Fall 2019 Pre-arrival Webinar Series: Academic Expectations – Undergraduate Students

Andrea: Hello. And welcome to the next in the webinar series for new international students. Today's topic is academic expectations for undergraduate students. If you have not attended any previous webinars, let's talk about what to expect in the webinar. The webinar series is optional for all incoming international students before they arrive in Iowa City. The objective of the series is to help new international students to arrange plans for travel to and living in Iowa City, to understand orientation expectations and responsibilities, as well as to help them transition to student life and academics at the University of Iowa. All webinars are recorded and posted on the international student website, and the link is provided on the slide.

If you encounter any technical difficulties during the webinar please let us know in the chat function. If you have any questions related today’s topic please use the Q&A function to post your questions. We will do our best to answer them live at the end of the webinar, as time permits. If you still haven’t received your I-20 or DS-2019, please remember that you must pay E-ship global shipping fee so that our office can mail you the document. Only if you have this document you can apply for your visa. this information is also contained in the pre-arrival checklist in iHawk, and the web link is provided on the slide. And if you have any questions please feel free to contact our orientation team at the email address provided on the slide as well.

Let's review some important dates. Mandatory orientation for international students is going to take place in August for undergraduate students, specifically because today's topic is geared towards that group, is going to take place on August 19 through August 23. make sure that you will be in Iowa City before August 19 so you can participate fully in the orientation. And again, it is mandatory or it is required to attend. August 26 is the date when our fall semester starts. Let's do some introductions.

Jennifer: Hi. My name is Jennifer Eimers, and I am an Associate Director in the Academic Programs & Student Development office, which is in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Ben: My name is Ben Landsee. I'm an academic advisor in the Academic Advising Center.

Andrea: And my name is Andrea Siebenmann and I am one of the ISSS advisers and will be the webinar moderator today. Let's begin with our presentation for today.

Jennifer: So, on the screen you see some of our goals for today's webinar. We're going to focus on how to prepare for academic success at the University of Iowa. So today we'll discuss 6 topics, and those topics are: adjusting to English as used in the U.S., the style of USA education and how that will affect your time, the importance of seeking help, your individual responsibility as a student, the components that make up your degree, and the importance of academic advising. So we will have time for your questions later. please post them in the Q&A function. And again, if you encounter any technical difficulties, please let's let us know using the chat function.
Ben: Let’s start with the U.S. language environment. This will be different depending on your prior language experience. If you are used to an English environment already you might find that accents are different from what you experienced previously. There are some common terms that are specific to higher education in the United States that are helpful to know. For example, we use the word semester instead of term. We have two 16-week semesters each year. One that goes from August to December and one that goes from January to May. Here are a few other terms that are specific to our campus. One is Cambus. This is the free bussing system we have on campus. Another is Hawkeye, which is our school mascot. It’s also a term used for students. So sometimes students are called Hawkeyes. We have a few online systems that are very important, that you will use a lot as a student and these include MyUI, ICON, and iHawk.

You also learn that we use slang or idioms that are based on a cultural context. For example, a professor might refer to your “take away” for the day during class. And that means what you have learned for that particular day. When you hear things like this, feel free to ask others what these phrases mean. An exciting part of this process, that is, being a student at the University of Iowa, is that your language skills are going to improve significantly. Your skills are going to improve from your experiences in and out of the classroom. In the last webinar you learned about the different placement tests you will complete when you arrive at Iowa. Actually, I think it’s the next. In the next webinar you’re gonna learn about some placement exams that you’re going to take when you get here at Iowa. If your placement exam results recommend that you take English as a second language course in Iowa, we recommend that you take those courses right away so that you can improve your language skills as soon as possible. Students who have taken at least half of their ESL, or the English as a second language courses, in their first semester, actually earn a higher GPA or grade point average in that semester. There are other classes that will help improve your English as well, such as rhetoric and courses that focus on communication skills. There are also experiences you can have outside of class that can help to improve your communication skills. We have a conversation center that allows international students who are not confident in their English language skills to practice having conversations in English. Friends without borders is a matching program that connects United States students with international students. There are also academic resources to help improve your writing and speaking skills, such as our writing center and our speaking center.

