

Thriving as an International Trainee in the United States

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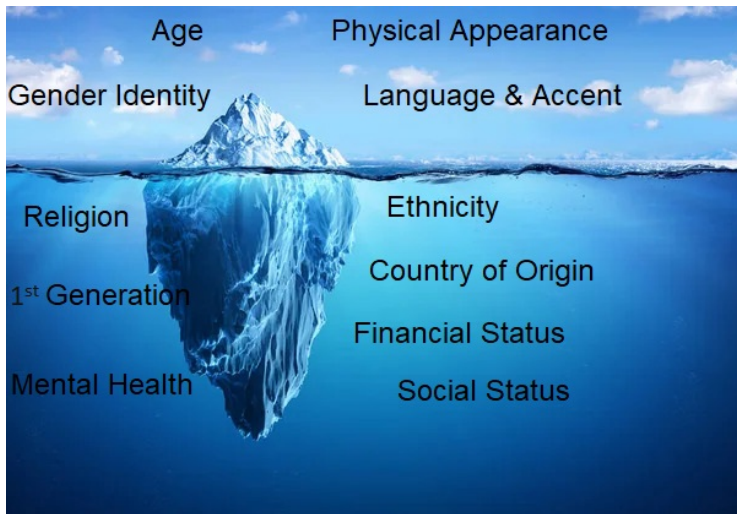
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This presentation

- based on my personal experience + experiences/observations from others
- does not cover U.S. visa and immigration issues

Inter-sectional Factors



Appreciate the intersections of identities that influence your experience.

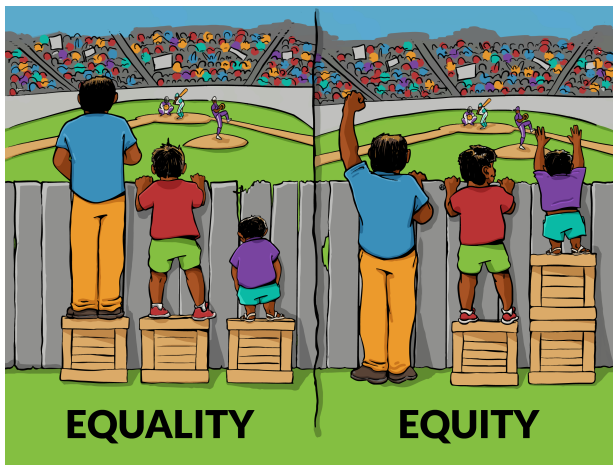
Marginalizing Factors and Challenges

International trainees in the U.S. are navigating new systems

- Language barriers
- Visa restrictions
- Cultural shift
- Stereotypes
- Xenophobia
- Isolation & homesickness
- Academic expectations (hidden curriculum)
- Accommodation problems
- etc.

⇒ Information overload, feeling overwhelmed

Equality vs Equity



- Assumes that everyone will benefit from exactly the same support.

- Provide individuals different supports so that they could achieve the same outcome.

<https://interactioninstitute.org/illustrating-equality-vs-equity/>



<https://davidworcester.net/2014/10/17/there-is-no-one-size-fits-all-approach-to-ministry-1-thessalonians-5/>

You don't know what you don't know

- communicate what you don't know
- communicate your needs
- celebrate small wins

How to Thrive?

Apply it to the case of securing fellowships/grants

- 1 Define success
 - clarify the purpose and intention
 - establish research independence

How to Thrive?

Apply it to the case of securing fellowships/grants

- ① Define success
- ② Creative strategies
 - find diverse paths/approaches
 - negotiate with PI and/or department

How to Thrive?

Apply it to the case of securing fellowships/grants

- ① Define success
- ② Creative strategies
- ③ Learning and development goal
 - gather evidence
 - mentors and fellow students/postdocs
 - fellowship database
 - informational interviews
 - skill development

How to Thrive?

Apply it to the case of securing fellowships/grants

- ① Define success
- ② Creative strategies
- ③ Learning and development goal
- ④ Action plan
 - timeline & required documents
 - successful examples
 - review by mentors (and peers)

How to Thrive?

- 1 Define success
- 2 Creative strategies
- 3 Learning and development goal
- 4 Action plan

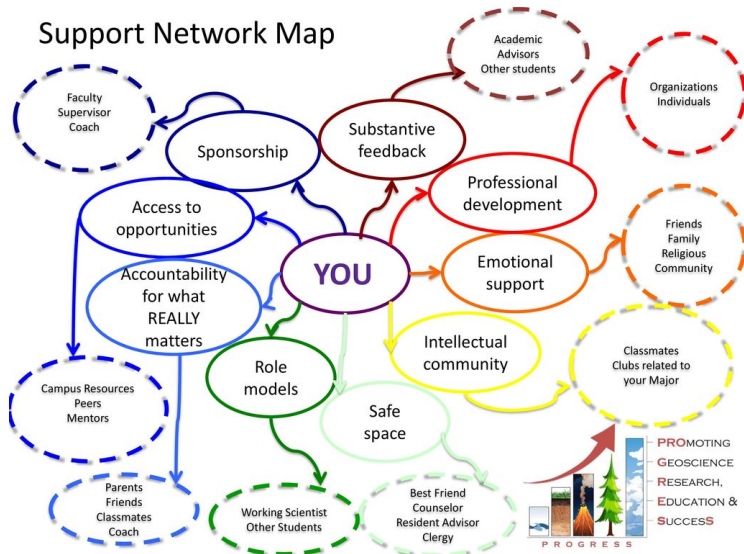
Key components

- mentors
- credible resources
- communities of support

It Takes A Village



Build Your Own Support Network



Some U.S. Mentors Do Understand the Unique Needs

Notes from A Senior Faculty Member

- For a student arriving in the U.S. for the first time, someone should pick them up from the airport.
- In some cities, it's very difficult for international students (with low incomes) to reserve apartments for rent before they arrive in town for their training. Landlords sometimes want to be paid in cash or with a check for large deposits.
 - Local faculty may need to help such students getting a few basic items needed for the first few days.
 - Sometimes getting a cell phone is an expense that the student may not be able to cover initially and could use some funds.
- In the first few months, remind the students about upcoming U.S. holidays, that cause adjustments to schedules.

- **Identify** challenges and “hidden curriculum”
- **Acknowledge** that you don’t know what you don’t know
- **Gather** credible resources
- **Cultivate** communities of support
- **Celebrate progress and wins**, both your own and members in your communities
- Resources:
 - Mentoring program: AWM, SMB
 - AMS’s Mathematics Research Communities (MRC)
 - AWM WIMB (Women in Mathematical Biology)
 - American Institute of Mathematics: Workshops, SQuaREs (Structured Quartet Research Ensembles)
 - etc.



<https://slihongzhao.github.io/>