

## ***Integration on the Urban vs. Rural Campus***

### **How do we define “Urban” vs. “Rural”?**

Discuss the idea of relativity (e.g. A student coming from China farm country arrives in Portland, ME = Rural to Urban; Student coming from Seoul, Korea arrives in New Brunswick, NJ = Urban to Rural)

### **International Students’ environmental origins (Rural vs. Urban)**

- How does International students’ urban or rural home environment (home university setting/home town) affect their personal expectations and their ability to integrate into their US campus community?
- How might their origins affect their relationship with their **countryman (rural or urban roots)** on campus?
- Will they seek out friendships with US students from similar backgrounds?
- Will students whose home environment is similar to host institution environment integrate more successfully? Why/ Why not?

### **US host Institution environment (Rural vs Urban)**

- How does location/setting of US host institution impact expectations? For the I. students, campus, community?
- How does host institution location/setting impact engagement/resources? For the students, campus, community?
- What kinds of resources might be more plentiful in a rural campus community? In an urban campus community?
- Does “pace of life” play a role in the ability (or interest) of campus community (US students, potential American hosts, etc) to engage the international student populations?

### **Both “urban” and “rural” settings have unique challenges and advantages but can we also identify similarities?**

## **Highlights from Roundtable Discussion**

### ***What do you think of when you hear “urban” or “rural”:***

**Urban:** pollution, public transportation, free events, culture, busy, dirty

**Rural:** cornfields, slow, isolated, grass, quiet, safe, friendly, no public transportation, tight knit, community, limited resources

**Rural Resources:** friendly, hands on engagement, captured audience, intimacy of campus resources/connections, less ethnic pockets so have to engage outside of comfort zone, campus focus

**Urban Resources:** can do/find anything – on and off campus, less campus engagement because of external “community” options, community connections

Sometimes the positive can be a negative or vice versa

- Rural – expectations of convenience vs. Urban – too many choices
- Mobility, intimacy vs. anonymity, expectations for engagement, going from blending in to standing out
- Do we assume an experience/availability is guaranteed in urban settings?

Find ways to engage the entire campus.

- Is it an international issue or a STUDENT ISSUE (Domestic and International)
- These are issues for ALL students (domestic students experience the urban vs. rural adjustment as well)
- Global (international & domestic approach) vs. International (international only)
- Challenges and approaches vary based on residential vs. commuter campuses
- Level of education (undergraduate vs. graduate) adds layers of engagement
- Commute vs. residential adds another layer to the engagement/integration

Independence and dependence are an area of challenge and can lead to a sense of “losing control”

Are we solving OUR problem as we see it or the STUDENT’S challenge?

Institutionalized threats to integration include – offering housing over breaks and late registration. Res Life policy that does not encourage/support international students and domestic student cohabitation can cause more I-student isolation/ghettoization.

Suggestions:

- Address expectations proactively
- Series of emails explaining life in your area (weather, housing, transportation, proximity to major cities etc)
- Incorporate online quiz prior to arrival on campus/area
- Rural-more preparation of resources/information to give holistic approach. There was concern that there is “no time” for that holistic approach in urban settings but there are more resources available on their own.
- Relationship building essential regardless of location

Urban vs. rural IS RELATIVE – it’s all based on personal experience. What one defines as rural is urban and urban is rural depending on their perspective.

**Additional Resource(s):**

“Many Foreign Students Are Friendless in the U.S., Study Finds,” Chronicle of Higher Education, June 14, 2012 – includes link to video from Michigan State University regarding cross cultural differences.

<http://chronicle.com/article/Many-Foreign-Students-Find/132275/>