

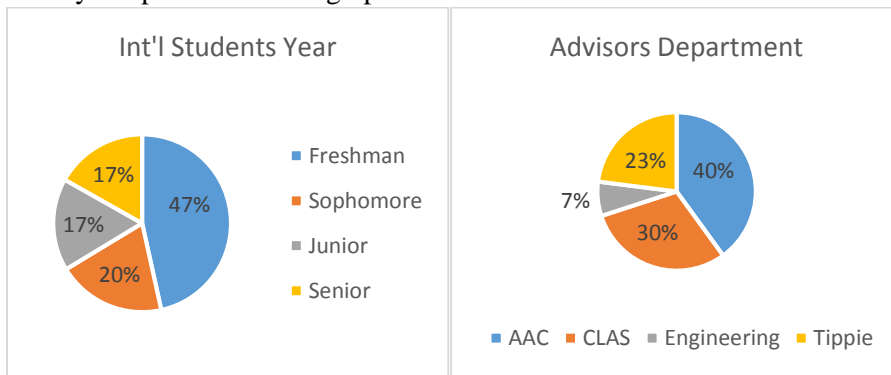
**Academic Advisors & International Student Assessment  
Fall 2015 Survey & Spring 2016 Focus Groups Summary**

The Academic Advisors & International Students Assessment project is a two-phase project, consisting of two parallel surveys for both academic advisors and international students in fall 2015, and 2 focus groups in spring 2016. There are four primary goals of this assessment project:

- 1) To identify areas of immigration regulations that academic advisors need additional support or information from International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) when advising international students on academic coursework. (survey)
- 2) Both academic advisors and international students will share their experience working with each other. (survey & focus groups)
- 3) Understand and identify areas of expectation gaps between academic advisors and international students in terms of academic advising. (survey & focus groups)
- 4) To identify areas that both academic advisors and international students need additional support and ways of delivery. (survey)

**I. Fall 2015 Surveys**

a. Survey Respondents Demographics



b. Expectations

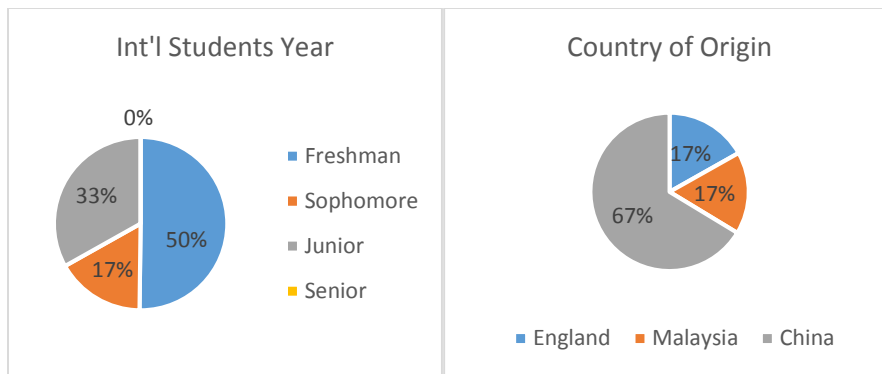
|                                | <i>International Students</i>   | <i>Academic Advisors</i>  |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| <i>Expectations</i>            | <p>Academics – varies from knowing a little about every major, to knowing everything about one major (including course content, career, and graduate school)</p> <p>Efficiency – maximize the use of time or graduate early</p> <p>Patience and encouragement, especially from freshmen</p> | <p>Be prepared for advising meeting, and use advising appointment for more in-depth planning and discussion</p> <p>Be open and honest for discussion</p> <p>-</p> |
| <i>Expectation differences</i> | <p>Students are not good at picking up the expectation differences</p> <p>Understanding advising relationship – authorized registration &amp; policy gatekeeper vs. relationship &amp; advise</p> <p>The definition/range of “academics”</p>  |   |

c. Immigration Regulations

|                                   | <i>International Students</i>          | <i>Academic Advisors</i>         |
|-----------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| <i>Most familiar</i>              | Enrollment rule – add/drop             |                                  |
| <i>Least familiar</i>             | Enrollment rule – part-time enrollment | Employment & internship          |
| <i>Needs for more information</i> | Employment & internship                | Enrollment rule – online classes |

