israel	Namibia	South Korea	
Costa Rica	Italy	Nepal	South Sudan	

# Understanding Our Students

## Previous Schooling

- Admitted students have prepared at...
  - National schools with the international curriculum or with an “overseas”/“international” track for those intended to study abroad
  - United World Colleges (“UWC”) (2 year intl schools with IB curriculum)
  - American/International Schools with a US curriculum
  - A high school in the United States
- Admitted students often have...
  - The International Baccalaureate Diploma (4,000-word extended essay, Theory of Knowledge class, great liberal arts college prep!)
  - A-Levels/Cambridge A-Levels
  - AP test scores

# Understanding Our Students

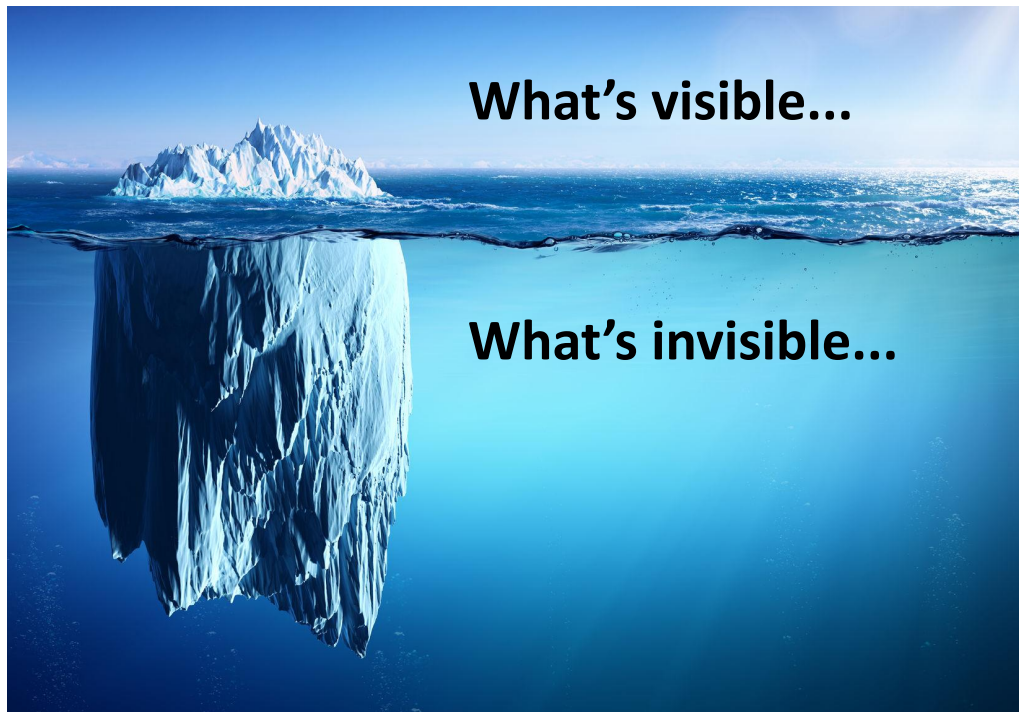
## “Multilingual” Students

Students who speak more than one language, and in this context, students who do not speak English as their first language.

- International students
- Domestic students
- “Third culture” students

Many students on campus have a solid understanding of college-level academic culture and are fluent in *academic* English; many are still acquiring those skills; that adds a layer to the adjustment process.

# Understanding Our Students



**What's visible...**

*...in person, SIS*

**What's invisible...**

*...gender identity,  
socio-economic status,  
language fluency, preferred  
patterns of interaction,  
ethnicity, ...*

# Understanding Our Students

## Keep in mind...

- The advisor-student relationship might be a new experience.
- Students might not be using their dominant language.
- Students come from different countries, different regions, and different *families*. They might differ from you in unexpected ways.
- Students might be experiencing all kinds of non-academic struggles.

