

## Students care that you care: Nine lessons learned on student-faculty interactions in higher education

Dr. Natalie Thibault<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wonkwang University, 460 Iksan-daero, Iksan-si, Jeonbuk State, Korea Selatan

Corresponding author: natalie@wku.ac.kr

**To cite this article (APA):** Thibault, N. (2025). Students care that you care: Nine lessons learned on student-faculty interactions in higher education. *Journal of Research, Policy & Practice of Teachers and Teacher Education*, 15(1), 43-52. <https://doi.org/10.37134/jrppte.vol15.1.5.2025>

**Received:** 02 January 2025; **Revised:** 04 July 2024; **Accepted:** 12 July 2024; **Published:** 06 June 2025

### Abstract

How can professors connect better and interact more with students in a higher education context? This paper attempts to answer this question and reports on lessons learned through the pursuit of phenomenological research on student-faculty interaction experiences of international students enrolled in Korean universities, through which 17 foreign enrollees were interviewed. This paper is based on the qualitative findings of a phenomenological study investigating student-faculty experiences for international students. In light of empirical findings and insight from literature, this reflective essay presents nine concrete lessons that can guide educators' efforts to establish, develop, and maintain meaningful relationships with university students, including foreign enrollees. Such insights are meant to offer new ideas and avenues toward more frequent and meaningful interactions between professors and students in a higher education setting.

**Keywords:** Higher education, immediacy, international students, Korea, phenomenology, student-faculty interactions

### Introduction

Every educator knows, or ought to know, that meaningful and frequent interactions with students in a higher education learning environment are beneficial and consequential. While it is theoretically agreed upon, what does it mean in practice? Interacting yes, but how? Understanding that something is important does not make its implementation obvious. In the busy reality of higher education teaching, professors might lose sight of what matters in terms of student-faculty interactions.

As an assistant professor teaching English-language courses at a midsize private university in South Korea, I have always looked for ways to connect with my students, mainly because ESL teaching requires direct and constant student participation. Over the last decade and a half, I have developed means to connect with my students, but my trial-and-error approach was grounded more in instincts than data. Relying on my own personality and demeanor, I did not have much real insight into what students *want* and *need*.

At the beginning of my doctoral studies in educational leadership, a question kept nagging me: Why aren't more students visiting me, or any of my colleagues for that matter, during office hours? I am there for six hours a week, ready to welcome my students and give them individual attention, yet nobody ever shows up. Are they scared? Disinterested? Confused? Do they even know where to find me? Over time, these questions morphed into a broader research inquiry on student-faculty interactions in Korean universities. For four years, I spent countless hours reading, writing, thinking, and talking about how students and faculty interact, or not, in higher education. Beyond coursework and research leading to the completion of my dissertation, I spent a great deal of time thinking about my own students, my relationships with them, and my role and duties as an educator. (Re)becoming a student myself, as an adult, made me think twice about what contributes to connection and growth in learning environments, and what does not.

Through **research, interviews, and review of the literature**, nine lessons emerged to me who, as an assistant professor teaching at a Korean university, interacts with students every day. Or do I? I surely hope so, but exploring, discussing, and assessing the experiences of international students in terms of contacts and interactions with faculty members and professors led me to question myself on my behaviors, assumptions, and preconceptions.

The goal of my doctoral qualitative study was **to explore lived experiences of student-faculty interactions for international students** enrolled in Korea. The purpose of the study was to shed light on experiences of contacts inside and outside the classroom, and to explore its meaning and importance for foreign students attending a Korean university. The lessons that I came to learn through the research process emerged as an unexpected aftermath of a study that had little to do with me, except for its ideation inevitably rooted in my own professional reality of college professor and, yes, of foreigner in South Korea. Pretending that my individual situation, both as an educator and an expatriate, did not impact the way I designed and conducted the study would be as foolish as disingenuous.

