Global Education:
Climate Issues

Immigrant/International Student Focus Groups
Award for Excellence Final Report
The Project

- Three focus groups were convened to discuss the needs of immigrant and international students at the college for the purpose of building the college’s infrastructure to meet the needs of this student population in the future.
Design of the Study

- A challenge—Identifying students
- An assistant/cultural broker
- 4 questions
  - How did you hear about NCTC?
  - What programs and services are most useful to you?
  - What would you say to other immigrant/international students about the college?
  - What could the college do to improve your educational experience?
Themes

- Role of Faculty and Staff
- ELL Support
- Social Environment
- The Bookstore
- Need for Information
How did you hear of NCTC?

- English Language Services, an intensive English language program in Grand Forks, ND
- Adult Learning Center (at East Grand Forks Campus)
- Referral by friend or relative
- Referral by high school counselor
- Referral by a social services organization, e.g. Lutheran Social Services
- Television advertising
- College website
- Referral from another institution, usually 4-year school
Which college programs and services are most useful to you?

- Library
- Internet access
- LPN and RN programs
- Financial aid
- Computer labs
- Any academic program of the student’s choosing
- Faculty
- Advisors
- Learning Services
- D2L
What would you say to other immigrant/international students about your experiences at the college?

- Positive Comments
  - Environment
  - Access
  - Preparation
  - Opportunity

- Suggestions
Suggestions

- "I would be proud if college provided ESL classes in all skill areas, but mostly for speaking/listening comprehension."
- "I recommend English classes (ESL) the first semester."
- "Some students are afraid to ask questions about the process, how to use D2L."
- "There are many immigrant students who don't easily speak their mind and will not ask for help, even when they need it."
- "Show students how to access the college."
- "Advise students to contact advisor/counselor for help."
- "Faculty need to recognize that we speak other languages and have accents, and that they need to slow down."
A Puzzle

- Why would immigrant students report favorably on their interactions with faculty and staff at the college and yet feel uncomfortable asking questions?
Go ahead—ask me anything. Why not?

- Power Distance
  (Hofstede)
- Sociolinguistics
  (Hymes, Halliday, Holmes, Widdowson)
Power Distance

- intermundo: glossary of intercultural terms

**power distance**

Power distance is defined as "the extent to which it the less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a country expect and except that power is distributed unequally". (Hofstede, 1991, p. 28)

- The power distance concept is clearly more far-reaching than the workplace alone. The power distance is often reflected in the hierarchical organisation of companies, the respect that is expected to be shown by the student towards his teacher, the political forms of decentralisation and centralisation, by the belief in society that inequalities among people should be minimised, or that they are expected and desired.

- Examples of countries with a high power distance include Mexico, the Arab countries and India. Countries that score a low power distance are, for example, Israel, Sweden and Ireland.

Taken from: http://intermundo.net/glossary_term.pl?mid=21
Er, but don’t ask me THAT!

- **Communicative Functions**
  - Humans construct language for a purpose (i.e. greeting someone, making small talk, *apologizing*, asking questions, saying no nicely, accepting or refusing an invitation, and so on).
  - These constructions are formulaic, but often not taught.
A Local Example

Minnesotans speak the clearest English, doncha know

Fargo aside, we believe everyone else sounds funny. Minnesotans speak General American English, right? Isn’t that why news anchors everywhere—trained to speak with maximum clarity—all sound like us? Listen again. According to renowned linguist William Labov and the researchers behind the Telsur Project, a 1990s study of regional accents, the area of the country that is most linguistically neutral is actually south of here: eastern Nebraska, southern and central Iowa, and northern Illinois (but not Chicago). How to Talk Minnesotan author Howard Mohr agrees that many Minnesotans are oblivious to their peculiar diction, though he says our unique speech is really more about attitude — using the passive third person, for example — than accent. Says Mohr: “I had a friend who smoked cigars, and he opens up a 5-gallon can of gas—looking in with his cigar going—and another friend tells him, ‘You know, a lot of guys wouldn’t smoke a cigar and look in a gas can like that.’ It’s all about being calm, without pushing.”

From Minnesota Monthly Magazine (June 2007). Used with permission.
A Few Rules on Asking Questions

- Timing
- Topic
- Level of Formality
  - Would you read my paper?
  - Won’t you read my paper?
  - Read my paper.
  - Will you read my paper?
  - Is there any way you could read my paper?
  - Could you read my paper?
  - Would you be willing to read my paper?
Suggestions

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- "I recommend English classes (ESL) the first semester."
- "Some students are afraid to ask questions about the process, how to use D2L."
- "There are many immigrant students who don’t easily speak their mind and will not ask for help, even when they need it."
- "Show students how to access the college."
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- "Faculty need to recognize that we speak other languages and have accents, and that they need to slow down."
Social Environment

- Individualism v. collectivism (Hofstede)
- College location v. Social network
An Enigma

- Why is this particular population of students so upset about the bookstore?
The Bookstore

- The issue: Cost of books, buying back books and reselling them

- The Islamic Tenant of *Al Riba*, the Islamic prohibition against usury

Sources: *An Islamic Approach to Business Ethics*
http://www.renaissance.com.pk/Mayviewpoint2y5.htm#_ftn1;
Liesl Riddle, Ph.D., Professor of International Business at George Washington University
Think globally; act locally.

Global:
Grameen Bank in Bangladesh

Local:
Minneapolis Alternative Financing Services

Even closer to home:
Alternative Book Buying Program?

Muhammad Yunus

Photo Source:
http://timor-este.usaid.gov/SGHighlightsArchives/SGArchive54.htm
Need for Information

- GED Policies
- Scholarship
- Housing
- International Transcripts
- Advisors v. Counselors
Action Plan

- Mechanism for Identifying Immigrant Students
- Study need for ESL classes in the Developmental Education Committee
- International Student Organization
- Presentations
- Survey students further
- Online Training on Safe, Working and Learning Environments
Final Comments

“The college is excellent. I have told others, ‘Come on!’ No one knows about this college before, but now they do.”