

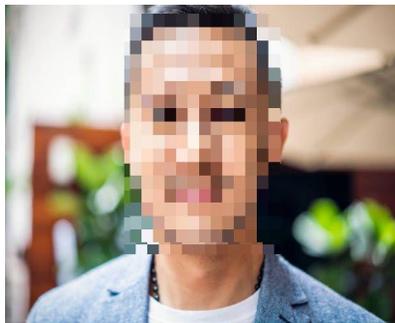
Preparing the Journey Equipping International Students for their Post Academic Transition

Watch the Re-Entry Vision Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJlw8ml80TI>



Let's start with Habibiti. Habibiti is your International Student from Saudi Arabia. She has come to your campus, and you have built a great relationship with her. You have shared Jesus repeatedly and have prayed tirelessly for Habibiti. She was Muslim and now has committed her life to Jesus. She is going to Dubai soon to begin her new job after graduation. Habibiti is marked with Kingdom purpose - to be laborer in the harvest field.



Let's next look at Li. Li is your International Student from China. He has come to your campus, and you have built a great relationship with him. You have shared Jesus with Li, and he is open. He is an atheist and has not committed his life to Jesus (yet!) You continue to pray tirelessly for Li; however, he is going back to China soon. Li is marked with Kingdom purpose - to be laborer in the harvest field.

Habibiti's and Li's journeys with Christ look different. They come from very contrasting backgrounds. Yet, they have much in common. You have a deep desire to see them as disciple makers in the Kingdom of God. Both are created in the image of God and marked for incredible purpose. Both have the potential to make a global impact - bringing the lost to Christ!

"He told them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to **send out workers into his harvest field.'"**

Luke 10:2

Let's disciple our Habibiti's, Li's and many more with the **send in mind**. Sending them to be laborers in the global harvest field - laborers to their own people or wherever God sends them. Let us prepare them for their Post Academic Transition through critical conversations, processing, and prayer. Let's connect them to local believer groups in their new context to continue watering the seeds towards lifetime discipleship. Let's develop their heart to reflect God's heart for their nation and the world.

Post Academic Transition: an International Student's time after their university study, whether they go back home, go to another country, or stay here in America.

"The sad reality is that many International Students who have made a profession of faith while studying abroad fall away from the church and that commitment within **two years** of returning."

- Friends International Ministry

How do we battle against our dear Habibitis and Lis falling away from Christ? We must be intentional with our International Students in two ways **1) Preparing them for their Post Academic Transition** and **2) Connecting them to local believers in their next context.**

PREPARATION STAGE

How do you practically prepare your International Student for their Post Academic Transition? An International Student from Saudi Arabia said **"International Students need open communication and discipleship about post-graduation. I needed someone who would pray with me and help process what my next chapter would be like. I needed someone who would help me in my transition from who I used to be and where I was to who I am and where I am at now."**

Preparation here in the United States, while they are in their Chi Alpha community, is critical before graduation. Many students will graduate and move on to a place where they do not have a strong Christian community (yet!) You have an opportunity to help them process the future in a safe and Holy Spirit-filled environment. This doesn't mean you need to have all the answers, but you can help by walking through certain topics with your International Student so they can process them with Jesus. Your students will be your best teachers of what they need to be ready for where God is sending them next.

Below is a checklist of practical and necessary steps that will help you prepare your International Student:

- **Go through *Navigating Your Journey* with your believing or seeking International Student. The guides are similar but tailored specifically for these two groups.**
 - For believing international students, use *Think Home* in tandem with *Navigating Your Journey* as it has relevant questions to process and Bible studies.
 - Contact xai@ag.org to access the *Navigating Your Journey* resources.
 - Ask questions, pray, and seek Jesus together as you process the various topics.
 - Process the topics through the lens of where they are now and where God is sending them, so you will have context for the discussion.
- **Work with your International Student to develop their Plan of Action** Contextualize what your International Student has learned in XA to the environment they will be entering. (Remember: your International Student is your best teacher!) See the “contextualization help” section below for more information.
 - Have your student take the time to write their testimony and discuss what sharing their story will be like in their new context. There is power in their testimony!
 - See the “Plan of Action” Section in *Navigating Your Journey*.
- **Encourage Integration of Faith & Culture**
 - Encourage your International Student to pray and have their personal devotional time in their native language.
 - Continue to help your student develop a strong overview knowledge of the Bible.
 - Provide a Bible and other resources in their native language
 - Process what will happen if they take a Bible home in their new context. For some International Students, this may be an issue depending on the context they are going into.
 - Resources: Digital Bible Society: <https://dbs.org/libraries>
- **Navigate “Counting the Cost”**
 - As you read through *Navigating Your Journey*, process with your student what it will mean to “Count the Cost” in their new context. See the “contextualization help” section below for more information.
- **Give them Back Home by Lisa Chinn:** <https://store.intervarsity.org/back-home-daily-reflections-on-reentry-each/>
 - This is a great resource for your International Student to walk through during the first 30 days if they are returning to their home country. For students not returning home, but going to other contexts, it can be viewed through the lens of their Post Academic Transition.

