

Culture Shock

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Florida Tech understands the concerns and needs of students from abroad. Our campus is a multicultural, multi-lingual, international community that, since our founding in 1958, has grown alongside the U.S. space program to become one of the most diverse campuses in the country. Over 20% of our student population is international, representing more than 100 countries around the world.

Adjusting to a new environment takes a long time. People who cross cultures usually are uncomfortable at first and talk of feeling confused, discouraged, lonely and anxious. As they get more comfortable, however, many people find that learning in a new culture is stimulating and broadening. Melbourne, Fla., will be both exciting and challenging to you. Your first task, of course, is to get settled in the Florida Tech campus community. Things will seem very new for a while. You will establish a new daily routine. You will hear new English words and expressions. You also may adjust to a new climate, new health care procedures, new friends and new communication patterns. You will learn about the campus itself—find important buildings, discover services you can use, and learn about registration and enrollment procedures. In short, it will be a highly stressful time in your life.

What to expect?

When you leave your home culture, you separate yourself from the people and circumstances that have defined your role in society. It is possible that you may experience a loss of some of your identity. The impact of this change can be disorienting. It is called “culture shock.” Culture shock can manifest itself in a number of ways.

Some of the signs of culture shock are:

- Fits of anger over minor inconveniences
- Irritability
- Extreme homesickness
- Withdrawal from people who are different from you
- A new and intense feeling of loyalty to your own culture
- Compulsive eating or a loss of appetite
- Boredom
- A need for excessive periods of sleep
- Headaches
- Upset stomach

- Excessive concern over minor pains
- Feeling sick much of the time
- Loss of ability to work effectively
- Unexplainable fits of crying
- Marital stress
- Exaggerated cleanliness
- Depression
- Difficulty concentrating

This is a long list! You do not need to suffer from every item on the list in order to experience culture shock. Only a few of the items may apply to you—maybe only a couple of them.

Be sure to seek assistance and support if you notice any of these symptoms are affecting you from maintaining your daily schedule of going to class, sleeping, etc.

What to do?

There is no guaranteed cure for culture shock. But there are several things you can do to ease the symptoms. Trying several of the following suggestions are probably more effective than trying just one. And you may even prevent some of the symptoms of culture shock by following some of these suggestions before you notice any symptoms.

- **Keep active. Spend time outside of your room or apartment.** Observe Americans in their own culture. Go to shopping centers, parks, libraries and sporting events. Watch. Listen. Learn. This process increases your knowledge of Americans and makes it easier to understand differences in habits, customs and social practices.
- **Make American friends.** Get acquainted with Americans. Ask questions. Be willing to answer questions about your own culture, so that you and your American friends can make interesting comparisons. It also helps to make friendships with people from your own culture if they are available and compare your impressions with theirs.
- **Exercise.** Find some physical activity that you can enjoy. Exercise can be an effective way to lessen worry and sadness. Many Americans, you will discover, like to be active. They like to run or walk along pathways in the city parks or on the streets. They also like organized games. You can get involved in many recreational activities including weightlifting, racquetball, basketball, martial arts and aerobic classes. Your culture back home may or may not value physical activity very highly, but research has shown numerous advantages to a consistent exercise program.

- **Join groups.** Your adjustment to American culture will be easier if you participate in campus organizations. There are many student groups on campus. The International Student and Scholar Services Office can tell you more about student nationality clubs and groups. You can attend most of these clubs once or twice just to see if you're interested. There is no obligation to join.
- **Introduce yourself to other international students.** There are hundreds of other international students on campus. They are experiencing many of the same adjustment problems you will be facing. Talk with them about how they're managing the changes.
- **Work on your English.** One of the most important steps you can take to ease your adjustment is to improve your English. It is much easier to learn the details of American culture when you know how the language is used. Listen for unusual or new phrases. Ask about “slang” terms you don't understand. Most Americans will gladly explain words or terms that sound new to you. So don't be afraid to ask questions when you don't understand. Get enrolled in an English as a Second Language (ESL) class to improve your English.
- **Remember your family.** If you've brought your spouse or family with you, remember that they will be experiencing culture shock as well. They, too, will be making difficult adjustments. It will help their transition if you can encourage them to take many of the same steps you might be taking. If you left your family back home, they will want to hear from you. Writing or calling regularly will help to maintain your relationship with them.
- **Be patient.** Culture shock is something that most international students experience in some way while they're here. Remind yourself that the problem is not permanent. Simply realize what is happening to you, and give yourself time to adjust.

