Lin: Welcome to the pre-arrival webinar series. Today’s topic is for “Achieving Success: On-Campus Engagement and Cultural Adjustment for Undergraduate Students.

Lin: And we also have two current international students who are joining us today to share the experience. I will let them also introduce themselves.

Heejin: Hello. My name is Heejin Kim. I’m from South Korea and I’m a senior at University of Iowa studying International Studies.

Mishma: Hello, my name is Mishma. I am from Sri Lanka. I'm a secondary student majoring in English and Creative Writing with minor in Cinema and Social Justice.

Lin: Great, thank you. And so, Heejin and Mishma, if one of you can start with the first question: what have you participated in at the University of Iowa?

Mishma: Sure, I can go first. So, I have been involved with the Campus Activities Board since my freshman year and they're the university's second largest student organization right after Dance Marathon. And we put on late night events on campus and in my second year, I became the cultural director of CAB. I have always so been involved with voluntary organizations like the Iowa Youth Writing Project, so what we do is we teach school students and Iowa City creative writing and we can either do it for credit, you can like do a class and volunteer which is what I did, or you can just do it as a student organization as well.

Heejin: And I participated in OASIS which is a abbreviation of Organization for the Active Support of International Students. So, like it's basically, have like 50% of domestic students and 50% of international students so they can kind of adjust to the new environment they're facing. So what we do is we hold on we held an event every semester on Fall, we have-I think it's fall, but I'm not sure, but we have like Bridging Fiesta and Cultural Ball, so we are hosting those big events, which is like kind of like a multi, multi-cultural event. Yeah.

Lin: Great. Can you both share how did you decide to get involved in the first place?

Mishma: So, I generally wanted to be really involved when I come to college mostly because I was really involved in school, I mean high school and I wanted to have the same environment when I came to college. And when I came here, I wanted, I researched on all the student organizations, all of them are listed in Engage page, which you can find in the University website. I also received a lot of emails in the first few weeks of classes, so that was a good way of knowing about student organizations and I also attended a career fair and that’s how I selected to join CAB, which was the best organizations I joined once I was on campus.
Heejin: Yeah, I came to University of Iowa as a transfer student, so I actually didn't have a plenty amount of time to share like being orientation program with other students. So when I was in orientation, I saw that there's a student org which is called OASIS and I think it is a really good opportunity for me to get involved in the community, so that's why I decided to be in OASIS.

Lin: Great. And how did you- so you, I guess you had both surely told me about how did you learn about this engagement opportunities so we will maybe get to the next question. How did your engagement help your- you adjust and learn about US culture and the University of Iowa culture.

Mishma: Sure, um, when it comes to CAB, which like I mentioned before it's fairly largely domestic student organization, so I actually ended up being one of the very few international students in that organization which really helped me to find most students from different parts of the US and just, yeah get to know more people who I couldn't have met otherwise. Also, I really, it really helped me to learn the different multi-cultural communities on campus as well because it's it's a very different experience even though we are all, I mean, we might be all sharing the same culture but we come from very different places. So that really helped me and also just get to know more friends and learn more about the way people engaged, and also just um, because I had to put on events for people both international and domestic, so they're really helped me learn more about the university's culture as well.

Heejin: And for me because I come from like very different culture of the US-the American culture so it was really hard for me to talk to someone else first because I don't know whether it is a rude action or not. So joining OASIS really helped me because the member of OASIS are the students who are really interested in my international things, so they always try to talk to me first and like asking things about in Korea and in other cultures so it really easy to make friends and talk more about each other's culture which makes me understand more about the US culture and the UI culture.

Lin: Okay, thank you. And then so we know that academics responsibility is pretty high already for college and that in addition to like kind of everything that you are involved in on. can everything else say your involved in on campus, how did you manage your time?

Mishma: It's actually fairly easy to manage your time in my opinion mostly because when you come to college, even though your classes might be really tougher than high school you actually won't be spending a lot of time in class. S, ,you have a lot of time to spare and I think actually joining student organizations help you manage your time more in that way because you won't be just having a lot of free time you'll be actually productively spending that time. And other than that when things get a little bit busy, like if you have like a major event or if there's some kind of social that goes on with the organization, you have to like give time to that there's always you'll always learn to prioritize which is also big skill which I think you learn from joining student organizations. And just starting to learn which is - what is more important and prioritizing between both academics and student organization, but also just between different student organizations and commitments as well.

Heejin: Oh and for me as a to manage the time, I use a lot of to-do list applications on the phone - phone because like there's all there's a lot of assignments that you have to do for academic things and there are like social events, or like meetings when you are joining student orgs, or somewhere else. So writing down something the things that you have to do and crossing out them that helped me a lot in management-managing the time.
Lin: Great, um. So what are the most important things that you have learned from your engagement experiences?

Mishma: For me, I have really pushed myself out of my comfort zone after joining a lot of these experiences, things that I didn't think that I could do. Especially in CAB, I put on an event, my like, when I became a cultural director put on event called Taste of Asia. Which we had 900 people in attendance for that event, I would have never thought that I could organize an event that would have that many people. Also just trying to push myself forward and the organization’s forward, I have learned a lot of leadership skills and tried out different things. I also joined Homecoming Council my first year. I don’t even know about American football then I joined that council, so things that-I was just really pushing myself to try out different things. So that’s one of the most important things I have learned.

Heejin: The thing that I learned was that what you expect is not always the truth or real. So like, I think people will have something in their mind about life and Iowa or US or university, whatever. And I have that in my mind too. And when I went to US for the first time, I thought it was really different from what I’m thinking of expecting of. So, kinda getting some idea about new environment will be good, but expecting too much may be harmful and leads to the culture shock or panic.

Lin: Yeah great so yet kind of like keeping an open mindful kind of things that you will be experiences. That's great. So before we go into the Q&A, I do have kind of, we do have one final questions for both of you. On kind of, do you have any words of advice for future international student at Iowa?

Mishma: I did mention about pushing yourself out of your comfort zone a little bit, but at the same time don't be like pressurized to try everything. That is something especially, if you’re an international student when you come to college you’re like, “I want to make the best out of these four years or however many years I want to be here and then just do everything.” Don't push yourself to do everything, but also don't be afraid to try out different things. You don't have to commit to something entirely because student organizations are very flexible. You can try out things and if you realize that it's not for you, if it's too much you can always just drop it and then try out different things. So don't be pressurized to try and like commit to every single thing, but at the same time don't be afraid to try out different things as well.

Heejin: Yeah, I kind of have the same thing. So, I just want to say that this is a very good opportunity for you and all it was also a good opportunity for me. So just try whatever you want to do because there are tons of things that you can do at University of Iowa. So you can do whatever you want and you can enjoy it, and think that's the most important thing.

Lin: Great. Thank you both