Jennifer: So the teaching and learning style in the U.S. may be different from that of your current school. at the University of Iowa, students are expected to attend every class. Classes should never be missed, and attendance in class will be a part of the final grade that you receive in your class. So we just want to emphasize that successful students do go to class. And the reason that this is so important is that at the University of Iowa, students are expected to learn by talking as well as by listening. students must speak during class, asking questions and responding to the teacher’s questions, or to ideas presented by other students. We recommend that if you feel shy, try to sit in the front of the class. We want you to recognize that your ideas are important and your ideas count. At the University of Iowa your academic performance is evaluated throughout the whole semester. So all the work that you do for each class will count for your final grade in the class. So this includes your attendance, homework, quizzes, exams, and projects. All of that would be added together for your final grade. And so this means that you must come prepared for each class. You will need to spend around two hours on homework and preparation for each of your classes each day. So those hours can really add up quickly. We are here to help you. the
required success at Iowa course will help build good study skills, and a plan for when and how you should study. We will share more information about this course a little bit later in the webinar. Each course has a plan for the semester called the syllabus. The syllabus gives dates when all of the assignments or readings, the exams and the quizzes must be completed, and using that calendar will help you to plan ahead. So you will receive a syllabus during the first day of each class, and you can also find that syllabus on the course website through a link. The syllabus gives you basic information that you need about the course, so it will include the instructors' contact information and office hours, it will include information on textbooks for the class, on the grading system and course policies, and it will include a calendar for exams quizzes and homework. So we recommend that you read the syllabus for each class very carefully and that you review it throughout the semester. You can also use the syllabus to create a weekly schedule using your personal planner.

Ben: So you want to use your planner and your syllabus to determine when you're going to have time to study for classes. You will work closely with an academic advisor to build a schedule that both meets your academic goals and your personal goals. Your advisor will suggest some courses to help you balance your study schedule. Your advisor can also talk to you about how to build a study schedule and the sorts of study skills that you might need to use your first semester. Most students in their first semester will enroll in about 14 to 16 semester hours. This number will vary by student. That's again something that you work with on with an academic advisor during orientation. So let's take a look at a weekly schedule that has 14 to 16 semester hours in it. If we're looking at the schedule, we'll see this student is taking 16 semesters of classes. It's important to remember that the student should plan on spending about two hours outside of class studying and working on assignments for every semester hour the student is enrolled in. This means the student should expect to study about 6 hours a week for a three semester hour course. In this example, we even built in time to work on completing success at Iowa. You'll notice that the courses are listed in the darker color time boxes, right? These are the specific times that the specific course of the student is enrolled in - it shows the time that they will actually be in class. In the lighter colored boxes you can see built-in study time for each course. This schedule also includes other time commitments such as working, exercise, or having other meetings or responsibilities to include when creating your own weekly schedule. But be sure to allow time for meals and some time to socialize. It's helpful to be realistic when planning a schedule. Having time to meet people and spend time with friends is important. Also adding time to go to a sporting event or attend a concert, or go to a group or organization on campus. This example shows a healthy balance of academic courses as well as time to get involved at the University. You can see from the previous slide, sometimes life as a student can be really busy. When we are busy or in a new place or starting something new, we can all use help. And asking for help is normal. And it's important for all of us, especially for new students. While at the University of Iowa, there are many wonderful people to help you, to whom you can go with us to ask questions.

We want to highlight two groups of people who you will all work with while here at the University. Academic advisors help students explore their academic interests, identify additional resources for information and support, and work with students to develop their plan of study. All students will have an assigned academic advisor. This means that each one of you will have an advisor that works with you. You'll have one advisor assigned to you and you'll work with them consistently throughout the
semester. The next group is an ISSS advisor. An ISSS advisor refers to an advisor in the international student and scholar services office who advises international students on immigration related issues. These advisers are resources to help you maintain your student status in the United States by helping to monitor your full-time enrollment.

