Diversity and Communication

When we communicate without considering unknown information about an individual, it can resemble going down a one-way street without knowing you are going the wrong way. You can guess certain traits about an individual by sight and inferring things about them, but you may miss the subtle hints that are important for understanding someone.

Every time we interact with one another we get the opportunity to gather important information about others...

- Likes and dislikes
- Personality traits
- Personal priorities
- Professional priorities
- Communication styles

The information is limitless and, if we choose to pay attention to this information, it can provide a number of hints for you when you communicate with people around you.

Communication

Communication is the process of transmitting messages to and from (two ways) individuals or groups. Successful communication requires efforts from both the sender and the receiver of the message.

As our world becomes more and more connected through phones, internet, and social media – it is important to recognize the evolving role that electronic communications play in your ability to be successful in properly communicating your intended message. Both the degree of formality and the method you use to you communicate with your peers may be very different than how you communicate with your instructors, your employers or others. Knowing whether one prefers to receive a text message, an email, a phone call/voicemail message or a posting on Facebook can make all the difference in how your message is received.

Diversity

Diversity as a term means many things to many people. For some it is seen as a phrase for talking solely about race, gender, or religion. In reality, it is a term which refers to much more than outward differences, and it can provide you with information about the people you interact with in ways that you may not have considered before.

“Diversity needs to be a core value embedded in the fabric of our day to day lives,”...“Being different has its values,” Marshall said. “Operating out of ignorance tends to lead us down the wrong path.”...“As pieces of a mosaic, if any of you are missing, then we have a problem.”

~Edwin Marshall, Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Multicultural Affairs at IU
Some Common Personal Qualities that Influence Us:

- Hometown
- Parent(s)
- Socio-economic status
- Daycare opportunities
- Religion
- Race
- Gender
- Family size
- Parent(s) occupation
- Hobbies
- Travel
- Vacation opportunities
- Political affiliation
- Friends
- Family country of origin
- Sports participation
- Body size
- Language/accent
- Smoker/non-smoker

Learning about diversity and communication on campus is a wonderful first step, but it is only the beginning. One way that many students have learned about other cultures is to take a trip abroad as part of their IU experience.

**Traveling abroad presents many opportunities to develop your leadership skills such as:**

- Increase your self-confidence
- Gain independence and maturity
- Grow your global network of friends
- Gain better appreciation of other cultures as well as your own
- Be prepared to face challenges in the future
- Learn to creatively solve problems
- Better understand your personal strengths and weaknesses
- Learning from students from different cultural, ethnic and national backgrounds
- Honing cross-cultural communication skills
- Mastering a foreign language
- Exposure to new ideas and philosophies
- Prepared to adapt to unfamiliar environments
- Able to learn from different teaching styles
- Effective communication among diverse groups
- Willingness to challenge yourself and your comfort zones
- Knowledge of a foreign language