

FISH OUT OF WATER

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“Being in university is hard enough, but doing it in a whole new environment, with no personal support system is like being a fish out of water.”

- Aron Fields

Going to college is hard. For most people, it is their first time away from home, away from their families and learning how to navigate life on their own. Now imagine you have to do this in a whole other country with new customs that are unfamiliar to you. This is reality for international students all over America.

The experience of international students in the United States can vary widely depending on a variety of factors such as their cultural background, level of English proficiency, financial situation, and the specific institution they are attending. However, there are some common experiences and challenges that many international students face.

For many, the decision to pursue higher education in the United States is a monumental one, marked by a mix of excitement and trepidation. Leaving familiar landscapes and embracing the unknown, international students arrive with dreams as diverse as their backgrounds. The first challenge they encounter is often the adjustment to a new academic system, teaching styles, and the American way of life.



One of the biggest challenges for international students is adjusting to a new culture and environment.

This can include everything from learning about new customs and social norms, to navigating a new education system and healthcare system.

Many international students also struggle with homesickness and feelings of isolation, particularly if they are far away from their families and support networks.

“I want (international students) to feel heard and welcome in a community where nobody will judge them.”

- Valerie Morales



Another major challenge for international students is language barriers. Even if they are proficient in English, they may struggle with accents and idiomatic expressions, which can make communication difficult. This can be particularly challenging in academic settings where they are expected to participate in discussions and debates.

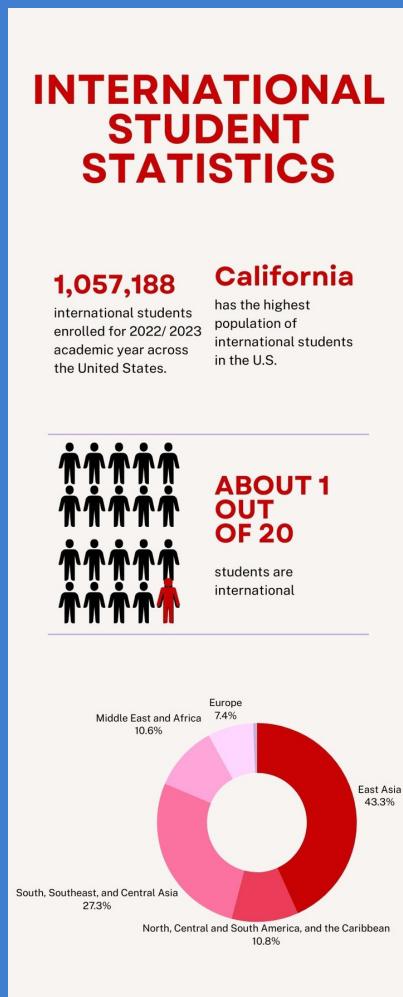
Financial issues can also be a major concern for international students.

Tuition fees for international students are often much higher than those for domestic students, and they may not be eligible for certain forms of financial aid. Additionally, the cost of living in the United States can be very high, which can put additional strain on their finances.

Despite these challenges, many international students also have positive experiences in the United States. They may have the opportunity to meet people from different cultures, learn new skills, and gain valuable professional experience through internships and other opportunities.

One of the most enriching aspects of studying in the United States is the opportunity to be part of a melting pot of cultures. Campuses are microcosms of global diversity, where students share perspectives, traditions, and cuisines from every corner of the world. This cultural exchange fosters a sense of unity and understanding, breaking down stereotypes and building bridges of friendship.

Many international students find that studying in the United States helps them develop greater independence and self-confidence.



The international student experience is not confined to academic pursuits alone.



Extracurricular activities, internships, and community engagement play a pivotal role in shaping a holistic educational journey. Many international students actively contribute to campus life, bringing unique perspectives to clubs, organizations, and cultural events.

Recognizing the unique needs of international students, universities across the U.S. have developed robust support systems. International student offices, mentoring programs, and counseling services aim to ease the transition and ensure that students feel at home in their adopted country. Friendships forged during this period often become lifelong bonds, providing a sense of belonging.

"We want the best for all students. We understand that it can be hard to navigate a life away from home and try our best to give international students the space to feel comfortable and included."

- Henry Heredia

Living in a foreign country comes with its own set of challenges. From homesickness to language barriers, international students confront obstacles that test their resilience and determination.

However, it's these very challenges that forge character and instill a sense of independence. Triumphs, both big and small, become badges of honor, symbolizing the courage it takes to thrive in an unfamiliar land.

As international students approach graduation, a mix of emotions fills the air. While some may choose to return to their home countries armed with newfound knowledge, others embark on careers in the U.S., contributing to the country's diversity and innovation. The international student experience is a transformative journey, leaving an indelible mark on the individuals and the communities they become a part of.

The United States continues to be a beacon of educational opportunity for students worldwide. The international student experience, with its blend of challenges and triumphs, adds vibrancy to the American higher education landscape. As we celebrate the diversity that enriches our campuses, it's evident that the journey of international students extends far beyond the pursuit of academic excellence—it's a voyage of self-discovery, cultural exchange, and the realization of the American Dream.