

# International Student Pre-Retreat Assignment

## Spring Retreat

In order to prepare yourself for the VIH Leadership Development Retreat, conduct an interview with an international student who has been in the U.S. for at least six months. Ideally, the international student's experience studying in an American university should constitute the only time s/he has lived in the U.S. Make sure to ask the international student the five questions below, but feel free to inquire into other areas of interest as you see fit.

It is important to establish a good rapport so the international student is comfortable speaking honestly with you. This can be accomplished by offering to buy the international student a coffee or taking them out to lunch. When you meet, explain that you will only take 30 minutes or so of their time and assure anonymity so that the international student is comfortable answering your questions.

### Questions

1. Inquire as to the international student's background:
  - A. Where are they from? (urban/rural area; nuclear family or not; dynamics of home life)
  - B. Why did they decide to go to college in the U.S.?
  - C. What are their academic and non-academic goals for their time in the U.S.?
2. How did the international student envision Americans before they came here and how did they expect American life to be?
3. How did the international student characterize Americans to be after they arrived and had time to acclimate? Did the international student find their preconceived notions to be accurate or did they need to be modified?
4. Ask the international student about the three most difficult challenges they encountered while adjusting to American culture. Should your international student say that they encountered no challenges, ask further questions on the following subjects: missing family, transportation, weather, time management, food, language, making friends, etc.).
5. The ability to interact with people in different cultures is a critical leadership skill. What advice would the international student have for you in terms of interacting with people in their host country?

Please take notes during your interview. Bring these notes with you to the session of the Leadership Development Retreat so you can share your insights with the group.