

## ISSS Needs Assessment Spring 2014 Executive Summary

This is a summary of an international student needs assessment from International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS). The purpose of this needs assessment was to assess international students' awareness of the academic support resources on campus and to find out effective ways to deliver this information to international students. 297 responses were collected, including 133 undergraduate students and 164 graduate students, a 7.3% response rate.

### Which of the following resources have you utilized?

Undergraduate Students				Graduate Students		
	Content	Number	Percentage	Content	Number	Percentage
<b>Academic Resources</b>	Writing Center	51	53%	Writing Center	55	50%
	Study, Workshop, and Tutoring (SWAT)	34	35%	University Counseling Service	25	23%
	Frank Business Communications Center	25	26%	Life in Iowa academic related sessions	21	19%
<b>Library Services</b>	Online Database	45	61%	Online Database	80	81%
	Learning Commons	38	51%	UBorrow	46	46%

The top three academic resources that undergraduate students indicated they weren't aware of were: **SWAT** (37% of 46), the **Astronomy Tutorial Laboratory** (34% of 71), and the **Student Success Coaches in the residence halls** (33% of 69). The top three academic resources that graduate students indicated they weren't aware of were: the **Speaking Center** (50% of 82), the **Collaborative Writing Consultancy** (38% of 84), and the **Center for Teaching** (29% of 75).

### What challenges have you experienced when using the academic resources?

Undergraduate Students			Graduate Students		
Challenge	Number	Percentage	Challenge	Number	Percentage
Reservation difficulty	5	22%	Time constraint	9	26%
Never used any of the resources	3	13%	Never used any of the resources	8	23%
Lack of awareness of resources	3	13%	Lack of awareness of resources	4	11%

Other challenges included **English speaking skills, cultural differences, understanding of the resources, and how to use the resources effectively.**

- *“I really wanted to use these resources but I couldn’t get fitting time to use them because most of them are time intensive and space specific.”*
- *“It is important to acknowledge domestic students and international students have very different needs when they are seeking academic instructions. I know that many centers have trained staffs to adjust for international students, but it is quite difficult for people to understand what is like to a non-native speaker to live with the insecurity of English language. It is really important to have someone who know beyond the basics and provide valuable instructions.”*

Most respondents indicated **no challenges** using **library services**.

**What resources and services do you wish you would have known about in your first semester at UI?**

Undergraduate Students			Graduate Students		
Content	Number	Percentage	Content	Number	Percentage
SWAT	35	50%	Writing Center	45	48%
Writing Center	33	47%	Speaking Center	45	48%
Speaking Center	29	41%	Libraries: Online Database	34	36%
Libraries: Online Database	18	26%	Libraries: UBorrow	33	35%
English Language Discussion Circles (Frank Business Communications Center)	17	24%	Life in Iowa Academic Related Sessions	26	29%

Respondents indicated that they received information about academic services or library resources from: **peers/friends** (62%), **email** (50%), **professors/TAs** (46%). The best way to inform them about services and resources are via **email** (85%), **posters/brochures** (6%), and **social media posts** (7%).

Respondents indicated that they are interested in learning more about **test-taking skills** (18%), **note-taking skills** (14%), **academic writing** (10%), **culture in class** (9%), **career options/development** (8%), **academic ethics** (6%), **speaking/communication skills** (6%), **graduate student specific topics** (6%).

- *“(I would like to learn more about) how to use reference, how to cite, how to paraphrase someone’s research in my own words.”*
- *I would like to learn more on how to adapt to the US education system in contrast to the education system back home.”*

When asked what ISSS can do to better support the students' academic success, respondents indicated that **ISSS has already done a good job** (14%), **to provide a comprehensive, detailed list of available services and resources** (12%), **hold academic success sessions tailored to international students** (8%).

- *“Session to address common issues related to academic success in undergraduate or graduate education.”*
- *“I really hope that I can have a list about all the academic and library resources available on campus.”*
- *Rather than just saying: ‘here’s a link that you might get some help.’ Please describe what it is, who would need for what purpose etc.”*

Respondents are interested in learning about the resources available through **workshops** (49%), **one-page information sheets** (28%), or **social media posts** (11%).

#### **Limitations:**

1. Returning students might not be aware of the new resources (e.g., Student Success Coaches).
2. Some resources are targeted towards specific populations and thus might not be available to all students (e.g., Collaborative Writing Consultancy within College of Education).
3. Email was selected as the most effective way to communicate with students. The needs assessment invitation was distributed through email (as well as quarter flier with a QR code); therefore, the individuals who completed this survey may be more inclined to read their emails and communicate through email.

#### **Efforts to be implemented in Fall 2014:**

1. Update the Handbook of Living in Iowa City. The updated handbook will include a section on student services, including academic support services, and will be posted on the ISSS website. The reintroduction of this handbook will help international students become more aware of the academic support services available and serve as an ongoing resource.
2. Expand the Life in Iowa program, the on-going orientation program to help international students adjust to life and academic system in Iowa, to three series: career series (previously existed), academic series, and cultural series. Within the academic series, there will be one academic/student success session for undergraduate students and one for graduate students. These two specific sessions will be tailored/adjusted after observation from the academic success session in orientation.

#### **Recommendation:**

1. Raise awareness of the Handbook (or the existing list of resources) in orientation, or other venues (International@Iowa? Global@Iowa?).

2. Include academic support information in social media.