How I Met Your International Student Advisor: Lessons Learned in Staff Onboarding

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UCF Demographics

**F-1 Students: 3,047**
- Undergrad: 1,573
- Master’s: 509
- Doctoral: 810
- Pathway: 71
- English: 84

Students on OPT: 434
Students on STEM: 155
Countries: 135
Top 10 Countries: India, China, Saudi Arabia, Brazil, Bangladesh, Venezuela, Vietnam, Oman, Iran, Pakistan

**J-1 Exchange Visitors: 206**
- Professor: 1
- Research Scholar: 104
- Short-Term Scholar: 7
- Student Doctorate: 36
- Student Master’s: 3
- Student Intern: 2
- Student Non-Degree: 53

Students on Academic Training: 14
Countries: 53
ERAU Demographics

1216 students representing 107 countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top 10 Countries</th>
<th># of Students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S. Korea</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>128</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>109</td>
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<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>87</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>UK</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>Ecuador</td>
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Our Why

- Most ISSS offices across the country experiencing transition
- Pandemic has made us reimagine our work and shift priorities
- Our people important- we want to invest in them!
- Onboarding should be a good experience for everyone- we want to make it the best it can be
Word Cloud Activity

-round poll is active, respond at PollEv.com/jp532
-Text JP532 to 22333 once to join
Describe your level of comfort in creating an effective onboarding process for your office.
Where does the level of your current onboarding process fall?

A) Advanced (Established)
B) Intermediate (Work in progress)
C) Beginners (Nonexistent)
Have you experienced transitions or turnover during the pandemic?

When poll is active, respond at PollEv.com/jp532
Text JP532 to 22333 once to join
What are your specific problems in staff onboarding process?

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Text JP532 to 22333 once to join
Key Elements of Staff Onboarding

HR Basics
- Aligning and identifying with HR
- Understanding institutional structure

Technical Process Training
- Utilizing technology & resources
- Training plan

Office Culture & Philosophy
- Office & Team Culture
- Aligning advising philosophies

Long-Term Professional Development
- Goals and Expectations
- Thinking outside the box
Onboardee Experiences
Onboardee Experiences - Current DSO, New Team

- Relocated to Florida from Delaware in Fall 2021
- 3 years prior experience as DSO at University of Delaware’s ISSS
- Traded comfort zone for new opportunity and some challenges

Similarities:
  - Regulations
  - Common international student issues
  - Work culture / knowledgeable and helpful colleagues

Differences:
  - Everyday work processes
  - Office policies and regulatory interpretations (little things can make a big difference)
  - Re-learning a new set of university services, offices, student policies

(I do not recommend making this drive)
Onboardee Experiences - Current DSO, New Team

- Tech and workflow resources that helped me
  - Sharepoint: common work processes, up-to-date SOPs
  - WebCourses: training and reference tools for advisors
  - Website and request forms: eligibility requirements, application instructions

- Team training and culture of generosity
  - First weeks = Standard university trainings (mixed bag) and one-on-one shadowing (essential)
  - “Hey have you done ____ (x process) ____ yet? No? Well let me show you! One just came in.”
  - Deliberate ramping up of comfort with new workflow, paired with regular supervisor meetings
  - Ongoing availability of advisors online and in-person to answer questions
Onboardee Experiences - Current DSO, New Team

● Common concerns
  ○ “In my old office we used to do it this way…”
  ○ Admitting when you don’t know something (that maybe you should)
  ○ Where to turn for help when your first and second choices aren’t available

● Lessons Learned
  ○ Things are done a certain for a reason in any org, take time to learn why
  ○ Shadow, shadow, shadow (and take notes!)
  ○ Take tours of your building and your campus, identify important places for you and your role
  ○ Appreciate the differences without judgement
Onboardee Experiences - New DSO/ARO

- Relocated to Florida from New York in fall 2021
- 1 year experience at Korean Consulate
- Career change to higher education
- Life experiences as J-2, F-2, and F-1
Onboardee Experiences - New DSO/ARO

**Training**
- Step-by-step written AND face-to-face instructions
- Terra Dotta System (TDS)
- Separate trainings for F and J
- USCIS and Department of State guidances

**University & Office Culture**
- HR meetings
- Event participation
- Long term goals
- Team building
- Student Interaction
Onboardee Experiences - New DSO/ARO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Concerns</th>
<th>Takeaways</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Understanding precedent cases/situations</td>
<td>● Just do it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Hiccups in communication between different departments</td>
<td>● Teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Familiarizing with verbiage used to guide students</td>
<td>● Questions, questions, questions</td>
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Onboarder Experiences
Onboarder Experiences - UCF

**What Worked**
- Process guides
- Shadowing
- Regular check-ins

**What Could Have Been Better**
- HR processes take time
- Set achievable milestones
- Clearer expectations

**Lessons Learned**
- No one-size strategy for everyone
- Importance of checking in and giving frequent feedback
- Important to explain the why
Onboarder Experiences- ERAU

What Worked
• Training instructions & materials
• 30/60/90 day conversations
• DSO shadowing & check ins

What Could Have Been Better
• Cross training with campus partners
• Timeline for HR processes and orientation
• Include general and complex scenarios in training manual

Lessons Learned
• Software/Database training Vs. DSO Training
• Accommodate unique training experiences
Discussion Activity
For Discussion

● What was your onboarding experience like?
● What worked? What didn’t?
● What can you do at your institution to improve onboarding?
● Do you have any onboarding advice, tips or tricks to share?
● What is your comfort level now in creating an onboarding process for a new staff?
Q & A
Session Evaluation

Please take a moment to evaluate this session