Resources for International Students:

International Student and Scholar Services

Open Monday–Friday 10 a.m.–3 p.m.
150 W. University Blvd. | Melbourne, FL 32901
Tel: (321) 674-8053 | Fax: (321) 728-4570
E-mail: iss@fit.edu | www.fit.edu/iss

Holzer Heath Center

150 W. University Blvd. | Melbourne, FL 32901
Phone (321) 674-8078 | Fax (321) 725-5967
www.fit.edu/health/hours.html

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

Open Monday–Thursday 9 a.m.–5 p.m.,
Friday 9 a.m.–4 p.m.
Phone: (321) 674-8050

Clubs and Organizations:

Florida Tech Diplomats

www.fit.edu/iss/FTDProgram.htm

Friendship Program

www.fit.edu/iss/friendshipprogram.htm

International Clubs

www.fit.edu/activities/studentactivities/clubsorg.html

International Student Handbook

www.fit.edu/studenthandbook/StudentHandbook.pdf

Housing:

Living in a residence hall is a great way to meet new students and get adjusted to a new culture.

Student Living

<http://auxservices.fit.edu/housing/village.html> or
<http://auxservices.fit.edu/housing/southgate.html>.
E-mail fthousing@fit.edu, phone (321) 674-8076 or fax (321) 674-7444

Important Documents:

Student Visa: www.fit.edu/ugrad/adminfo/international/visas.html

International students, scholars and their dependents must have a valid, current passport to enter the United States. Passports must remain valid at all times. In most cases, a passport can be renewed by foreign embassies and consulates in the United States. For contact information, please visit www.embassy.org or <http://usembassy.state.gov>.

Social Security Card: www.socialsecurity.gov/online/ss-5.pdf

Campus ID:

The Panther Access Account incorporates the “campus one-card concept” that allows your ID card to be used in multiple applications.
<http://auxservices.fit.edu/campusid/main.html>
Other student forms: <http://auxservices.fit.edu/forms/main.html>

Student Activities:

www.fit.edu/activities/index.html
Student List Serve: http://lyris.fit.edu:81/cgi-bin/lyris.pl?enter=iss&text_mode=&lang=english

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

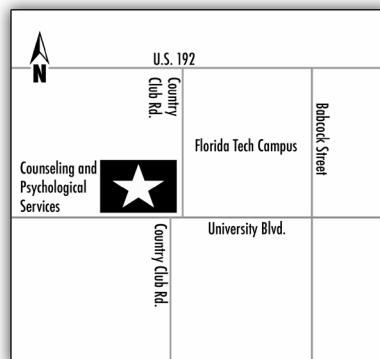
CAPS is a counseling facility operated by Florida Institute of Technology’s School of Psychology. Its goals are to promote the best possible academic, vocational and emotional health. Our services are available to students and their immediate families. Call CAPS at (321) 674-8050.

Center Hours

Monday–Thursday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. • Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Location

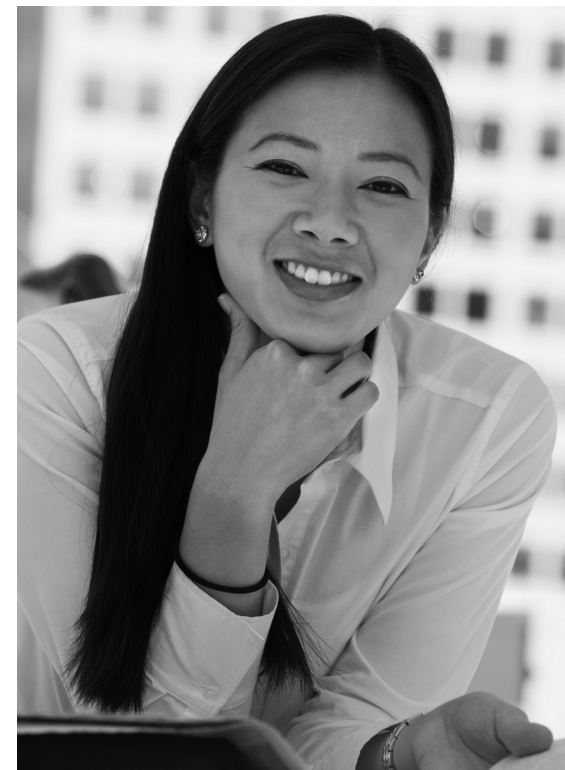
Intersection of Country Club Road and University Boulevard, west of Babcock Street



For additional counseling, academic success resources and helpful articles, visit www.fit.edu/caps or call 674-8050.

PY-443-707

Acculturation Issues



Florida Institute of Technology
Counseling and Psychological Services