I came out of my doctoral experience transformed on a personal level, but also on a professional one. I would like to present the *nine lessons* I have learned while researching **how, why (or why not) students interact with their professors** in higher education. Those lessons emerged from research participants' recollections and experiences of contact with their Korean and foreign professors, as well as extensive research in the literature. **Even though the participants in the study were international students**, their recollections and experiences can illuminate our views on student-faculty experiences as a whole. This article is the fruit of an aspiration to highlight such insights and hopefully help educators connect and interact more, and better, with students.

### **Of the importance of student-faculty interactions in higher education**

Through extensive research over several decades, the importance and benefits of student-faculty interactions for college students has been demonstrated (Cuseo, 2018). In terms of increased academic performance and motivation (Trolan et al., 2016), satisfaction regarding academic majors (You, 2020), greater sense of belonging and engagement (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014), and overall well-being (Trolan et al., 2020), students benefit from being in contact with professors and faculty members throughout their tertiary education. Conversely, poor relationships and limited interactions can be a factor in low retention (Park et al., 2020).

In addition to benefiting students personally and academically, meaningful student-faculty interactions positively impact faculty members, contributing to a greater sense of satisfaction (Faranda, 2015), enhanced sense of belonging, and increased motivation (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014). Meaningful student-faculty interactions contribute to student satisfaction (Wong & Chapman, 2023), which consequently leads to higher teacher evaluations, increased recognition, and additional opportunities for professional development (Solis & Turner, 2016). It is worth mentioning that the fostering of meaningful student-faculty interactions in higher education has concrete benefits for colleges and universities as well, through increased student retention (Dwyer, 2017; Jung & Kim, 2018), development of a healthy climate for diversity (Parker & Trolan, 2019), and the building of an enviable institutional reputation (Ammigan, 2019).

The purpose of the qualitative phenomenological study was to explore lived experiences of student-faculty interactions as perceived by international students enrolled in a Korean university. It investigated student-faculty interactions in terms of meaning-making in lived experiences inside the classroom and outside the classroom. The focus of the study was placed on the participants, all foreign nationals enrolled full-time in an undergraduate degree in a Korean university. Seventeen foreign nationals, 15 female and 2 male students from 10 different countries, were interviewed to discuss and explore their personal experiences of contact with faculty inside and outside the classroom.

Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured individual interviews – either in person or through videoconferencing – in May and June 2021. Each in-depth interview, which was conducted after informed consent was obtained from participants, followed an interview protocol and lasted between 38 and 62 minutes. The transcribed contents of interviews constituted the main dataset for the study and were analyzed following Hycner's (1985) guidelines for phenomenological analysis of interview data. The reliability and validity of the research were assured through a process of triangulation (cross-referencing between audio and video recordings, interview transcripts, and field notes) as well as member checking.

### **Findings**

Even though a variety of interactions were reported, the overall frequency of contact with professors was deemed low by participants. The level and frequency of interactions varied greatly depending on professors and types of courses. A variety of factors impacted the frequency of interactions (see Table 1), including professors' immediate behaviors, social hierarchy dictated by Korean society, language issues, and student characteristics.

Table 1.

Factors facilitating or hindering contact with faculty

	Facilitating Factors	Hindering Factors
Inside the classroom (RQ1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immediate behaviors from professors (smiling, usage of first names, sharing or personal details, etc.)</li> <li>• Student-centered learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language issues</li> <li>• Distance and social hierarchy</li> <li>• Lecture-based classes</li> <li>• Focus on memorization and transmission of knowledge (rather than critical thinking)</li> </ul>
Outside the classroom (RQ2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear invitations from professors</li> <li>• Friendliness and openness (immediate behaviors)</li> <li>• Opportunities to talk about any topic (related to coursework or not)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear of disturbing or bothering professors</li> <li>• Distance and social hierarchy</li> <li>• Preference for email</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge about office hours</li> <li>• Nervousness related to language proficiency</li> <li>• Student individual characteristics</li> </ul>

In terms of interactions outside the classroom, participants stated a clear preference for email, due to convenience and speed. Office hours remained underutilized. Participants explained how interactions outside of the classroom were often consequential to those inside the classroom: students who did not have much contact with faculty in the classroom would not reach out unless absolutely necessary. Students who had difficult interactions with professors in the classroom would avoid any out-of-classroom contact, while those who had good interactions in the classroom were more inclined to seek additional guidance and help.