CONTEXTUALIZATION HELP

Among the changes and challenges an International Student goes through as a part of their Post Academic Transition, it is vital to understand the context they come from and the context they are going into. For your believing students, the Holy Spirit will be a guide. Below are some examples. This is not a template - rather, these are examples to help you process what could be. Doing additional research and talking with believers from a similar background can also be helpful - your International Student will be a great source of information about their context, but for some International Students, these ideas are new. Look at news articles, the latest happenings in their home country or the place they are going to, stories of missionaries from those areas. This can really help begin to understand the context your student is going to.

Understanding what type of culture your International Student is from can help shape your conversations and preparation for their Post Academic Transition. Below is a quick reference to "The 3D Gospel". It reviews 3 different cultures: Honor-Shame, Power-Fear, Innocence-Guilt. <https://blog.efcl.org/leadership/2019/02/the-3d-gospel-a-quick-reference/>

Family

The way a family operates typically reflects the culture they are a part of. For example, in many cultures, family is very communal, International Students are expected to provide for their family post-graduation, and there is a lot of respect for elders. The independence they have here in the U.S. may not continue in their new context. It is important to understand this as you have conversations with your International Student and process what being a son/daughter is like in their new context. How do they honor their parents even if their parents are telling them not to follow Christ?

Work

International Students were sent to the U.S. to get an education. Many times, when they return, they are expected to find a quality job and provide for their family. This can come with enormous pressure, conformity to dishonest practices and long hours at work, causing them not to be able to attend a small group or church. Process with your student what their new workplace will be like and how to navigate it in obedience to Jesus.

Counting the Cost

In many areas of the world, religion influences culture greatly. Students may be moving to places where idolatry or other religious practices that do not line up with Christianity are cultural norms. Other students will return to countries where conversion to Christianity can have serious consequences. How do they tell their family about Christ? What

will happen if they do? For example, when a Muslim converts, it puts their family's reputation at risk. They have committed the ultimate sin by renouncing Islam. Their consequences can range from having tension at home with their parents all the way to losing their life for following Jesus. A decision for Christ does not come easily or carelessly. **This is not something that should make you fearful, but you need to be aware so you can help them learn to rely on the Holy Spirit's wisdom. God's strength and power will be with them, and they will have great impact in their new context as they take the Gospel into places where there is no Gospel presence!** What will it look like for your International Student to go home with a Bible? How will they navigate the spiritual warfare they will encounter? We want them to be led by the Holy Spirit. We want to make sure we prep them with these things through the lens of the context they are going to, not just a North American context. These are all things to keep in mind when navigating your student's Post Academic Transition Journey.

Because of these and other challenges that your student will face after graduation, it is essential to discuss with your believing International Student what it will mean to "Count the Cost" in their new context. What does Jesus mean when He tells us to count the cost? Many times, we categorize students who are kicked out of their family or face death as those who are counting the cost. This is very true. However, what about those students who need to live with their families who are not Christian? They are counting the cost as well. A former International Student from India shared his experience returning home to his Hindu family after meeting Jesus in the U.S. After they rejected his testimony, He prayed to God and said, **"God I would go to hell for rejecting you, but this is so hard I would rather go to hell."** We must equip our International Students for what they may potentially face when they go home. The Bible is a great source of examples of people who learned how to Count the Cost. There is a whole chapter on this in "Navigating Your Journey." You can also access the Re-Entry Additional Resource Library for more learning and research on these topics. When we connect your student, the local believer group will have wisdom about the context as well that will help to prepare your student.

Access the Re-Entry Additional Resource Library here



CONNECTION STAGE

Your International Student may not have a loving, supportive Christian community where God is leading them next. However, we want to work to connect them to people who will continue their discipleship journey! The XAi Re-Entry Specialist (Allison Smith asmith@ag.org) can help you connect your International Student to a local believer group wherever God sends them post-graduation. The first step is to effectively communicate where your International Student is on their journey with Jesus. This is so that the overseas and stateside people receiving the student can continue the discipleship process appropriately.

