

Stage A

Honeymoon

- Before students arrive at school and for the first few days.
- Students are enthusiastic and want to meet new people. They want to get away from home and start out on their own.
- University faculty and staff are very welcoming.

Stage B

Culture Shock

- New set of surroundings hard to adjust to. Difficult to adjust to roommate.
- Too many or too few people around (depends on the size of the student's home community).
- Expectations and values differ from prior experiences.
- Student has difficulty finding his/her way around and feels lost.
- Community bathroom is problematic.
- Excitement wears off and people withdraw.

Stage C

Initial Adjustment

- Physical adjustment occurs and students feel more "at home".
- This stage occurs more quickly for extroverts than for introverts.
- Gap between home and university customs and values persists.

Stage D

Mental Isolation

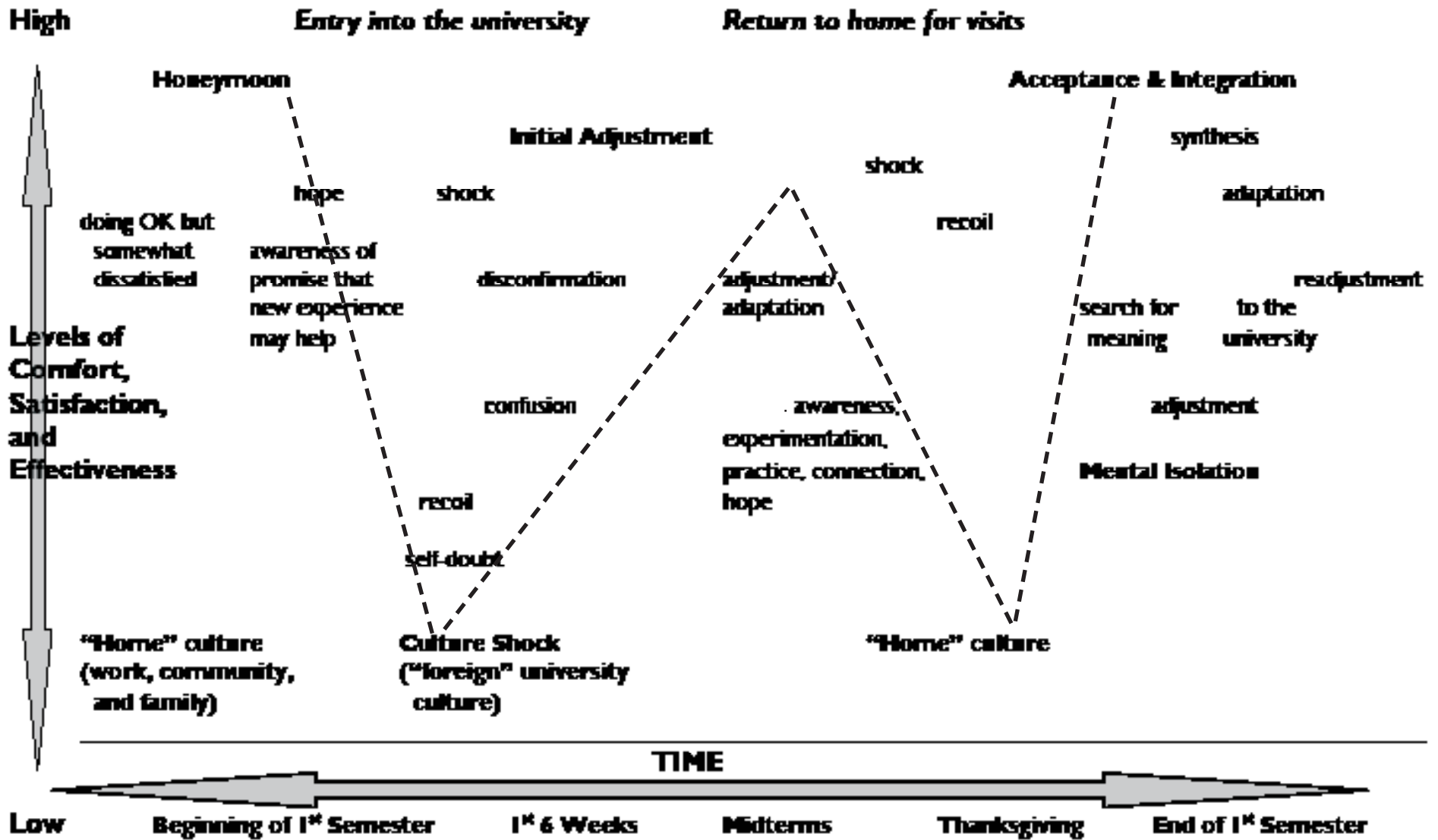
- Even though student has adjusted to the physical environment, other things stand out as "different."
- Feeling that getting to know others is hard.
- Feeling that no one else feels the same.
- Feeling alone.
- Values are challenged.
- Students tend to sit in their rooms alone.
- Cliques may form here.
- Critical time period for many students.

Stage E

Acceptance & Integration

- Students feel good again.
- Students feel more completely "at home".
- Students feel they are a part of their new environment
- Home values reconciled with university values.

Adjustment to College and Readjustment to Home Culture (The W-Curve Hypothesis Model adopted from Gullahorn and Gullahorn)



Transition Tasks for First-Year Students

1. Resolving separation and loss in leaving home
 - Leaving parents, siblings, peers
 - Leaving "safe" home culture
 - Dealing with homesickness
2. Adapting to a new college environment
 - Learning "mapping" skills
 - Locating resources and services
3. Initiating new relationships
 - Loneliness
 - Privacy issues
4. Meeting new academic demands in college
5. Decision making and self-discipline skill development
 - Time management
 - Decision making
 - Conflict resolution
 - Assertiveness skills
6. Clarifying values and understanding university culture
 - Understanding faculty values
 - Dealing with peer group expectations
 - Understanding the expectations of a university culture

Intellectual Development of First-Year Students

1. Have a "dualistic" perspective
2. Look for clear, concrete structure and answers
3. Rely on faculty and staff to provide facts
 - They are "good" authorities if they provide the right responses.
4. Rely on rules and laws as absolute
5. Need practical, experiential applications of theoretical material
6. Oppositional students are rebellious and oppose "vagueness" of faculty in their teaching
7. Believe that facts can be manipulated and used but that they don't necessarily relate to one's life
8. Ask themselves "What do professors really expect?"
9. Become aware that "this is much different from high school"

Suggested Academic Support for Students in Learning Communities

Entry into the University	Beginning of the Semester	1st Six Weeks	Midterms/Finals	Remainder of the Semester
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning "mapping skills" and location of resources • Initiating new friendships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions about expectations in classes and community • Discussion about values and success at ISU • Discussion of study skills (note-taking, test-taking) and time management • Interaction with other students in the same classes • Interaction with other students in the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding differences in learning styles/preferences • Utilizing feedback provided through quizzes, etc. • Peer study and discussion groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use for introspection, discovering personal values • Other students as models for developing skills • Integration of knowledge • Opportunities for active learning • Review of test-taking skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of material and syllabus • Practice exams • Predict questions for tests • Peer review groups • Midterm grades provided, explained, and discussed • Opportunities for stress relief 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of syllabus and tasks yet to be completed • Focus on goals and time management for the rest of the semester • Registration and goal setting

Residence Halls and the Transition Process

To be able to accomplish any of these goals, you must know the students with whom you are working. Only frequent contact and a genuine interest in their lives and experiences will allow these suggestions to work effectively!

Once a basic trust level is established, staff and student leaders can help entering students in the residence halls transition into the university community through efforts such as:

- Educating students about transition issues through passive and active programming and individual or small group conversations.
- Encouraging involvement in activities through small group meetings and programs sponsored by academic departments, hall governments, area governments, RHA, campus organizations, and the Ames community.
- Participating in purposeful intervention strategies with students by utilizing the knowledge of the phases of the "W" curve.
- Facilitating connections between first-year students and the university community through faculty mentor programs, invited lectures, informal meetings between faculty and students in the halls, meal invitations to faculty, and other mechanisms.
- Providing opportunities to build skills in areas such as conflict resolution, assertiveness, reading and studying, and stress management.
- Using the initial positive phase to prepare first-year students for the onset of cultural shock by providing resources and contacts.
- Assisting first-year students in understanding the university's cultures and confronting, integrating, or adopting its values.¹

Source: Halferberger, K., Mesier, R., & Stokes, B. (1999). Transition experience. In J.H. Schuh (Ed.), *Educational programming and student learning in college and university residence halls*. Columbus, OH: ACUHO-I.