While meaningful encounters with professors were usually initiated in the classroom, those that developed into out-of-classroom relationships were deemed very valuable by participants (see Table 2). Almost every recollection of meaningful relationships focused on human facets of relationships, including professors' personalities, demeanors, and behaviors. In contrast, every participant shared at least one episode where they felt ignored, confused, or uncomfortable while interacting with a professor. Participants shared recollections of painful interactions with professors deemed arrogant, close-minded, or who did not seem to care about students. Limited engagement of professors with international students was mentioned as well, along with differential treatment, negative assumptions, and a lack of understanding of student personal struggles.

Table 2.

Professors' characteristics related to positive or negative student-faculty experiences (based on participants' recollections)

Positive and Meaningful Experiences	Negative or Upsetting Experiences
<p>Participants recalled positive and meaningful experiences with professors who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• care about students</li> <li>• pay attention to students</li> <li>• play a mentoring role</li> <li>• reach out to students</li> <li>• create occasions for direct contact</li> </ul>	<p>Participants recalled negative or upsetting experiences with professors who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• do not care about students</li> <li>• make derogatory comments</li> <li>• treat international student and domestic students differently</li> <li>• have negative assumptions about students</li> <li>• do not understand or acknowledge students' personal struggles</li> <li>• have an arrogant or distant attitude</li> </ul>

## **Discussion**

The review and analysis of participants' recollections of personal experiences with student-faculty interactions led me to (re)examine my own behaviors, assumptions, and understandings. It pushed me to ask: How do I interact with my students? Do I sincerely invest all necessary efforts and energy to establish genuine contact with the young people sitting in front of me in the classroom? Do I *truly* make myself available to them?

This personal inquiry led me to the discovery of nine lessons that emerged not only from the key findings of the study I conducted, but also from what research can teach us about student-faculty interactions. While I cannot posit that each lesson will equally apply to all educators in all universities across the globe, it seems clear to me that those insights can offer teachers and professors avenues to improve the frequency and meaningfulness of the contacts they establish, and maintain, with their university students.

### ***Lesson 1: "Know who is in your class"***

*"[Korean professors] just interact very naturally with the Korean students. But I always feel like they don't really know what to make of an international student. So, I think they should be more open to interacting with [us] and just like acknowledging that... we are still willing to learn hard and to study a lot and to give our best even though we might not be able to do it in fluent Korean." – Isa, Female, 20, Germany*

Let us start from the beginning. From day one, educators ought to pay attention to *who* is in their class. Taking the time to examine and assess the class roster, and asking questions to students, can make a significant difference in the way relationships can, or will, be established. As a teacher, ask yourself a few questions: Who is actually taking my course and why? Are there any students who might have special needs, and who might appreciate extra help? What about students who struggle with the language of instruction? Do some students seem isolated? With this key information in mind, it will be easier to keep an eye out for students who might struggle in class and to extend a hand to help them through the coursework. Assessing the composition of the class, evaluating students' needs and making adequate adjustments contribute to the creation of a *pedagogical space* (Guzzardo et al., 2021) where students will feel supported in their academic endeavors.

When teaching a foreign language, taking the time to assess student understanding from time to time can have a significant impact on learning. Is everyone following the course contents? Are there students who seem lost or confused? What about the students who systematically struggle to answer questions in class or remain unusually quiet? If there are international students in the class, periodically checking on them, validating their level of understanding, and inviting them to reach out for help can make a world of difference. Considering that international students often need more support and guidance from professors (Glass et al., 2017), educators ought to make sure to be there for them.