In addition, many of the students will need connections in sensitive nations. It can jeopardize the situation of missionaries and local believers in sensitive areas if they communicate who they are unwisely. Therefore, how they communicate to a disciple maker will be different from how they communicate to a seeker. These connection partners are excited and ready to continue the discipleship relationship and are willing to take risks to include your students. However, all of us must do our part to walk in wisdom to help them be able to continue the work God has called them to do. **Please refrain from calling workers in sensitive countries "missionaries."** (If your student is going to India, China, Northern Africa, Middle East and many other countries in Asia and Africa you will need more caution and awareness in communicating to your student.) you can say something like **"We have friends who are believers who live where you are going, and I would love to introduce you to them!"**

Open Doors International releases a yearly "World Watch List", listing countries with high levels of persecution for Christians. You can access it here to learn more about potential places your student is going: <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/>

While preparing your International Student for their journey ahead, remember God loves them even more than we do! He created them with their purpose in mind. Do not fear, but go forth in boldness and a sound mind, knowing that Jesus has your International Student in His hands. We have the incredible privilege to be His vessel in preparing our International Students to reach their nations!

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline." 2 Timothy 1:7

Your International Student Profile

Disclosure of who the local believer group is and why they are in your International Student's country will be up to the local believer group. Based on the below information, they will make their decisions. Use the questions, categories, and Engel scale below to guide you in deciphering where your International Student is at. Continue to seek Jesus and listen to the Holy Spirit to understand where your International Student is on their journey with Jesus.

1. What is your International Student's home country/belief background?
2. What is your International Student's post academic plans?
3. Has your International Student accepted Christ?
4. Has your International Student been water baptized?
5. Has your International Student been baptized in the Holy Spirit?
6. Has your International Student started actively making disciples?
7. Has your student completed any leadership training? (Example: LTC, XAi LIT)

Discipleship Journey Categories:

- **Disciple Maker (Engel Scale +5)**
 - Has accepted Christ as their Savior
 - Understands the Great Commission and actively makes disciples
 - Water Baptized
 - Baptized in the Holy Spirit
 - Can sense God's calling to full time ministry or the marketplace
 - Completed XAi LIT Training
 - Has a strong overview of the Bible and understands how to share the Gospel in their context
 - Understands what it means to count the cost for Christ in their context
- **Disciple (E.S. 0 - +4)**
 - Has accepted Christ as their Savior
 - Needs more discipleship on their journey to make disciples
 - Has been water baptized or is seeking water baptism
 - Is seeking baptism in the Holy Spirit
 - Is committed to growing in Christ and fellowship with other believers
- **Seeker (E.S. -7 - -1)**
 - Warm to Christ but has not made a commitment to follow Jesus
 - Has had and will need more conversations about Jesus
 - Is actively attending XA events on your campus

Engel Scale

- +5: Effective in sharing their faith and life; they are continuously making disciples
- +4: Continuing their growth in character, lifestyle, service and learning how to make disciples
- +3: Functioning member of the Local Church/Local Believer Community
- +2: Learning the basics of the Christian life
- +1: Evaluating of the decision

0: Repentance and faith

- 1: Challenge to respond personally
- 2: Grasp of implications of the Gospel
- 3: Aware of personal need
- 4: Experience of Christian love
- 5: Positive attitudes to the Gospel
- 6: Awareness of the Gospel
- 7: Interest in Christianity
- 8: Vague awareness of Christianity
- 9: Experience of emptiness
- 10: No Framework for the Christian God

To begin the connection process, fill out the Post Academic Transition Connection Form **with the permission of your International Student**. The XAi Re-Entry Specialist and Local Believer Group will contact you about connecting your student.

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScMQLh-pjSp99R1Jk113MSRvngara1rlvKFo8xDbDeEiCFwg/viewform>



May we connect and prepare our International students as partners in the kingdom of God. May we see them not only as those we are reconciling to Christ, but as those who will also reconcile the multitudes of the nations to Christ. God is committed to your International Student. Hang onto this hope as you process all the ups and downs with your International Student. Thank you for serving and loving them. Because you said yes to them, many more will say yes to Jesus!

“I will shake all nations, and what is desired by all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,” says the Lord Almighty.”

Haggai 2:7

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

Below are examples of challenges, obstacles, and perspective examples your International Student may have upon their Post Academic Transition:

