Life as a college student is fraught with challenges: keeping up with classes, making new friends, learning new fields of study and working jobs and internships. But imagine also having to learn a new language and adjust to a foreign culture — those are some of the added challenges faced by international students attending colleges in the U.S.

“Some international students might become overwhelmed with adjusting to even seemingly mild cultural differences, while others may hide their discomfort and attempt to blend in, leading to continued confusion,” writes Brandie Yale, director of graduate admissions at the UH Cullen College of Engineering.

Yale’s article, “Understanding culture shock in international students,” appears in the December issue of Academic Advising Today, a publication by NACADA, a global organization that promotes and supports quality academic advising at institutions of higher education.

After describing some of the factors affecting culture shock, such as the breadth of difference between a student’s home culture and host culture as well as their individual personality traits, Yale offers insights into the stages of cultural adjustment.

By learning to recognize the stages of culture shock in international students, university academic advisors can better assist these students with moving through the process of adapting to a new country, culture, language and way of life, Yale writes.

Moreover, cultivating a sense of community among native and international students can help to ease the sense of culture shock. Advisors should encourage international students to have as much social interaction with
native students as possible and can help develop programs and events to facilitate such interactions, she writes. The more international students find occasions to interact with native students and others in the host community, the more quickly they will conquer the impediment of culture shock and the more success they will have as international students.

Click here to read the full article

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