Learning students' names and address them individually in class can work wonders to establish rapport. A few practical ways to help professors learn students' names include playing ice-breaking or introduction games, or using name tags or tent-like signs in the classroom. Participants in the study mentioned how grateful they were for professors who pay attention to the students and acknowledge their presence on an individual basis.

### ***Lesson 2: Give students a little more of your time***

*"One of the professors always opens the [online] classroom 15 minutes early, so whoever wants to can just join 15 minutes early to chat, talk to her. So that's really nice." – Isa, Female, 20, Germany*

Whenever possible, try to arrive in the classroom a few minutes early. Students are grateful for professors who take the time to ask how they are doing and chit-chat briefly before class starts. At the end of the lecture, staying in the classroom for a few moments will allow students to come up for questions or requests for help. Students appreciate the chance to talk with professors before or after the lecture, as they might feel hesitant to reach out otherwise (e.g. visit your office, send an email, etc.).

Rushing out of the classroom after the lecture should be avoided. Some participants also shared experiences of professors who would run out of the classroom after their lecture to avoid student questions or request that student questions to be exclusively communicated through email. Such refusal to engage with students created frustration for participants, leading to a feeling of not being adequately supported by faculty (Guzzardo et al., 2021).

### ***Lesson 3: Encourage exchanges in all directions***

*"With professors who are nice, and in my opinion professional, a real dialogue is possible in class, and it's a dialogue that includes the majority of students." – Simone, Female, 24, France*

In any class, fostering and valuing of exchanges between professors and students, and among students – especially of different origins, backgrounds, or majors – can greatly contribute to meaningful and fruitful contacts beyond coursework. By inviting students to participate as much as possible and using student-centered teaching approaches, professors can contribute to greater student engagement (Dipasupil et al., 2019). In addition, an increase in student-student interactions can have positive impact on student satisfaction (Wong & Chapman, 2023).

Do your best to connect your students with one another rather than separate them: invite students to collaborate, exchange, and work together. Favor a mixing of students, especially if there are international students in the class. When assigning group work, encourage students to work with different classmates and avoid separating students by major or nationality. If you sense that some students are struggling to mingle and connect, consider assigning the teams yourself to make sure no students remain isolated. Study participants shared upsetting experiences where professors separated international students and Korean students for group work, and how such attitude discouraged them from reaching to professors they perceived as hostile towards foreigners.

### ***Lesson 4: Open your office door... for real!***

*"Usually, in the beginning this semester, they will talk about what when the office hours are open and then "feel free to come" and then you'd show up and there was nobody there." - Jennifer, Female, 23, The Philippines*

Despite their ubiquitous nature in many universities, office hours remain greatly underutilized in most countries (Smith et al., 2017). If you are scheduling office hours, needless to say that you ought to be available. If you are not, let your students know by leaving a note on the door or making an announcement to the class.

Whenever possible, keep your office door open so students are less intimidated to come in. Take the time to explain to students how and why they can use office hours; if possible, reiterate the information a few times throughout the semester (Avoid the "hit and run" announcement of office hours in the first week of the semester). Remind your students that office hours are available to them, at least 2 or 3 times throughout the semester. Make written announcements (in the LMS system, on the syllabus, etc.) and include the exact location of your office.

Some study participants did not know what "office hours" are, while others were afraid that they would be negatively perceived if they came to the professor's office. Giving students concrete examples of the type of help you can offer (e.g. help with assignments, review sessions, Q&A, etc.) will concretize the idea of office hours in their minds and hopefully contribute to participation.

Since twenty-first century students are tech-savvy and often prefer email to in-person communication (Smith et al., 2017), consider remote alternatives to traditional office hours such as virtual office hours or messenger chat sessions. For students who are more comfortable writing than speaking, especially in a foreign language, it could offer a comfortable alternative to an in-person visit to your office.

