

Recruiting International Students in a New Era

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ETS's TOEFL® Program on International Student Recruitment Post-pandemic



A new year is well underway, and it is seemingly the first in the last few years that has a palpable glimmer of optimism as the world navigates its way out of the pandemic.

This is evidenced by the revival of international student enrollment. In the United States, the total number of international students increased by 4% according to [IIE's Fall 2021 International Student Enrollment Snapshot](#) — a significant improvement to the 15% decrease in Fall 2020 and a sign of the progression that can be expected in looking ahead to Fall 2022.

The education sector is keenly aware of the continuing implications of what has been experienced since early 2020, especially the notion that change is the only constant. And with change, comes the inevitable question of tradeoffs and choices — some that are quite challenging. How can institutions meet enrollment goals but also identify the *right* students? How can short-term financial goals be met without compromising institutional reputation that has taken decades to build? How can

institutions offer students the same level of choice (e.g., in coursework format, admissions requirements) while preserving the quality of those choices?

Indeed, institutions have been engaging with these questions and in many cases over the last 24 months have generated high-quality outcomes — further supporting international students currently enrolled and on campus; shifting deadlines and requirements; offering remote coursework; and adjusting recruitment and enrollment strategies, to name a few strategies. Many of those bold initiatives likely required short-term tradeoffs and stopgap arrangements, and as the pandemic begins to recede, it may be an opportune time to reevaluate some of these choices.

Over the last two years, ETS's TOEFL® Program has explored and evaluated very similar questions — primarily, how can we meet our stakeholders' evolving needs while continuing to uphold the high standards we've set for ourselves and that stakeholders have come to expect from us? Thus, we were the first testing provider to create a high-quality, high-security at home version of the TOEFL iBT® test — TOEFL iBT® Home Edition — and established it as a long-term, permanent part of the TOEFL iBT portfolio, acknowledging the positive feedback from students and institutions and the market need for this solution. Then, in late 2021, we added a third way to take the TOEFL iBT test in select markets — TOEFL iBT® Paper Edition. As we introduced these products and increased access to students around the world, we ensured that [each version of the TOEFL iBT test](#) upheld the same exacting standards — without tradeoffs. These industry-leading standards — validity, reliability, fairness and security — have solidified the TOEFL iBT test as the gold standard among English-language tests.

Last year, we also took the TOEFL portfolio of tests one step further through the accelerated development of a brand new, versatile, high-quality English-language test — [TOEFL® Essentials™](#) — which launched in August 2021 and combines the quality universities expect with the student friendliness, accessibility and affordability that students need and value. It's the first of its kind and as of this writing, [more than 280 college and university programs](#) worldwide are using this to meet their recruitment and enrollment goals.

With the proper investment of dedicated research, time and resources — we've found that it's possible to have your cake and eat it, too. Institutions, much like testing providers, can meet their goals and objectives that serve their primary stakeholders, and can do so without compromising the high standards they have embraced to build their reputation — those that are especially critical in today's dynamic, competitive educational landscape.

We hope you'll find this booklet, which contains a collection of articles curated by *Inside Higher Ed* — and some contributions from ETS — of value. In addition, I invite you to explore the [TOEFL Essentials Decision Kit](#) to learn more about how this test can help expand your pool of diverse, qualified applicants, especially as you begin thinking about the upcoming admissions cycle. It's a test without tradeoffs, and we're here to answer any questions you may have about how it can serve your institution.

We welcome your thoughts at TOEFLNews@ets.org.

Sincerely,

Srikant Gopal
Executive Director
TOEFL Program, ETS

Introduction

The recruiting of international students to American colleges and universities suffered seriously during the pandemic. Many talented students couldn't get visas to travel to the U.S. But the desire of American colleges to enroll such students did not disappear. And the numbers are starting to rebound.

The articles in this booklet explore the challenges facing colleges in recruiting talent abroad. In addition, colleges have started again to encourage their American students to study abroad for a semester or even longer.

We welcome your thoughts on these articles as well as your ideas for future coverage.

–The Editors

editor@insidehighered.com

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International Enrollments Begin to Recover

Colleges report a 68 percent surge in new international students enrolled this fall, following steep pandemic-related drops last year. The Open Doors survey also tracks the pandemic's effect on study abroad.

By [Elizabeth Redden](#) // November 15, 2021

The number of international students enrolled at U.S. colleges and universities has begun to rebound following a precipitous pandemic-related drop in international enrollments last fall, according to new data being released today.

The number of new international students increased by 68 percent this fall over last fall, and the number of total international students grew by 4 percent across more than 860 U.S. higher education institutions that responded to a “snapshot” survey on fall international enrollments conducted by the Institute of International Education (IIE) and nine other higher education associations.

The increases this fall follow a 46 percent drop in new international students, and a 15 percent drop in total international students, in academic year 2020–21 compared to the year before. Those numbers come from the newly released Open Doors census of international enrollments, conducted annually by IIE with funding from the U.S. Department of State.

“The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the international educational landscape on a global scale that had not happened before,” said Mirka Martel, head of research, evaluation and

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS, 1949/50–2020/21



In 2020/21, the total number of international students **declined by 15%** from the prior academic year. This decrease was primarily due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Source: The Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange is a comprehensive information resource on international students in the United States and U.S. students studying abroad. It is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. Government and is published by IIE. For more information, visit www.opendoorsdata.org.

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INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

International student enrollments decreased across the board in fall 2020 after the start of the pandemic, according to the new Open Doors survey.

learning at IIE. “Many international students were not able to travel to the United States due to travel restrictions. U.S. universities showed incredible flexibility in offering many of these students the opportunity to begin or continue their studies online, whether in the United States or from abroad.”

Unlike in past years, when Open Doors only tracked the number of student visa holders enrolled in person at U.S. institutions, the newest Open Doors report uses an expanded definition of “international stu-

dent” to include any international student studying in person or online at a U.S. university, including students who enrolled in online classes from overseas.

The majority of the international students in fall 2020 were enrolled exclusively in online classes: IIE found that only 41 percent of newly enrolled international students, and 47 percent of all international students, were able to attend a class in person in fall 2020.

But even with the expanded flexi-

International Enrollments Begin to Recover (cont.)

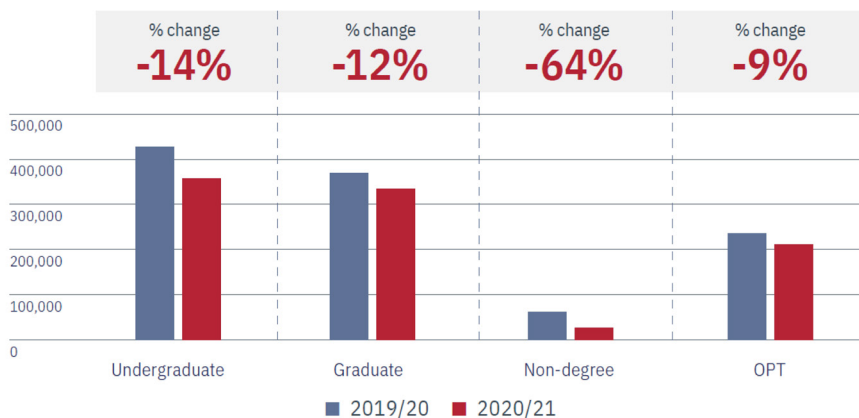
bility universities offered for international students to take courses online, total international enrollments at U.S. colleges were down across the board in academic year 2020–21, from every major sending country, at every academic level (see infographic at left) and in every major field of study. The steepest drops were in intensive English programs, which reported a 61 percent drop in international enrollments.

There were decreases in international enrollments across every sector of higher education, although the declines were steeper in some sectors than others. The total number of international students enrolled in 2020–21 fell by 13 percent at doctoral universities, 23 percent at master's colleges and universities, 14 percent at baccalaureate colleges, and 24 percent at associate degree-granting colleges.

The snapshot survey data from this fall points to a resumption of in-person learning: 99 percent of the responding colleges said they're offering their classes in person or in a hybrid format. And at least 65 percent of the international students enrolled at colleges that responded to the snapshot survey this fall are present here in the United States.

U.S. colleges said they are prioritizing outreach to prospective international students in India (56 percent) and China (51 percent)—together students in these two countries account for more than half of all international students in the U.S.—and to international students enrolled in U.S. high schools (44 percent). Colleges reported recruiting strategies including leveraging current

ACADEMIC LEVELS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS



Undergraduates made up **39%** of all international students in 2020/21.

Source: The Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange is a comprehensive information resource on international students in the United States and U.S. students studying abroad. It is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. Government and is published by IIE. For more information, visit www.opendoorsdata.org.

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Institute of International Education

international students (64 percent), online recruitment events (56 percent) and social media outreach (55 percent).

More than three-quarters (77 percent) said their recruitment budget is the same or higher than in previous years.

Not all institutions reported increases in international enrollments this year: while 70 percent reported increases in international enrollment, 10 percent said their numbers were flat, and 20 percent reported decreases.

The snapshot survey data for this fall do not include a breakdown of the change in international student numbers at the undergraduate versus the graduate level.

Allan E. Goodman, IIE's chief executive officer, said the history of academic mobility during previous pandemics shows that "academic mobility occurs even during it, and

when it's controlled or when it's over, there is a surge of the kind we very much hope to see, because people have deferred their dream to study abroad but haven't abandoned it."

The new data, Goodman said, "foreshadows that the same pattern will continue in the wake of this pandemic, that exchanges continued all during it ... and it will increase and ramp up very rapidly in the years ahead."

But William Brustein, the Eberly Family Distinguished Professor of History at West Virginia University and a former senior international officer at WVU and several other universities, said he is concerned about undergraduate international recruitment for many U.S. colleges in the years ahead. He cited a number of challenges, including the higher cost of higher education in the U.S. compared to many competitor countries, increasing competition for international students from other countries, geopolitical

International Enrollments Begin to Recover (cont.)

tensions between the U.S. and China, and concerns about the U.S.'s handling of the pandemic.

"The highly selective schools in the U.S. will continue to do well, but I think the community college sector and the state systems are not going to fare well when it comes to international student recruitment over the next few years," Brustein said.

New international student enrollments had already been on the decline in the four years leading up to the start of the pandemic, decreasing by 3.3 percent in 2016–17, 6.6 percent in 2017–18, 0.9 percent in 2018–19 and 0.6 percent in 2019–20, according to Open Doors data. Many observers pointed to an unwelcoming political climate and Trump administration policies on immigration as being likely factors contributing to these decreases.

IIE and seven other major higher education associations—the American Association of Community Colleges, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, the American Council on Education, the Association of American Universities, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, NAFSA: Association of International Educators, and the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities—issued a statement today calling on the U.S. government to work with higher education institutions to develop a national strategy to return international student enrollment and exchanges to pre-COVID numbers.

The Departments of Education and State [issued a joint statement](#) in July articulating "a renewed U.S.

commitment to international education," which, advocates for international education hoped, could be a first step toward a federal strategy.

"It is essential that the federal government support higher education's efforts to develop a national strategy to increase the number of international students enrolled at U.S. colleges and universities, ensuring that the nation returns to its pre-pandemic, high water mark level set in 2015 of more than 1 million international students," the statement from the higher ed groups says.

U.S. Study Abroad

The Open Doors census also found a 53 percent drop in the number of American students studying abroad for credit in 2019–20, the year the pandemic began, compared to the year before. (While Open Doors reports on both international enrollments and the enrollments of U.S. students studying abroad, the study abroad data lag a year behind.)

U.S. colleges launched an unprecedented effort to evacuate their

study abroad students from around the world in spring 2020, after the start of the pandemic.

"In total, over 867 institutions reported that approximately 55,000 U.S. students returned home safely amid the COVID-19 pandemic, due in large part to the tireless work of study abroad providers," Martel said.

The near total suspension in U.S. study abroad can be starkly seen in the enrollments in summer 2020, when the number of students studying abroad fell by 99 percent compared to the year before. Summer is typically a busy time for study abroad, accounting for 39 percent of all study abroad enrollments in the 2018–19 academic year.

The numbers of U.S. students studying abroad declined in all major destination countries from 2018–19 to 2019–20, with the steepest decline—79 percent—being in China, where COVID-19 was first identified.

The proportion of racial and ethnic minority students among all stu-

ONLINE GLOBAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES, 2019/20

242 institutions reported that more than **10,000** students received academic credit for an online global learning experience.

43%

Internships and consulting with global companies

38%

Collaborative projects

31%

Videoconference dialogues

45% of institutions offered multiple online global learning experiences.

Source: The Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange is a comprehensive information resource on international students in the United States and U.S. students studying abroad. It is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. Government and is published by IIE. For more information, visit www.opendoorsdata.org.

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International Enrollments Begin to Recover (cont.)

dents studying abroad decreased slightly from 2018–19 to 2019–20, from about 31 to 30 percent.

Many colleges and study abroad providers shifted their programs to virtual formats and expanded online offerings, including online global internships. A total of 242 institutions reported that more than 10,400 students received academic credit for an online global learning experience.

Melissa Torres, president and CEO

of the Forum on Education Abroad, a professional association for the field, said many colleges she's spoken with have resumed sending students abroad to select destinations this fall—"and many more are seeing the pool of destinations opening, both from the standpoint of countries allowing visitors in and also that schools are lifting some of their travel restrictions."

At the same time, she said colleges have become more risk averse. "I think the ed abroad offices are

having to really demonstrate even more than they usually do why particular destinations are safer than others."

"The Open Doors report is sobering but not surprising," Torres said. "I think in education abroad, the sense that I'm getting from colleagues is that there's finally some light at the end of the tunnel, and it's not just the next train. It's been a very, very long 19 months. There's a lot to do to get back to where we were on the capacity side." ■

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New Law Threatens International Recruiting Model

A ban on incentive-based recruitment could have big implications for how colleges recruit international students.

By Elizabeth Redden // October 25, 2021

Major higher education groups are pressing for changes to a new federal law regulating veterans' educational benefits that they say puts colleges [at risk of losing access to GI Bill benefits](#) if they pay professional recruiters commissions to find international students and convince them to enroll at the colleges.

The [Thrive Act](#), signed into law in June, threatens to cut off GI Bill funding for institutions that engage in incentive-based student recruitment. Unlike a similar, long-standing prohibition on incentive-based recruiting included in the Higher Education Act, the Thrive Act does not include an exception for the recruitment of international students.

Higher education groups have called for the Thrive Act to be [amended](#) and brought in alignment with the HEA. Amid such calls, lawmakers this month introduced two separate bills to amend the Thrive Act, [one sponsored by Democrats](#) and [one by Republicans](#) to address the higher education groups' concerns.

International education experts expressed optimism the bill might be amended in light of the bipartisan support. In the meantime, the Thrive Act has posed an unexpected challenge to a common -- albeit once contentious -- practice of paying agents commissions for stu-

dents recruited abroad, a practice that has grown in popularity and acceptability over the past decade.

The National Association for College Admission Counseling [revised its code of ethics to allow for the practice in 2013](#), clearing the way for broader adoption of commission-based international recruitment strategies. A [recent joint survey](#) conducted by NACAC and the American International Recruitment Council found that almost half (49 percent) of the 294 colleges that responded use commissioned agents to recruit international undergraduate students.

Advocates for agent-based recruitment strategies say they represent a cost-effective way for colleges to recruit in a broad array of countries. Agents are typically paid a percentage of a student's tuition payment, reducing up-front costs associated with recruitment travel and maintaining a large international student recruitment staff.

American colleges have experienced [declines in new international students in recent years](#), and this trend accelerated sharply with the pandemic.

"With a restriction in place barring use of incentive-based agents in overseas recruitment of international students, U.S. colleges and universities will struggle greatly to

H.R.2523 - THRIVE Act

117th Congress (2021-2022) | [Get alerts](#)

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Sponsor: [Rep. Levin, Mike \[D-CA-49\]](#)
(Introduced 04/14/2021)

Committees: House - Veterans' Affairs; Budget | Senate - Veterans' Affairs

Latest Action: 06/08/2021 Became Public Law No: 117-16. ([TXT](#) | [PDF](#)) ([All Actions](#))

Tracker:

Introduced → Passed House → Passed Senate → To President → Became Law

reverse this decline," Esther D. Brimmer, the executive director and CEO of NAFSA: Association of International Educators, wrote in a [Sept. 20 letter](#) to lawmakers calling for amendments to the Thrive Act.

Brimmer added, "This restriction also runs counter to the Biden administration's recently issued [Joint Statement of Principles in Support of International Education](#) led by the Departments of State and Education, which emphasizes 'the U.S. government's commitment to support key facets of international education, in partnership with U.S. higher education institutions.'"

Jill Allen Murray, NAFSA's deputy executive director for public policy, said the new law will disrupt a well-established process for student recruitment.

New Law Threatens International Recruiting Model (cont.)

“The issue right now is we have a system in place that many institutions use, and this law threatens to ban it,” she said.

“NAFSA’s really pleased to see these bills introduced to see that both sides of the aisle see the need for the fix, and we’re really hopeful that Congress will move quickly to advance these bills into law,” Murray said. “Now is not the time to allow this challenge to persist. International student enrollment is too important.”

Longtime critics of the practice say the prohibition in the Thrive Act should be an opportunity to reconsider the long-standing carveout of international student recruitment from the Higher Education Act’s general ban on incentive compensation. Critics argue that a commission-based payment structure risks putting the interests of institutions ahead of those of students, and that it also incentivizes fraudulent practices such as the submission of falsified or ghostwritten application materials.

“Engaging in processes that we

view as unacceptable or corrupt here in the U.S. just because those practices are taking place overseas will change the nature of the university itself,” said Barmak Nassirian, a longtime critic of the use of commissioned agents in international recruitment. Nassirian, who is vice president for higher education policy at Veterans Education Success, emphasized he was speaking personally and not on behalf of the organization, which supports the Thrive Act as an important program integrity measure but does not have a position on the international student recruitment issue specifically.

Another longtime critic of the practice, Philip Altbach, a research professor and distinguished professor at Boston College’s Center for International Higher Education, said he’s been “beating this dead horse for years ... until Congress stepped forward and raised the dead horse from the grave.”

Altbach would like to see the practice be openly debated again, though he is not hopeful about that happening.

“If the entire industry with all of its lobbying power and so on wants to keep the status quo, there’s no reason at all to expect it would change,” he said.

It is not clear to what degree, if at all, colleges have changed their recruitment practices in response to the Thrive Act.

“I think with good reason institutions are hesitant to share how they are approaching the situation,” said Brian Whalen, executive director of the American International Recruitment Council, an organization that developed standards of ethical practice for agency-based international recruitment and that certifies agencies based on those standards.

“Those institutions that are on a semester calendar may not be as impacted right now because they are in-between enrollment cycles,” Whalen said via email. “What I have heard is that institutions are hopeful that the bill is amended as quickly as possible and they are being very active in reaching out to their Congressional representatives.” ■

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<https://www.insidehighered.com/admissions/article/2021/10/25/veterans-ed-law-could-impact-international-recruitment>

Expanded Options for Some Foreign Students

The Biden administration has taken steps to make the U.S. more attractive to international talent, including expanding eligibility for some foreign STEM students to participate in a popular postgraduation work program.

By [Elizabeth Redden](#) // January 24, 2022

The Biden administration announced a series of administrative actions aimed at attracting and retaining international students and researchers in STEM fields on Friday.

These actions include identifying 22 new fields of study eligible for the STEM optional practical training program, which allows international students in STEM fields to stay in the U.S. and work for up to three years after they graduate, rather than the typical one-year period allowed for non-STEM graduates.

The expansion will newly allow international students in a range of fields—including climate science, cloud computing, data analytics, economics and computer science, geobiology, geography and environmental studies, financial analytics, and industrial and organizational psychology—to gain additional work experience in the U.S. while remaining on a student visa.

A full list of the 22 fields newly eligible for STEM OPT, and descriptions of those fields, can be found in [the Federal Register](#) notice of the changes.

The move to expand the STEM OPT program marks a significant shift from the Trump administration, when the program was [widely seen as vulnerable, legally and politically](#).



OLEMEDIA/E+/GETTY IMAGES

The Biden administration on Friday announced that international graduates in 22 fields, including cloud computing, will be newly eligible to participate in the STEM optional practical training program.

Although it never proposed a regulation to this effect, the Trump administration [expressed interest](#) in “reducing fraud and abuse” in practical training programs like OPT and in seeking ways to “improve protections of U.S. workers who may be negatively impacted by employment of nonimmigrant students.”

OPT is very popular with international students—[more than 200,000](#) international students used the program to gain work experience in the U.S. in the 2020–21 academic year.

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“STEM innovation allows us to solve the complex challenges we

face today and make a difference in how we secure and protect our country,” Alejandro Mayorkas, secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, said in a written statement. “Through STEM education and training opportunities, DHS is expanding the number and diversity of students who excel in STEM education and contribute to the U.S. economy.”

The Department of State also announced [new guidance](#) Friday relating to the academic training program, which allows students on J-1 exchange visitor visas to work in a job related to their field of study. (The program is similar to the OPT

Expanded Options for Some Foreign Students (cont.)

program, except OPT is available for students on F-1 visas, while the academic training program is for students on J-1 exchange visitor visas.)

The change will allow undergraduate and graduate students in STEM fields on J-1 visas to participate in academic training for up to 36 months, an increase from the maximum 18 months previously allowed in most cases.

According to the State Department, there are currently 1,720 exchange visitors in STEM studies who are eligible for the academic training extension.

Among other changes announced Friday, the Homeland Security Department announced two updates to its policy manual.

The first change clarifies how the department determines eligibility for [O-1A visas](#) for individuals with “extraordinary ability” in the sciences, education, business or athletics. A White House [fact sheet](#) says the update clarifies how the department determines eligibility for the visas, “provides examples of evidence that may satisfy the O-1A evidentiary criteria and discusses considerations that are relevant to evaluating such evidence, with a fo-

cus on the highly technical nature of STEM fields and the complexity of the evidence often submitted.”

A second change to the manual aims to clarify how people with advanced degrees in STEM fields and entrepreneurs can take advantage of [a provision of the Immigration and Nationality Act](#) that allows an individual with “exceptional ability” to petition for an employment-based visa without having a job offer (or employer), if U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services deems the waiver of the requirement they have a job offer to be in the “national interest.”

Steve Yale-Loehr, a professor of immigration law practice at Cornell University, said the administrative actions, taken together, “provide a small but significant step to help keep U.S. companies competitive in a global economy and to address workforce shortages.”

“Larger actions, such as increasing the number of employment-based green cards, will require congressional action,” he said.

Sarah Spreitzer, assistant vice president and chief of staff for government relations at the American Council on Education, said the Biden administration is “very much

constrained by the existing statute. They haven’t been able to get comprehensive immigration legislation passed in Congress, but these are all good changes they’re taking under the existing regulatory framework. None of them are a huge change, but we think they’ll continue to send a welcoming message to our international students and scholars.”

Esther D. Brimmer, executive director and CEO of NAFSA: Association of International Educators, said in a written statement that the association commends “the Biden-Harris administration for taking concrete action to make the United States a more attractive destination for the world’s talent and share the assertion that all Americans benefit from their presence in our classrooms, communities, and workplaces.”

Brimmer added, “We look forward to the Biden-Harris administration deepening its international education commitment and resources so that international talent from non-STEM fields may contribute to American ingenuity and innovation to a greater extent as well, and to ensure that U.S. students are able to benefit from an internationalized campus and career-enhancing study abroad experiences.” ■

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<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2022/01/24/biden-administration-actions-aim-attract-stem-talent>

An Online 'Moon Shot' for the Developing World

A new, free online certificate program from Arizona State's Thunderbird School of Global Management will be offered in 40 languages and seeks to reach refugees, women and others in the developing world.

By [Suzanne Smalley](#) // January 21, 2022

The Thunderbird School of Global Management at Arizona State University plans to launch a new global management and entrepreneurship online certificate program that will offer five free online business courses in 40 languages worldwide and aims to reach 100 million learners by 2030, 70 percent of them women.

The program was announced by the university Thursday and will be funded by a \$25 million alumni gift matched by in-kind donations from the business school and the university, which will bring the business school at least halfway to the \$100 million goal for launching the program across the next two years, said Sanjeev Khagram, dean of the business school.

Khagram said the program is a natural extension of Thunderbird, which calls itself the most global and digital management and leadership academy in the world. With the new program, the school's administrators hope to catapult people in the developing world into business careers and entrepreneurship by showing them what's possible. Khagram said officials are particularly focused on reaching an estimated 26 million refugees worldwide.

People who enroll will earn a badge



ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY
ASU's Thunderbird School of Global Management

for each course taken, and if they complete all five courses in the program, they will receive an executive certificate. Khagram said he is working with the university to ensure the certificate can be converted for college credits. He noted that Thunderbird professors will help design and teach the courses, but the program will include supplemental professors from various regions in the world "for cameos" to ensure courses are culturally appropriate.

Khagram said he expects there to be many doubters of the plan, given the sweep of the program's ambi-

tions, but he believes Thunderbird's long experience in online education and in reaching international students equips it for the challenge.

"We've been working on these things for a long time," Khagram said. "We're not a start-up here. We already have thought through a lot of how to use AI, how to use mobile technology, how to get internet access to students all over the world, including Africa."

Khagram is from Uganda and fled the country when it was ruled by strongman Idi Amin in the 1970s, and he spent time in an Italian

An Online 'Moon Shot' for the Developing World (cont.)

refugee camp before immigrating to the U.S. He said Thunderbird is committed to reaching and supporting underserved populations and will partner with organizations worldwide to ensure success.

"We know that there are skeptics," Khagram said. "We know this is bold and ambitious. But we believe in moon shots."

Some online education experts are indeed skeptical. Phil Hill, an education market analyst and co-founder of MindWires, an educational-technology consulting firm, said that even the massive open online course juggernaut Coursera needed a decade to reach 100 million learners and did so only with venture capital support far more robust than the amount with which Thunderbird is working.

Hill called the goal of reaching 100 million people "press release hype" and said Thunderbird officials "need to have cold water thrown on them."

"There's no realistic plan to say they can come even close to what they're planning," Hill said.

Hill said Thunderbird's decision to offer a certificate program makes a lot of sense and harnesses the growing momentum for such on-

line offerings. But he questioned whether there are 100 million people worldwide who will even want to leverage the opportunity. Noting Thunderbird's goal of reaching learners in Africa, he pointed out that any coursework offered there will need to be optimized for mobile delivery so that students without reliable internet connections can find one to download work and then complete it from home when off-line.

Thunderbird officials pegged the announcement of the new certificate program to the World Economic Forum's State of the World online sessions. In making the announcement, Thunderbird highlighted United Nations estimates that the coronavirus pandemic has wiped out 20 years of educational gains.

The program's courses will be translated with what Thunderbird officials are calling a "unique Google engine purpose-built for the Global Initiative." They said native speakers will be retained to ensure the digitally translated language renderings are high-quality. Thunderbird also plans to leverage a global network of 50,000 alumni in more than 100 countries and its network of 16 Centers of Excellence around the world to augment the effort.

The certificate program's five courses will be developed and taught by Thunderbird faculty. They are Global Leadership in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, Customer Experience and Digital Marketing in a Global World, Global Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Business, Data Analytics and Digital Transformation in a Global World, and Global Financial Accounting.

The first course will launch April 8.

Russell Poulin, an expert in online learning and executive director at the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies, a membership organization focused on practice, policy and advocacy for digital learning in higher education, said ASU's track record of success in implementing innovative educational programs can't be overlooked. But he warned that "grand plans like this one" bear careful watching.

"As for offering courses in different languages, other institutions have learned that the issue runs far beyond simply translating the text," Poulin said. "There are many flavors of Spanish. There are local idioms that are not universally used. Business concepts will have to be placed into context. Monetary units differ ... business practices differ, and so do cultural contexts. It's a big job." ■

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<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2022/01/21/thunderbird-offer-online-business-program-40-languages>

Navigating Vaccine Requirements for International Students

What foreign COVID vaccines should colleges accept? What protocols should be in place for international students who weren't able to be vaccinated at home prior to coming to campus?

By Elizabeth Redden // July 6, 2021

AstraZeneca or Moderna? Sinopharm or Sputnik?

For the [more than 500 American colleges](#) that plan to require COVID-19 vaccines for students coming to campus this fall, a major challenge will be implementing this requirement for international students who might not have access to one of the three vaccines currently authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for use in the U.S.

Some of those students may have access to a different vaccine authorized by a different national regulator in their home country, or they might not have access to a COVID-19 vaccine at all.

"It runs the gamut," said Edythe-Anne Cook, associate director for administrative services at the Student Health Center at American University in Washington, D.C. "As you can imagine, every country has their own access to vaccines, and they have their own policies and plans for how they're distributing them."

For the purposes of its COVID-19 vaccine requirement, [American is accepting](#) any COVID-19 vaccine authorized for emergency use by either the FDA -- the Moderna, Pfizer and Johnson & Johnson vaccines



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-- or any [vaccine listed for emergency use by the World Health Organization](#), a list that includes the AstraZeneca vaccine and the Sinopharm and Sinovac vaccines, both of which are made in China, among others.

