Helpful Suggestions for Dealing with Saudi Students

Culture Shock
- Remember all people are individuals first.
- Use the warmth and care of mature Saudi students to encourage the others.
- Listen. Remember theirs is an oral culture so listening is a very important way to show caring and support.

Religion
- Provide a place where students can pray, men and women separately.
- Provide a larger room for Friday afternoon prayers (usually just men).
- Prepare staff about issues before Ramadan, i.e. food, tiredness, & attendance issues.

Housing and Food
- Be clear about what is provided and what is the standard. Reassure them that they can find their own housing if they don’t like what is offered. (if this is possible)
- Be very clear about their signatures on contracts and what that means.
- Clearly explain what food accommodations the university can make. If it does not meet their religious requirements, then they can handle food arrangements themselves.
- Be clear about no water on bathroom floors and that the water must be cleaned up immediately if spilled.
- Smoking rules and appropriate smoking locations need to be explained very clearly.
- Roommates need to be very clear about what is shared, schedules, and guest rules at the very beginning of their stay.

Advising
- Be very clear about the services you can provide and what you are able to do.
- Be clear that you provide assistance but the responsibility is theirs.
- Help them to focus on measurement of their abilities and not on what they think they can do.
- Provide consistent advice and policies to minimize negotiation.
- It can be very helpful to pair Saudi students with other students in their major.
- Students are not usually as upset as they appear to be. Emotion shows their deep concern for the subject at hand.
- In their culture, people are more important than rules, so they expect exceptions to rules. Clearly explain when this is possible and when it is not.
- They’re not used to getting information through e-mails, so other reminders before appointments and events are important.
- For them, relationships lead to efficiency. Use this in working with them!
- Because of different ideas of financial responsibility, have them pay first.

Classes
- Make class expectations clear and thorough. Give them written copies of these.
- Teach U.S. understanding of academic integrity at the beginning of each semester in each class.
- Be very clear about time expectations for classes, appointments, etc.
- Be clear about turning off cell phones in classes.
- At the beginning, it’s better to pair 2 Saudi women with 1 or 2 men. Later after they have adjusted, they can meet one on one with a man in an open space.
Remember what they bring to your campus
- Excellent communication and social skills
- An emphasis on personal connections and relationships
- Excellent negotiation skills
- Flexibility
- A chance to intimately learn about Islam, Saudi Arabia and a totally different world perspective
- A chance to contribute to the development of their country and international relations between our countries

Resources for working with Saudi Arabian students

Saudi culture

2. (The above book as applied to IEPs by Susan Matson and Mark Algren)
   http://www.saudistudentteam.com/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/MatsonAlgren_Nydell_Article-ORTESOLJournal2006final2.87192704.pdf

   (Editor’s note from the website: Instead of the standard book review format, Matson and Algren have reviewed Nydell’s book, extracted relevant cultural traits, and applied them to the IEP setting.)

Advising Saudi students
3. www.saudistudentteam.com

Islam