### ***Lesson 5: Be available for more than coursework***

*"That's why I really liked her even after the class, she has a time like she tells us that she has a time on, for example Wednesday or Tuesday, so that we can meet her and then we can give any questions even it's not related to our class. Yeah, we can ask anything about the fashion design from her. So even I went one time to ask many questions." – Samia, Female, 22, Uzbekistan*

Students are eager to learn from professors beyond the contents of the course they are teaching. Whenever possible, create occasions of contact where students can exchange with you, ask questions about your personal experiences and research projects, seek career advice, etc. Studies show that students are appreciative of professors who go beyond teaching (Guzzardo et al., 2021), show kindness and humanity (Kim et al., 2023) and who initiate contacts with students (Dingel & Punti, 2023).

Study participants expressed gratitude towards professors who created occasions for direct interactions non-related to class, such as open-door policies for office visits or casual conversations before class. If your field of expertise or studies coincide with your students' major interests, consider sharing your professional work with them, by disseminating your research, sharing your professional social media profiles with them (e.g. LinkedIn or ResearchGate), or inviting students to professional presentations or conferences that might be of interest.

### **Lesson 6: Be sensitive to student personal circumstances**

*"Last year, I went through a difficult time and missed a lot of classes. I tried to talk to my professor to explain what was happening, but she didn't react positively at all [...] She didn't take it seriously at all. She ignored me in class, never tried to put me at ease... She seemed to think I was lazy and didn't want to work." – Catherine, Female, 21, France*

Whenever possible, try to listen openly and show empathy when students share stories of personal struggles. Students are appreciative of professors' kindness, support, and *humanness* (Kim et al., 2023). In class, aim to foster an atmosphere of compassion and honesty so students feel comfortable opening up and explaining the circumstances impacting their academic work. If students are afraid to speak to their professor, something should be done differently.

If you notice changes in behaviors in good-performing students, check on them: missed assignments, unexpected or prolonged absences, noticeable change in demeanor or attitude can be signs of personal struggles. If personal circumstances impact a student's performance, consider offering alternative assignments or extended delays.

### **Lesson 7: Use the tools at your disposal**

*"I had one [online] class with a really great teacher. She was really involved in making sure we're okay despite this Zoom setting. She was talking with us and during class she would ask use Zoom functions to ask for our opinions." – Miyeon, Female, 28, France*

Technological tools are very effective to keep in touch with students. Use technology to keep channels of communication open with your students, such as email, announcements through the school LMS and intra system, or social media. Students are usually very comfortable with technological tools; professors should not be afraid to use them to establish meaningful contact.

If teaching online, taking advantage of interactive tools in videoconferencing software – such as poll functions, interactive quizzes, reaction buttons, etc. – can contribute to enhanced participation and engagement (Gimpel, 2022) and student well-being (Xiao et al., 2023). Even though building rapport online might be harder, it is possible; online teaching does not have to be dry and boring, it can also be engaging and generate meaningful connections.

### **Lesson 8: Open up to your students**

*"I think [email] is efficient, for the class [...] But I think it lacks the relationship part, the possibility of maybe knowing them more, possibility of maybe them knowing me more, and I think that part is important to be honest." – Jamick, Male, 23, Uzbekistan*

Participants' testimonies indicated how students are eager to get to know their professors. Whenever possible, try to share a bit of information about yourself; this type of immediate behavior can greatly contribute to interactions and connections. What Dingel and Puntì (2023) called *faculty initiative*, which includes asking students questions, spending time with them, and remembering details about them can have a positive impact on the development of meaningful relationships.

Make efforts to lecture in an engaging way, by maintaining eye contact, moving around the room, and inviting comments, reactions, and questions. All professors ought to learn to detach themselves from speaking notes and slideshows. By moving around the classroom, avoiding PPT overload or "death by PowerPoint" and by inviting and encouraging questions and reactions from students, you can increase the level of engagement and interest and foster a learning environment where students will not fear to reach out to you.