There are many other people at the University of Iowa who want to help you succeed. But why would you ask for help? Because seeking help is actually a sign that you are taking responsibility for yourself, and that the most successful students are actually students who ask for help. We know that the first year is a year of big transitions for all students, and it can often be the most difficult year. Many staff members across campus will reach out to you. This may include your academic advisor, instructors, resident assistants who live in Residence Halls, and others may ask you about your transition to the University. This is your chance to ask questions, share any of your concerns, and just build connections. The easiest way to seek out help is to accept help when is offered to you. There will be times when you need to step forward and ask for help. If you have questions about the content in one of your classes, your best resource is your instructor. Instructors are required to have office hours. Office hours are a time set aside when your instructor will be available to talk with you. Sometimes it can be hard to know what exactly to ask your instructor, or it can be intimidating to go talk to them. Writing down your questions ahead of time can help make this a bit more manageable. In most of your classes, you will receive formal feedback for your assignments or exams. You can use this feedback to help you ask specific questions about the course during office hours, right? During discussions in some of your classes, it will be common for instructors to encourage you to participate in the discussion and to ask questions. This is an excellent opportunity to ask questions and get clarification that you may need to understand the material being covered in class. Be proactive when you have questions. It is best not to wait until the last minute to ask for help. While formal feedback can help guide your questions, it may be more helpful to ask for feedback and suggestions early in the semester. Go to your instructor’s office hours early on when you first have a question. Start attending other campus resources from the very beginning of the semester. This may include going to the math or chemistry labs on campus, or attending group study session is called supplemental instruction. There are many academic support resources available at the University. You can review the many resources at the tutor Iowa webpage found in the University of Iowa's website. You will learn more about these resources during orientation and in the Success at Iowa course.

Jennifer: At the University of Iowa, we also expect students to show individual responsibility. That is, it is your responsibility to become a good student and to improve as time goes on. This requires your effort, your patience, and your willingness to ask for help when you need it. This also means attending every class, taking notes during class, sharing your ideas, asking questions, and doing your own academic work by the required deadlines. What does it mean to do your own academic work? It means that no one does your work for you. If someone else does your work for you we consider this cheating, or what we also call academic misconduct. Here are some examples of academic misconduct. Having someone else help you write your essay, having someone else correct all of your mistakes for you in your essay, using information from books or from the Internet without showing who wrote the information and where it came from, using your cell phone during exam, or talking during an exam or looking at someone else's answers. Most students at the University of Iowa are very honest, and your instructors will expect you to be too. So we just have listed here some of the consequences of academic misconduct.
might give you a failing grade for that assignment. They may give you a failing grade for the entire course. The University can also ask a student to leave for one year, suspending the student, or can ask the student to leave and never return, which is called expelling the student. This means that you would not be able to stay in the U.S. unless another university accepted you.

Ben: Next we want to talk a little bit about understanding what makes up your degree at the University. All of degrees are comprised of three parts. Courses for your major requirements, courses for general education program, and courses that will count as electives. In the college of Liberal Arts and sciences students are required to complete 120 semester hours to graduate. This breaks down to about 15 semester hours per semester to graduate in four years. The number of semester hours required to graduate varies across other colleges within the University. For example, students who earn a degree from the College of Engineering need to complete 128 semester hours to graduate. While all students complete general education coursework, the specific semester hours and categories required maybe differ depending on your college enrollment. You can review the specific requirements and general education categories on your own degree audit. The degree audit is an academic planning tool that allows students and advisers review programs of study in progress towards completion of the requirements at the University. This is an important tool to regularly review with your academic advisor and to make sure that you’re on track for graduation, that you understand what’s required of you. At the University of Iowa, you will take courses that will give you both the breath and the depth of your education. The breath of your education will be the general education curriculum and electives. This is the course work outside your specific major, and is required for you to complete your degree. The general education program is mostly structured as categories, which offers you a lot of freedom. You will get to choose the specific courses you want to take to make the general education program meaningful and relevant to you. You can find courses in each category that suit your interests and strengths, And that let you explore possible majors or other minors. They requirements the general program have been chosen intentionally to help you develop transferable knowledge and skills that will help you in your major classes and future careers. Many students will also need to complete elective courses to reach the number of semester hours that are required to earn their degree. and electives are simply courses that fulfill neither major requirements or general education requirements. The depth of your academic course work comes from the specific courses in your major that you are required to take in order to finish your degree. By the time you graduate from the University of Iowa your major will be your area of expertise. Beyond your academic coursework, there are wonderful academic opportunities to participate it. You’ll be able to stretch yourself academically through experiential learning - doing things such as research, studying abroad, or participating in an internship related to your field of study.

Finally, we want to introduce you to academic advising at the University of Iowa. All students will work with an academic advisor at orientation. Advising experiences may vary based on what specific college a student enters. Most entering first year students are in the College of engineering, College of Nursing, Tippie College of Business, Or the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. I am an academic advisor in the academic advising center. In the advising center, we advise students in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. This does include pre-business students whose goal is to be admitted to the Tippie College of Business. As an academic advisor, my role is to help students explore their academic interests, identify campus resources, and assist students in the development of appropriate plans of study for their academic goals. As you work with your advisor, you can expect a respectful space to ask questions and
discuss your interests. Your advisor will help you to define explore your academic goals. This is why it's important to be open with your interests, your questions, and any concerns you have with your academic advisor. We are knowledgeable about academic requirements, policies and procedures. Students advised in the academic advising center are required to meet with their academic advisor in order to register for classes. This is not the case for all students. However, it is wise to meet with your academic advisor each semester to discuss your major coursework progress towards graduation, and any questions that you may have. While your academic advisor is an important resource for you on campus, you are ultimately responsible for understanding your degree audit and planning graduation. but we are there to help you with this process. As you prepare for orientation in your first meeting with your academic advisor, please remember to complete any placement exams. This may include math, chemistry or world language placement tests. This information will help your academic advisor give you the best possible advice while creating your Fall schedule together.

Jennifer: Throughout the webinar we mentioned the Success at Iowa course. This is a very important course and will help you to be a successful University of Iowa student. All new and transfer undergraduate students are required to complete the course. You will be automatically enrolled in the course Success at Iowa. Many of you may have already started working on the course, which is great. If not, you can learn more about the course by clicking on the course description in MyUI. You can also log into the course through ICON. Your attendance at orientation counts towards your final grade in this course. So therefore, you must attend orientation in order to pass Success at Iowa. If you have other questions about the course please email the email address that you see on the slide, and you can contact your course instructors with that email address. In closing we want to welcome you again to the University of Iowa and to Iowa City. We are very excited that you will be a part of our community.

Q&A

Andrea: Thank you so much to both presenters for wonderful information for our new students who have joined the webinar. And we have received a few questions for the topic that was presented today. And so let's dive right into those, ok? One of the first questions was regarding the classes. How many classes the students should take each semester. And there was a question also about when do classes begin, and the question was will most classes start at early. So I don't know what was referred to, perhaps the schedule that was there. Let's start with how many classes should the student take each semester.

Ben: I mean generally students will end up in four to five academic courses per semester. And that usually works out to 14 to 16 semester hours which was mentioned in the presentation. And so sometimes 15 semester hours might be four classes, sometimes it might be five, it depends on your major and the kind of class you are taking. Courses start in terms of time of day, anywhere between 7:30 in the morning and 6:30 at night. And so dependent on course availability, your own personal preference, and the specific course that you want to take, you have some choice in when your schedule begins. So, you may not have to start in the morning, or you might get to start in the morning depending on how you look at it, but there is some choice there.
Andrea: We talked and this is from coming from me, when we talked about the average number of credit hours will it be 15 per semester. Is there an upper limit for students, how many credits they can take?

Jennifer: So the maximum number of credit hours that most students can enroll in per semester is 18. Depending on a student’s English placement or English proficiency exam, that number may change. But for the most part it's 18.

Andrea: OK alright. Thank you. And so we have answered those questions. And let's move on to questions about the major. OK, so student is asking if they can have more than one major, and how can they do that and still graduate on time?

Jennifer: So, yes, the student may have more than one major. If both majors are in the same college, so let’s say you choose two majors that are both in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, that means that your general education requirements will be the same. If you choose a major that are in two different colleges, you can do that. It's a little bit more complicated of a process, but you would be held to the general education requirements for both of those majors. So if you’re considering two majors, I want to encourage you to think about two major that are in the same college. As far as how to graduate in four years with two majors? You should work with your academic advisor, and you just need to plan very carefully, you have to make sure that you’re taking the right number of hours each semester. Maybe there are some classes that are required for your major that will also satisfy general education requirements. You know, you can work with your advisor, we have something called Simple Plans, and you can just schedule very carefully to make sure that your meeting all those requirements.

Andrea: Wonderful. Thank you. I would only add on behalf of ISSS that when it comes to the time that a student is for example in their fourth year here at the university, in terms of immigration status, they need to be very careful that if they need to add more time to their program in order to graduate. Because if they, for example, added another major, changed majors and it requires new courses to be taken, there are specific steps that International students need to take in order to maintain their immigration status. This will be covered again in our orientation when students are on campus, but then typically students are encouraged to also consult international student advisors on this. So I just wanted to make sure that this is understood and out there is that information. Speaking of majors, there is another question why students have to take other courses besides their major.

Ben: So at Iowa, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and actually every college, expects students to have a broader base of knowledge than simply the area of their expertise. We want students to understand the world in a broad sense. And then really understand the part of the world that they are interested in for the major. So the general education program is designed to help students gain a broad base of knowledge across many topics. And the general education program can be a really good way to actually deepen your understanding of your own field as well, because your understanding perhaps how other parts of different disciplines or different parts of the economy or the world factor into what you’re learning in your major. And it's just a standard part of the liberal arts education that you will become a citizen of the world by doing that general program.

Andrea: Thank you. Thank you so much for the answers, and speaking of majors we still have a couple of other questions, and one of them In fact, they can be merged into one, where students would like to
know if they have not decided for a major how do they go about it, and then WHEN they should decide about the major.

**Ben:** So if you haven't decided on your major, we call you an open major or an exploring major, someone who is still kind of testing the waters out. And it’s something that you can work really closely with your academic advisor on. So sometimes we encourage students to find courses they find exciting or interesting through the general education program and by exploring different parts of their education program. You might find, I really like this topic or this kind of way of thinking about this topic. And that can lead to different majors, right? Sometimes, going to explore majors, there's lots of programming around helping students explore majors. And so if you don't know coming in, that's great. Because we could help you if you're interested in you’re engaged in the learning process. It’s never a problem not having to declare a major. There is a rule where at 60 semester hours, the college of Liberal Arts and Sciences wants you to have declared major, because they want to make sure that you have time to complete the major in roughly four years. And so usually, I'm hoping if I’m working with a student who’s an open major or undecided, I’m hoping that sometime in their second year they have a really good grip on what they want to do. And so usually within the first two years, is a great time to declare a major if you don't know. Some students may not know at that point and that’s fine. You'll work closely with your academic advisor, but if student is really engaged in the process usually they find something or multiple things in the first two years.

**Andrea:** Thank you. Hopefully that will address the questions about the major, and make it more clear, but usually students are encouraged to always contact their academic advisor if there is any doubt or concerns.

**Ben:** One thing to add is that advisors in the academic advising center are generalists. So I have advised many majors, and just in my hallway alone, basically every major at the University Is covered by somebody. I cover many of them. And so your academic advisor is a great resource. So let’s say you declare economics, but you're interested in creative writing. chances are your advisor can talk to you about both of those majors, at least enough that they can get you started on a process where you can explore one or the other. and so it's like, always feel free and comfortable telling your interest to your advisor. They’re going to be able to help you get the information in need to make really good decisions.

