

## Tips for Academic Success for International Students

# Interacting with Professors, Teaching Assistants, SI Leaders, and Tutors

CWRU is a small, private university that prides itself on making sure every student feels welcomed and a part of the campus. Your presence as an international undergraduate is a benefit to everyone! You bring a global perspective to the campus and especially to the classroom.

While you are learning more about America culture, you will find that your classmates and professors, teaching assistants (TA's), SI leaders, and tutors are eager to know more about you and your culture. Even if you feel that your English is not perfect, speak in class. We are part of a global community; we all speak with accents!

In your home country, you may have had a more formal relationship with professors and their assistants than what you will experience at CWRU or other USA campus.

Your professors will encourage you to ask questions in class, participate in discussions, send email, and visit them during their office hours or at a scheduled appointment. Their syllabi will list how and when to contact them.

Most American professors prefer an informal classroom environment that mixes lectures with discussions.

During an American classroom discussion, faculty and students may sit in a circle and take turns talking. When not speaking during a discussion, Americans expect that participants will look at the speaker and use body language to show their interest in what is being said. They may nod in agreement, lean slight forward, and smile.

To prepare for a discussion, some faculty will provide questions in advance. If you have the questions before class, prepare some brief notes so that you can comfortably speak during class.

The best approach when greeting your professors in face-to-face meetings or through email is to use the title *professor*. You might write or say, "Hello, Professor Smith." Once you have used this more formal title, your professors may say that they prefer a different way of addressing them. They may invite you to use their first name.

SI leaders and tutors are undergraduate students who have been successful with the content of the courses they support. They are trained to work in an informal, friendly, and supportive manner. They will expect you to participate actively in the SI or tutoring sessions so that you can clarify concepts. Instead of lecturing or teaching you in a formal way, they will use a method that requires that you work in a collaborative manner.

Teaching Assistants, called TAs, are either graduate or undergraduate students who have been hired by their professors to teach, grade, and lead lab sessions. They will generally introduce themselves and may ask you to call them by their first name. Treat them with the same courtesy you would give to your professors.