### **Lesson 9: Remember that students care that you care**

*"She was the first professor at that time who was personally and genuinely very interested in us, and gave us a lot of time and attention. And she very personally encouraged us to work harder and, sort of showed us what we could have or what could happen later if we work hard." – Agnes, Female, 23, Lithuania*

The ninth and last lesson is, for me, the most fundamental lesson of them all. Students are receptive to professors who *care* about them. They care about the efforts you invest in the class and how passionate you are about your work. Participants' recollections of their interactions (or lack thereof) with professors highlighted the fact that students care that professors want to be there, and that they want *them* to be there. In sum, students want

to feel seen, heard, and acknowledged by professors who have real concern for their success (Bledsoe et al., 2021) and who do more than teaching (Guzzardo et al., 2021).

## Practical implications

While the nine lessons that emerged from the phenomenological study are meant to increase meaningfulness and frequency of contact between professors and students in a higher education setting, it would be unrealistic to assume that they can all be implemented by every educator across the globe. Environmental, societal, and cultural factors can render some of them difficult to apply. Considering that the insights were drawn from a Korean cultural context, and based on the observation of an English as a second language (ESL) professor, the generalization of such rules is not absolute. Nonetheless, the acknowledgment of students' needs, preferences, and insights regarding student-faculty interactions are valuable. The lessons introduced in this article can all take different forms, depending on the type of courses professors teach and to which student clientele. A series of practical tips and ideas are compiled below (see Table 3), but the list is far from complete. Each educator ought to reflect on their own teaching practices and come up with their own ways to establish, maintain, and foster meaningful relationships with their students.

Table 3.

Practical tips to implement the nine lessons

Lessons	Practical tips and ideas
Lesson 1: Know who is in your classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play ice breakers and introduction games to learn about your students and learn their names: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Memory games</li> <li>- Round-robin games</li> <li>- Asking students to introduce the meaning of their names</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Use name tags or tent-like signs to help you learn your students' names</li> </ul>
Lesson 2: Give Students a Little More of your Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give written feedback on your students' work</li> <li>• Play music or show videos before class, to create a warm atmosphere and generate conversations</li> <li>• Tell students you will stay in the classroom to answer questions after the lecture</li> <li>• Organize an outing (walk in a park, coffee time, etc.) with a group of students</li> </ul>
Lesson 3: Encourage Exchanges in All Directions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At the beginning of the semester, prepare ice- breaking games and activities that facilitate exchanges (e.g. Two truths and one lie, "I'm going on a journey and I'm bringing...", etc.)</li> <li>• Focus on classroom activities that encourage interactions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Group discussions</li> <li>- Q&amp;A sessions</li> <li>- Debates</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Make students change seats on a regular basis so they work with different people</li> <li>• Rearrange or move furnishings in the class to increase interactions and group work</li> <li>• Encourage students to share photos, links or personal stories on your class group chat or message board</li> <li>• Organize an outing (walk in a park, coffee time, etc.) with a group of students</li> </ul>
Lesson 4: Open your Office Door... For Real!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place a copy of your current schedule on your office door</li> <li>• Install a bulletin board for messages on your office door</li> <li>• Give students a map/directions on how to find your office on campus</li> <li>• Organize a coffee or tea "time" session for your students (in your office or elsewhere)</li> <li>• Schedule review sessions before major exams to help students with questions</li> <li>• Offer virtual office hours</li> </ul>
Lesson 5: Be Available for More than Coursework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share your professional social media accounts (e.g. LinkedIn, ResearchGate, etc.) with your students</li> <li>• If your field of studies coincides with your students' interests and major, share your knowledge and insight about your own studies, career, projects, etc.</li> <li>• If you are giving a professional conference or presentation that might interest your students, invite them to attend</li> </ul>

