

4 #Hacks

to Improve International Student Engagement on Campus

Somewhere in the mix of reading applications, actively recruiting, helping students understand the OPT/CPT process, advising and planning activities, you're creating your strategic marketing plan for the upcoming school year and are implementing some of it. However, as you know, international student mobility is dynamic and geopolitically influenced, which means plans might need to be altered. I say "control what you can control," starting with better student engagement on campus, which in turn can influence your recruitment numbers — **because students talk**. That communication can stretch all the way back to their high schools, social media, friends, and family.

- 1 Really listen.** Plan your programming according to what your international students need. Simply put, find out what they need by asking them. Create a focus group and really get to know your students. That means spending time with them; conduct a survey to assess if your organization is doing all it can (within its resources). For example, students could be concerned about jobs and finding an OPT after graduation. Talk to the career center and find out how it's helping international students.
- 2 Empower your students.** Trust that your international students will lead the way. In one school, I started an International Student Advisory Board. We asked the students to write the Board's mission, and plan and connect with departments across campus once they assessed pain points and priorities.
- 3 Seek out international professors on campus.** They relate and can provide unique guidance because many of them were international students themselves. Create dialog opportunities to include meetings with international students and professors.
- 4 Be real. International students know if you truly want to help them.** It's not enough to just welcome international students to your campus. They want to know if you're standing alongside and advocating for them. Providing that sense of belonging can start from the moment they step on your campus.