### Advising Multilingual/International Students

#### Expectations

- The advisor-student relationship may be a new experience, so...
- Ask students what they are expecting, what this type of relationship would consist of in at their last school?
  - Explain what an advisor does at St. Olaf, and "train" students in your style of advising.  
*Be aware that a student's understanding of your role, your relationship, your process of how to get things done, etc., might be different. Take time to explain all of that, explain why you are asking questions or giving information. Remember that in some countries faculty are not approachable, student services are non-existent, and asking questions is offensive. Students might not know how often they should/could reach out and meet with advisors, what are appropriate topics of conversation, level of support, mentor role.*
  - Describe available resources, help students see whether and when they would be useful, and teach students how to make use of them on their own.  
*Talk about what you are available for and what other support services are available. Introduce them to a faculty member in their intended field of study. Don't assume that students will ask if they want to know. Talk about academic goals, grades, GPA, academic expectations in the US for grad schools and employment, major selection. Talk about research and internship opportunities/plans and the Piper Center. Talk about academic struggles. Talk about making a schedule (from classes, all classes M.W.F., extra curricular activities). Help dismantle the stigma around asking for help. Help unveil the "hidden curriculum."*

#### Language

- Students might not be using their dominant language; they might not be used to the college-level, academic register, so...
- Start your interactions in a "low-stakes" way.
  - Face the student, consider your word choice and pace, and allow extra time for turn-taking.
  - Don't assume that students are familiar with acronyms, systems, documents and spaces that are particular to St. Olaf.  
*Listen, be patient. Be careful with culturally bound references and language. Use visual support. Look at schedules, program descriptions, etc., together. Write things down. Stop and summarize from time to time. Use lexical markers to identify main points and next step. Learn from your international colleagues.*

#### "Culture"

- Students, domestic and international, come from different countries, different regions, and different families. They may differ from you in terms of ...
- expectations surrounding authority figures (eye contact, turn-taking, forthcomingness)
  - preference for directness or indirectness in speaking
  - understanding of academic integrity
  - definition of private and personal  
*Be aware of your own assumptions, keep an open mind, and be patient with students as you learn who they are. Listen. Ask. Pay attention.*

#### Non-academic struggles

- Students may be experiencing homesickness, and international students may also be experiencing jet lag and culture shock. They are generally farther away from their family, and they may be calling home in the middle of the night, when it's daytime in their home countries.
- Some students may have helicopter parents or authoritative parents, and they may have different kinds of pressures related to family expectations. Some may be going through this transition on their own. International students may have an extra layer of stress around financial issues, and immigration status, and health care, and they may be experiencing stress caused by events occurring in their home countries.
- Most students will be going through common adolescent struggles related to identity, autonomy and social connection. International students may find that language and culture add an extra barrier that makes it difficult at first to establish strong friendships.  
*You will be one of the first connections to campus, and potentially one of the most important, so give them an opportunity to tell their story, and take the time to listen.*



# Helping Multilingual Students Thrive

- Students have had a variety of formative experiences. They have different backgrounds, they arrive with complex identities, and their identities change. **GET TO KNOW** these students.
- Students are *new* to St. Olaf. They need knowledge and tools to navigate the campus, feel welcome, and succeed. **REVEAL** the hidden curriculum, and help students become confident, independent Oles.
- The professor-student relationship will have a potentially huge impact on a student's success. **BE THE GO-TO PERSON** for these students.

# Support for Our Students

**International Student Orientation**-- a 3-day orientation for new international students

- Broad overview of immigration regulations related to study and work
- Orientation to a Liberal Arts Education, the GPA/credit requirements, classroom expectations, academic resources
- Brief introduction to campus facilities and Northfield amenities
- Community-building with other international students

**New Student Orientation:** -- a 5-day orientation for all new students

- Learning Outcomes related to Living in Community, Academic Success, and Co-Curricular Involvement

# Student Support Systems

## First-year Support for Writing and Academic Adjustment

- Pre-registration and the Writing Placement exercise
- Writing-intensive sections of the First-Year Seminar
  - Critical reading, the writing process, research and library resources
  - Academic culture and the academic conversation
  - Academic Integrity and the responsible use of information
- Writing and research support in the First-Year Seminar
  - Writing Desk (embedded tutors, weekly appointments)
  - Writing Workshops
- Spring check-in
- Writing 108

# Student Support Systems

## Ongoing Support for Writing and Academics

- Multilingual Student Language Support (Academic Success Center)  
One-on-one support for reading, listening, writing, speaking, in-class participation, other social and practical support
- Other Academic Success Center resources:
  - Conversation Partners
  - Writing Desk, Supplemental Instruction, and Academic Tutoring
  - Academic Coaching
- St. Olaf College Statement on Instructional Adaptations to Testing Procedures (Extended Time and Verbal Clarification) for Students Whose First Language is Not English

# **Student Support Systems**

## **Ongoing Support for Writing and Academics**

**YOU!**

**Be a good listener.**

**Help students understand the system,  
...see the possible options,  
...discover and achieve their goals.**