*continued*

Lesson 6: Be Sensitive to Student Personal Circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If an issue arises, address it individually with the student(s) in question, to avoid humiliation or embarrassment</li><li>• If teaching students who struggle with the language of instruction, use written communication (messaging apps, email, LMS functions), to allow them to use translation apps that can help them express themselves</li><li>• When necessary, reach out to students individually and directly (email, SMS, etc.) if you sense that they are struggling or having problems</li><li>• If students open up to you regarding personal struggles, practice active listening and show compassion. If possible, offer students extra time or help</li></ul>
Lesson 7: Use the Technological Tools at your Disposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create an open group chat (on a messaging app such as <i>KakaoTalk</i> or <i>WhatsApp</i> or on your institutional LMS) where students can engage with each other (and you)</li><li>• Utilize learning and teaching apps to increase responsiveness and interactions in class</li><li>• Offer chat or video call sessions (e.g. <i>Zoom</i>) in place of office hours</li><li>• Assign audio and/or video homework</li></ul>
Lesson 8: Open Up to Your Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Make efforts to lecture in an engaging way:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Maintain eye contact</li><li>- Try to detach yourself from speaking notes</li><li>- Move around the classroom whenever possible</li><li>- Avoid PPT overload or "death by PowerPoint"</li></ul></li><li>• Invite and encourage questions from students</li><li>• If you feel comfortable doing so, share images or videos related to your hobbies, hometown, or family. Show them before class, during break times, or on your class group chat or LMS</li><li>• In week 1, make every student ask you one question before leaving the classroom</li><li>• Before class or during break times, make students discover your favorite music</li></ul>
Lesson 9: Remember that Students Care that You Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Call your students whatever they prefer to be called (nickname, pronouns, etc.)</li><li>• Tell your students how you want them to call you (first name, professor, teacher, etc.)</li><li>• When students share personal details with you and the class, take notes and refer back to it whenever possible</li></ul>

---

## Conclusion

Conducting a phenomenological study on the lived experiences of international students enrolled in Korean universities has changed me. Beyond the transformative experience of completing a doctoral degree through extensive qualitative research and dissertation writing, my studies have led me to re-examine different aspects of my profession and, most importantly, my own teaching practices. While faculty members and professors were not interviewed in the context of the study, the contribution and involvement of teaching professionals should never be removed from the equation when the time comes to discuss student-faculty interactions. Developing and maintaining meaningful, helpful, and adequate relationships between students and educators is a shared responsibility.

The experiences recalled and related by study participants are personal and unique in nature, but they can also help us discover and highlight trends and patterns that can help us understand the unique dynamics of student-faculty interactions. Professors and faculty members ought to be recognizant of the role they play in students' academic and social lives, especially if said students are attending university outside their home countries. We should never underestimate the impact our behaviors, attitudes, and demeanors can have on students' experiences. Through the lens of student involvement theory (Astin, 1999), the phenomenological study has shown how impactful relationships with professors can be for college students. As educators, it is our duty to remain committed to developing and maintaining relationships that can contribute to student success, motivation, retention, and engagement. Consequently, we will ourselves reap the benefits of a classroom environment that fosters exchanges, trust, and immediacy. It is a *win-win* for all involved.