**Andrea:** Excellent. Thank you. We have actually, we may have addressed this already through the presentation and also through some of the answers, but I will still ask a question. What else are the other things that students can talk with their academic advisor besides academic advising, perhaps, or any other issues that they had to approach them about?

**Ben:** So one of the great things about having an academic advisor is that you can schedule an appoint with them through our online system called MyUI. and that means that you have access to someone on campus who has connections. There is probably not a question that you can’t ask your advisor. we may not have the answer, but we will know exactly who does. And we’ll certainly be able to listen to you and help you figure out what's the next step. So I would say almost any question, If you don't know who to turn to, you can turn to your academic advisor. and they may not have the exact answer, but they will put you in contact with the person who does, right. And so we’re great place You can email, like I said, you can schedule appointments through MyUI. So if you have a question that you haven’t found an answer to, you can ask here.
Andrea: Excellent and I would like to piggy back on that to or add on behalf of ISSS as advisers, I would like to say that if students... sometimes we are approached by students asking us questions about academic advising or any other topics, if they have any other concerns, and just like Ben mentioned, we try to refer students to the appropriate parts of the university that may take care of them, or help them address the issue that they have, or concerns, And so usually kind of we try to help students in helping them to get anything resolved that they need to get help with and make them hopefully successful students at the University.

Ben: I want to add one thing, I think it's better to ask that question. It’s better to ask the question to not the right department than to not ask at all. Because almost everyone on campus if you ask questions, if they don't have the answer they're going to work to find you the person who does, and you're not going to get that connection if you don't ask the question. So I think it's more important if you have a question to ask whoever you have access to and then they'll get you on the right path.

Andrea: Right. And culturally that may be something difficult for students. So during the orientation we will have some information that will be encouraging the students to help them overcome those cultural barriers that they may have in regards to the previous education system that they may have experienced before, and adjust better to what is expected here in United States.

Speaking of academic advisors, a student has a question about who their advisor is, or how do they know who their advisor is? Maybe I can start with saying that during the international student orientation week, students will be introduced and assigned to specific academic advisors so that they can help the students with the enrollment into classes in the fall. This happens after students take their English placement testing earlier in the week. So right now we cannot give you an answer as to who and how you get contact the advisor. But this will all happen at the orientation. And so that's why it's really mandatory for all students to attend, because it's going to be very important for you that you get this academic schedule prepared and created a soon as possible. Any other comments on that? Okay. So that was one of our last questions actually. There is one question that I will follow up with about study abroad for international students, but that's not really a topic for now, so will follow up on that question later on.

But let’s close, If we don’t have any other questions right now. So we can move on to the closing of our webinar for today. And I have shared some information about the brief survey that we ask students to complete, so that we can get a feedback on the topic or general information about the webinar or comments that you may have. If you don't have a chance to complete this survey right now, you can still access it on our website where you have access to the registration information for the webinar. So it's shown here on the slide as to where you can look up this information and the survey. And we have also some reminders about contact information and follow up. If you still have any questions about the pre arrival checklist or other issues that you may experience before your arrival, or are you have any concerns, feel free to contact our orientation team again at the same email address that we shared before, and it's shown here on the slide. And also we would like to encourage you again to visit ISSS’s website, especially for new international students that has a lot of wonderful additional resources for new students, and we strongly recommend that you please look at this website and look at the links, you will definitely find them useful. And again web link is provided on the slide. And finally a reminder that we have one more webinar scheduled in our Fall 2019 series and there’s going to be a webinar
on July 26, in two weeks, and it's going to be specifically for undergraduate students and focusing on the understanding of their orientation expectations, responsibilities, and placement tests. We have touched upon up most of these topics today. We didn't go into a lot of details, but the webinar on July 26 will address a lot of these questions. So we strongly recommend that you register for this webinar, you will definitely find it very helpful. Thank you for your participation, and we will hopefully have you join us on July 26.