TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

► The first days in a new environment are confusing for all students. Please be flexible, tolerant and patient to understand the additional needs of international students.

► When facing a communication barrier, speak slower, not louder. Allow pauses and write things down. International students may not understand immediately and will be able to refer to it later if it is in writing.

► Pointing something out on a map can help with communication. Use handouts, visual aids, and gestures.

► Paraphrase or check for understanding. Repeat and recap as needed.

► Smile. Ask about them: their name, where they are from and their travel experiences to arrive here.

► Use simple language. Avoid idioms, jargon, and slang.

► Listen actively.

► Try to withhold judgment about behaviors that appear unfamiliar to you. It can be easy to misinterpret non-verbal cues such as gestures, eye contact, and greeting rituals.

► Learning from our encounter with different cultures is a great opportunity. We have many behaviors and beliefs that we take for granted and others may not necessarily share them.

► Understand that they might be feeling a lot of stress. No one likes to feel like a stranger and feel unable to communicate or fit into a new environment.
Be careful about your use of humor. It is often difficult to understand jokes outside your own culture.

Stories of international students experiences in our community make great reading. The winning essays from the 2013 International Student Essay Contest are available at: http://www.udel.edu/oiss/new/essay.html.

Source: Peter Briggs, Office for International Students & Scholars, Michigan State University