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Researchers moving to a new country can benefit from support from local colleagues.

SAY HELLO TO YOUR NEW BENCHMARK

How to welcome an international colleague. By Lara Pivodic

In my work as a health-sciences researcher, I've moved to several countries, including Belgium, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. I've learnt that for every researcher who moves abroad, there are several more who will welcome that individual and support their transition. In today's global research environment, which values mobility and often expects it from researchers, these local teams have a responsibility to help colleagues from abroad have a good start.

During my own international moves, I have experienced at first hand the difference that a supportive environment can make, alongside my own efforts to adapt to the new environments. Here are seven hospitable things that research teams can do to help their colleagues.

Welcome the new team member. First impressions count on both sides and can set the tone for days and weeks to come. It is crucial to be aware that someone is joining the group, to know the date of their first workday and to say 'welcome' in some way.

On the first day of my secondment to the United Kingdom as a PhD student, I had a meeting with my academic supervisors, one with an administrator for official intake and one with my 'buddy' – a fellow PhD student who helped me to take my first steps in the new place and introduced me to the team.

Value input. This step applies even if they are staying for only a short period. Invite them to all activities that other laboratory members

are expected to attend, such as seminars, journal clubs or team-building events.

In the first month of my six-month visiting-researcher appointment in the United Kingdom, I was invited to present my work at a monthly seminar, select an article for the journal club and join the institute's working group on research dissemination. This motivated me and made me feel like a valued member of the team.

Assign a good workspace. Give them a place next to or near many colleagues. This will greatly boost your new member's integration into the local team, help them to quickly grasp how things work in the new lab and spur the exchange of information and knowledge.

Show interest. While supervising an exchange PhD student in Belgium, I asked her how often she would like to meet with her collaborators. As a team, we then adjusted to her preference. Embrace the opportunity to get to know different styles of, for instance, project management, giving and receiving feedback and supervising PhD students.

The new colleague might have a career path that is not typical for your field in your country. Rather than wondering whether they are

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equally qualified, compare what you have both learnt in the course of your careers, and consider how your experiences and skills could complement each other's.

Talk extensively about cultural differences. The value of international collaborations comes from the different perceptions, communication styles, work styles, customs and other forms of variety that a new colleague can bring to both the work and the social spheres. Understanding and speaking about differences will help to prevent conflicts that might arise. If they occur nonetheless, you will be able to more easily agree on how to handle similar situations in the future.

On arriving in Belgium, I noticed that I was used to a more 'direct' communication style than were my local colleagues, as a result of my previous research post in the Netherlands. This prompted me to ask the locals for advice on how to approach discussions with my PhD supervisors, interviews for grant applications or negotiations with project partners. I am convinced that such exchanges have greatly helped me to establish and uphold successful collaborations.

Offer help with practical matters. Navigating a new health-care system, finding a good phone plan or arranging childcare are time-consuming at best and nerve-racking at worst. I was forever grateful to a co-worker in Belgium who helped me to arrange health insurance and an annual public-transport pass and pointed out the place that sells the best bread in town.

Ideally, your university's international office should provide a welcome pack that explains which administrative and practical matters need to be arranged and how. Make sure that the new researcher gets one before their arrival.

Pay attention to the little things. Little things count for someone whose life – particularly their social life – has been turned upside down. Suggesting a coffee together outside work or offering to show your new colleague a nice place in town might help them to forget the stresses of relocating for a little while.

During my stay in the United Kingdom, I joined a group of fellow PhD students for weekly Friday breakfasts at a cafe close to our university. These mornings allowed us to bond, and I learnt a great deal about UK life outside the workplace. If you get along with the newcomer, you might make a new friend.

Lara Pivodic is a postdoctoral fellow of the Research Foundation–Flanders in Belgium and a senior researcher at Vrije Universiteit Brussel, where she conducts research on palliative and end-of-life care.

Twitter: @LaraPivodic



DIVERSITY DEFICIT DRAGS ON

There are promising signs for gender and ethnic representation in US graduate programmes, but parity is still far off, says study. **By Virginia Gewin**

The number of Indigenous and Latinx students enrolling in US graduate-level programmes for the first time rose between autumn 2017 and 2018, according to a report from the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) in Washington DC, which represents more than 500 universities, mainly in the United States.

The report found that first-time enrolment in PhD and master's programmes grew by 8.3% and 6.8%, respectively, among American Indian/Alaska Native and Latinx students (Latinx refers to US residents with origins in

comprise 11.6%, the report found. By comparison, according to the 2010 US census, black and African American people represent 13.4% of the nation's population, and Hispanic or Latinx individuals represent 18.3%.

Indigenous students represent less than 1% of first-time enrollees, even though their total enrolment rose by 1.2% from a year ago. "More work has to be done in the graduate-education community to increase the representation of these students in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields," says report co-author Hironao Okahana, the CGS's associate vice-president for research and policy analysis. "All fields of study need to be a welcoming place for people from a variety of different backgrounds."

First-time international enrolment in graduate-level programmes fell for the fifth consecutive year, and is now down to 20% of all enrolment. The study found that the decline was most marked in engineering programmes, in which first-time enrolment of international students fell by 8.3% from 2017 numbers.

Female students continue to be outnumbered by their male counterparts in some graduate-level STEM programmes. They account, for example, for only 38.2% of physical and Earth-sciences graduate students and 32.1% of maths and computer-science students. "While the rate of growth for women in sciences looks good, there is still a long way to go to catch up," says Okahana.

Virginia Gewin is a freelance writer in Portland, Oregon.

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Latin America). Among other science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields, maths and computer science saw a 40% and 14.2% increase in the proportions of American Indian/Alaska Native and Latinx students enrolling, respectively. The proportion of black and African American first-time enrollees in physical and Earth sciences rose by 12.5%. Results are based on responses from 589 institutions in an annual survey.

Yet, overall, US graduate-level programmes still have low proportions of students from minority ethnic groups. Black and African American students comprise 11.8% of total first-time enrollees, and Latinx students