

Strategies for Meeting the Expectations of Chinese Students

Presentation at the Focusing on the First Year Conference
The Ohio State University
January 27, 2015

Ruilan Zhao
PhD Candidate
Dept. of Teaching & Learning



Bob Eckhart
Executive Director
Combined ESL Programs



From apathy to affinity

October 9th, 2014

[Home](#) » [Features](#) » [onCampus Staff Features](#) » [From apathy to affinity](#)

Understanding cultural differences is essential to helping a growing population of Chinese students to remain vibrant

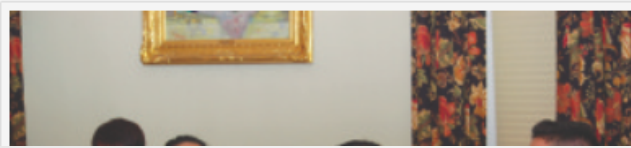
By Adam King

University Communications

It is a time-honored tradition on the first day of classes: An instructor hands out a syllabus so students know the semester-long ins and outs of assignments and exams.

A Chinese student at Ohio State, however, sees it as merely another piece of paper. In the Chinese education system, typically there is no syllabus and expectations are not communicated.

That subtle nuance between the two societies was one of many explored at the Sept. 25 Chinese Cultural Awareness Workshop at the Faculty Club Grand Lounge.



Search

Advertisements

**Planning for Retirement
is not easy**



Contact Mitch Grant



Chinese undergraduates at OSU

| | |
|------|----------------------|
| 2004 | 53 |
| 2005 | 52 |
| 2006 | 55 |
| 2007 | 85 |
| 2008 | 253 (doubled) |
| 2009 | 581 (doubled) |
| 2010 | 1207 (doubled) |
| 2011 | 1758 (~50 increase) |
| 2012 | 2286 (~33% increase) |
| 2013 | 2392 |
| 2014 | 2472 |

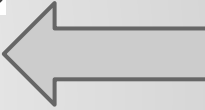
Source: Table 9, http://oesar.osu.edu/pdf/student_enrollment/trends/AUTTREND.pdf

Characteristics of the Chinese Educational System

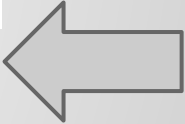
- 1) Gao Kao creates grade-centered/individual system as opposed to group-work--a student's entire future revolves around one test score;
 - 2) Confucian lecture style that is teacher-centered; students take notes, memorize, and reproduce information on tests;
 - 3) Uniformity is highly valued as compared to creativity so students only master the ability to follow instructions and take direction.
-

NYT article: Inside a Chinese Test-Prep Factory

Xu looked gaunt. He showed me his student-ID photo, taken the previous fall, when his face was round and fleshy. “I’ve lost seven kilos” — 15 pounds — “because I can’t get used to the food,” he said. The freedom of university life took adjustment, too. “There are no rules here,” he said. “I was so confused during first semester, because nobody told me what to do.”



The grounds themselves were as manicured as an American college campus, albeit one with decorative rocks adorned with the school’s motto: “We don’t compete with intelligence but with hard work!”



<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/04/magazine/inside-a-chinese-test-prep-factory.html>

Expectations of Chinese Students

- 1) If they just get good grades they will get a good job, regardless of their cultural intelligence;
 - 2) Sometimes the way to get what you want is just to push, push, push...but they don't know when it is culturally appropriate to push or not push in certain situations;
 - 3) Students are expecting explicit instructions, for example, picking a topic, using a model to learn how to write, etc. They want to be told what to do.
-

Strategies for Meeting Expectations

- 1) Help int'l students understand US classroom values especially in terms of collaboration;
 - 2) Explain how individual choice in the classroom is important;
 - 3) Make sure they understand the difference between *knowing* and *thinking* and realize they will be asked to think.
-

Takeaways--From Apathy to Affinity

- 1) Not all Chinese students are the same
 - 2) Chinese students expect many of the same things as domestic students
 - 3) Chinese students will be thrilled if you know anything about Chinese culture
-

Conclusion/Q&A

- 1) Your best resource for guidance about how to work with Chinese students is talking to Chinese students--they will usually be very helpful and cooperative.

 - 2) There are many great books which can help you understand Chinese culture/students:
 - a. River Town, Peter Hessler
 - b. Age of Ambition, Evan Osnos
 - c. Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Dragon, Yong Zhao
-

For further information or consultation at your college/university:

Bob Eckhart

eckhart.5@osu.edu

Ruilan Zhao

zhao.358@osu.edu

Ruilan and Bob are available to meet with faculty/staff in your department/at your institution to help determine strategies that work best for meeting the needs of Chinese students there.

Dozing Off: American Universities Should Do More to Help Chinese Students Adapt

Inside Higher Education, December 11, 2014

<<<http://go.osu.edu/insidehighered>>>