## References

- Ammigan, R. (2019). Institutional satisfaction and recommendation: What really matters to international students? *Journal of International Students*, 9(1), 262–281. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v9i1.260>
- Astin, A. W. (1999). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Development*, 40(5), 518–529.
- Bledsoe, R. S., Richardson, D. S., & Kalle, A. (2021). Student Perceptions of Great Teaching: A Qualitative Analysis. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 21(3), 21–32.
- Cuseo, J. (2018). Student-faculty engagement. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 2018(154), 87–97. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.20294>
- Dingel, M., & Puntí, G. (2023). Building faculty-student relationships in higher education. Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning, 31(1), 61–82. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2023.2164976>
- Dipasupil, S. R., Lee, H. J., & Ham, J.-H. (2019). Students perception on the level of classroom engagement at a Korean university. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning (IJET)*, 14(20), Article 20. <https://doi.org/10.3991/ijet.v14i20.11469>
- Dwyer, T. (2017). Persistence in higher education through student-faculty interactions in the classroom of a commuter institution. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 54(4), 325–334. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2015.1112297>
- Faranda, W. T. (2015). The effects of instructor service performance, immediacy, and trust on student-faculty out-of-class communication. *Marketing Education Review*, 25(2), 83–97. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10528008.2015.1029853>
- Gimpel, G. (2022). Bringing Face-to-Face Engagement to Online Classes: Developing a High-Presence Online Teaching Method. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 22(4), Article 4. <https://doi.org/10.14434/josotl.v22i4.32702>
- Glass, C. R., Gesing, P., Hales, A., & Cong, C. (2017). Faculty as bridges to co-curricular engagement and community for first-generation international students. *Studies in Higher Education*, 42(5), 895–910. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1293877>
- Guzzardo, M. T., Khosla, N., Adams, A. L., Bussmann, J. D., Engelman, A., Ingraham, N., Gamba, R., Jones-Bey, A., Moore, M. D., Toosi, N. R., & Taylor, S. (2021). “The ones that care make all the difference”: Perspectives on student-faculty relationships. *Innovative Higher Education*, 46(1), 41–58. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-020-09522-w>
- Hagenauer, G., & Volet, S. E. (2014). Teacher–student relationship at university: An important yet under-researched field. *Oxford Review of Education*, 40(3), 370–388. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2014.921613>
- Hycner, R. H. (1985). Some guidelines for the phenomenological analysis of interview data. *Human Studies*, 8(3), 279–303. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20008948>
- Jung, J., & Kim, Y. (2018). Exploring regional and institutional factors of international students’ dropout: The South Korea case. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 72(2), 141–159. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hequ.12148>
- Kim, H. J., Kong, Y., Hernandez, C., & Soban, M. (2023). Student emotions and engagement: Enacting humanizing pedagogy in higher education. *IAFOR Journal of Education*, 11(3), 185–206. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1410460>
- Park, J. J., Kim, Y. K., Salazar, C., & Hayes, S. (2020). Student–faculty interaction and discrimination from faculty in STEM: The link with retention. *Research in Higher Education*, 61(3), 330–356. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-019-09564-w>
- Parker, E. T., III, & Trolan, T. L. (2019). Student perceptions of the climate for diversity: The role of student-faculty interactions. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, Advanced online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000132>
- Smith, M., Chen, Y., Berndtson, R., Burson, K. M., & Griffin, W. (2017). “Office hours are kind of weird”: Reclaiming a resource to foster student-faculty interaction. *InSight: A Journal of Scholarly Teaching*, 12, 14–29.
- Solis, O. J., & Turner, W. D. (2016). Strategies for building positive student-instructor interactions in large classes. *Journal of Effective Teaching*, 16(1), 36–51.
- Trolan, T. L., Archibald, G. C., & Jach, E. A. (2020). Well-being and student–faculty interactions in higher education. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2020.1839023>
- Trolan, T. L., Jach, E. A., Hanson, J. M., & Pascarella, E. T. (2016). Influencing academic motivation: The effects of student-faculty interaction. *Journal of College Student Development*, 57(7), 810–826. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2016.0080>

- Wong, W. H., & Chapman, E. (2023). Student satisfaction and interaction in higher education. *Higher Education: The International Journal of Higher Education Research*, 85(5), 957–978.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-022-00874-0>
- Xiao, M., Tian, Z., & Xu, W. (2023). Impact of teacher-student interaction on students' classroom well-being under online education environment. *Education and Information Technologies*, 28(11), 14669–14691.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-023-11681-0>
- You, J. W. (2020). The relationship between participation in extracurricular activities, interaction, satisfaction with academic major, and career motivation. *Journal of Career Development*, 47(4), 454–468.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0894845318802108>