**II. Spring 2016 Focus Groups**

a. Focus Groups Demographics



b. Focus Group Themes

i. About expectations:

- a) Some students expect advisors to communicate more often, or check-in to ask questions, but notice that advisors expect them to be more proactive.
- b) For students who are new to this academic system or do not know enough about the system yet, this might be a challenge - they usually do not know how to ask questions and where to start asking questions.
- c) Some students want to know more about courses (e.g., whether a course will be too difficult for them because they are new international students, or advance level courses with many graduate students in the course, etc.). Knowing these might help them plan study time, or know whether they are able to persist with the courses, or consequences that they would have if enrolling in the courses.
- d) Some students see academic advising as a two-ways partnership, and discuss expectations with advisors regularly.
- e) Students who changed advisors for a few times feel lost about expectations for academic advising.

ii. About policies:

- a) Students expect advisors to bring up institutional policies that they were not aware of.
- b) Students wish to have a layout of their degree requirement right at the beginning.
- c) One student expressed wishing academic advisors know more about international policies.

iii. About opportunities:

- a) Study abroad was brought up a few times – students want to know about opportunities like study abroad that are available to them.
- b) With opportunities like study abroad or adding another major that requires advance planning, students would like to know about them earlier in order to plan ahead to graduate on time.

iv. About procedures/processes:

- a) On top of not aware of opportunities, students also expressed confusion about procedures. Examples include credit transferring, scholarship application, dropping classes.
- b) Although students generally are aware of these policies and can find the information online on their own, the procedures/processes were not clear to them.

v. About orientation/first advising appointment:

- a) Students usually learned about academic advising during orientation/On Iowa, or during the first academic advising appointment.
- b) One student mentioned that her advisor explicitly explained to her in what ways academic advisor could help her.
- c) The general orientation is overwhelming. Departmental orientation would be helpful.
- d) Students would appreciate knowing what to expect in academic advising appointments and what questions to ask before their first advising appointment.

**III. Summary/Interpretation**

- a. Both the surveys and the focus groups captured the expectation differences between international students and academic advisors: students want to know more about courses content, opportunities available to them, and how they can use their time more efficiently, while advisors expect students to be prepared and proactive to ask questions and discuss their decisions. Not all international students are able to pick up these expectation differences on their own.
- b. The extent to which students know about how the education system here works (e.g., policies, procedures, processes), and the opportunities available to them impacts their ability to ask questions. Some students are able to find out the policies on websites after they have been at Iowa for a while, but processes still confuse them.
- c. Students who want to know more about course content and opportunities in their field seem to benefit from having faculty advisors. At the same time, these students might not be as aware of opportunities outside of their departments, or other institutional policies/processes. Some students are not aware of the values of exploring campus-wide resources with academic advisors until later on.
- d. Peer to peer information sharing and assistance was brought up a few times by students as an effective way to discover the unknown.

#### **IV. Recommendations**

- a. Letting students know what to expect for academic advising, or teaching them how they can use their time during academic advising appointments ahead of the appointments.
- b. Procedures and processes can be outlined more clearly/explicitly on websites. For example, while both international students and academic advisors are familiar with add/drop policies, and registrar's website has some general processes, but there is not a specific one outline for international students for adding/dropping classes after MyUI closes. This can be added on the ISSS website.
- c. International students cannot retain much from orientation or transition-type courses. It will be beneficial to see whether Success at Iowa help international students to retain more information. It will also be helpful to examine the message to international students – emphasizing what they can learn from this course/orientation instead of emphasizing the requirement.
- d. Letting more people know about existing resources (e.g., ISSS website) and encouraging them take advantage of the existing resources.
- e. Continue to explore ways to inform students about opportunities and resources.

#### **V. Limitations**

- a. Both the surveys and the focus groups are less likely to capture the perspectives of those who are not as proactive.
- b. Survey was not able to distinguish faculty advisors and professional advisors' perspectives because of a design error.
- c. This assessment will also benefit from having academic advisors' input for other recommendations.