

## **Brief suggestions for international students in College of Chemistry**

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I can still remember the day of the College of Chemistry's Freshmen Orientation. I felt excited for being a brand new member of one of the best chemistry programs in the world, yet alienated for being in an unfamiliar environment at the same time. As time passed by, the alienation decreased while the excitement and satisfaction continued to grow. As a senior, I think hearing my experience would be helpful for any international student at the College of Chemistry.

For most of international students, the freshman year is for sure the toughest year. They have to leave their parents and friends in their home country and encounter culture shock in a completely different environment. From my perspective, I was very nostalgic during my freshman year. So, how do you deal with nostalgia? My personal advice would be remembering the past while embracing the present and future. Please, make new friends and make yourself familiar with the new environment while staying in touch with your old friends. Furthermore, realize that something unfamiliar is not necessary harmful. Stay open and stay optimistic. Nostalgia would some times blind your sight and make you unable to see the splendid vision in front of you. If you feel your nostalgia it makes you feel depressed, don't just hide your emotion, instead you should search for psychological assistance from your friends and your family and University's counseling services at the Tang Center. Peer advising would also be a good choice to go to because the advisers are peers who have experienced situations similar to yours during their freshman year.

Another challenge during the freshman year is to overcome the difficulty of using a foreign language. Many international students, even after 5-6 years of training in English, still find themselves incapable to use English adeptly in a solely English-speaking environment. They worry about not understanding the lecture materials and being unable to communicate with other students well. I would suggest recording the professor's lectures and going to professor's office hours to clarify any unfamiliar language. Don't be scared, professors won't bite you and they are happy to answer questions. I also encourage international students to express their ideas openly at the discussions as only through practicing will you improve your communication skills.

International students also have to get used to the greatly different study environment at Berkeley. In some countries, especially in some Eastern Asian countries, the students mostly receive knowledge passively during high school. While in college in the US, and especially at UC Berkeley, students have to actively seek knowledge as the professors put most of their attention on researching instead of teaching. From my personal experience, I suggest international students preview the textbook and other materials prior to the lectures since international students often can't understand as much as native speakers in the lectures. Doing a preview also enhances your ability to read accurately and quickly. Another skill crucial for international student is writing skills. I strongly encourage international students to finishing the writing requirements at freshman year since the writing skills you will learn in the writing class will greatly enhance your abilities in writing the lab reports in other classes.

Last but not the least, explore the College of Chemistry as much as you can. The College of Chemistry is the best place in the world to study chemistry. The faculty here are all the leaders in the cutting-edge field of chemical science. As international students, you have a great advantage as you can bring what you learned in your homeland to College of Chemistry, making this place more diverse.

If you want to learn more about the College of Chemistry's peer advising program, you can visit our office in 121 Gilman.

Website: <http://chemistry.berkeley.edu/ugrad/current-students/peer-advising>

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