A review of dozens of colleges' mandatory vaccine policies suggests that many are going the route American has taken of accepting either FDA- or WHO-authorized vaccines. This aligns with [interim guidance](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for individuals vaccinated outside the U.S., which says that people who have received all recommended doses

of a COVID-19 vaccine listed for emergency use by the World Health Organization do not need additional doses of an FDA-authorized vaccine. By contrast, those who have been vaccinated with a vaccine that is not authorized by the FDA or WHO "may be offered a complete FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccine series" assuming a minimum of 28 days has passed since their last dose of a different vaccine.

According to the CDC, only people who have received all recommended doses of an FDA- or WHO-listed vaccine should be considered fully vaccinated for purposes of public health guidance.

Navigating Vaccine Requirements for International Students (cont.)

Gerri Taylor, co-chair of the American College Health Association's COVID-19 task force, said colleges already have a track record of accepting international versions of vaccines for more long-standing vaccine requirements, such as those for preventing meningitis, measles, mumps and rubella.

"Each college has to make their own decision, and the WHO is a good standard, as is the CDC," said Taylor. "If we follow what they're recommending, I think schools will be in good shape."

Not all vaccines available internationally are currently recommended for emergency use by the WHO: among the notable vaccines not listed by the WHO currently are Covaxin, which is available in India, and Sputnik V, which is available in Russia. Many colleges have plans in place to help students who are unable to be vaccinated with WHO- or FDA-approved vaccines prior to coming to campus get vaccinated after arrival.

But that raises the question of what special precautions students might need to take in the weeks until they are fully vaccinated: [according to the CDC](#), a person is considered fully vaccinated two weeks after a single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine or two weeks after a second dose of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine. Taylor, of the American College Health Association, said colleges with COVID vaccination requirements are struggling with how to house students who arrive on campus without being fully vaccinated for whatever reason.

"This is not just an international



It runs the gamut. As you can imagine, every country has their own access to vaccines, and they have their own policies and plans for how they're distributing them.



issue; it's all students," Taylor said. "Do you house somebody who's vaccinated with somebody who's not vaccinated? ACHA is in discussions right now trying to make a decision" about what to recommend in this regard.

Colleges are taking different approaches.

Whitman College, in Washington, [posted guidance](#) last week saying that students "who are unable to obtain a COVID vaccination in their community before coming to campus will be given quarantine housing, assuming that they agree to work with the college to be vaccinated as soon as possible."

A Whitman spokesman said decisions about whether these students could attend in-person classes would be made on an individual basis. "We are working to bring students in this situation to campus early enough for them to be fully vaccinated by the start of the semester," he said. "For those who are not able to be on campus that early, we will work closely with them and their professors to find individual

solutions that do not put our students, faculty and staff at additional risk."

Cook, the student health center administrator at American, said the university will let international students who have not yet been vaccinated with an approved vaccine move into residence halls and attend in-person classes, but they will have to wear face masks and participate in surveillance testing. They will also be subject to any city health department requirements related to COVID testing and restriction of activities upon arrival. She said these students will be able to attend in-person classes while they get vaccinated.

"We know that there will be some members of our campus community who aren't vaccinated right away, but we're confident that they'll agree to continue to follow the health and safety guidelines to keep everyone safe," Cook said.

Boston University plans to accept any COVID-19 vaccine, including those without WHO or FDA authorization or approval. But the uni-

Navigating Vaccine Requirements for International Students (cont.)

versity notes on [its website](#) “that while BU will accept all vaccines, current Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidance exempts only fully-vaccinated individuals who have received a WHO/FDA-authorized or approved vaccine from having to quarantine after travel or close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19. If this remains the case in the fall, students who arrive on campus with a vaccine from another country may still be subject to close contact quarantine, travel quarantine, or other requirements set by the Commonwealth [of Massachusetts].”

David Hamer, professor of global health and medicine at the BU School of Public Health and BU School of Medicine, cited a few reasons why BU decided to accept all COVID-19 vaccines for the purposes of its institutional vaccination requirement.

“One is we’re worried about what students will have access to,” he said. “If we do not accept certain vaccines, then when they arrive, they would have to be basically in quarantine and not able to attend class until they’ve been fully vaccinated, and that could take three or four weeks. That means those students might be at risk for not being able to start their semester on time unless they came early, and then there could be added costs if that would be the case.”

“The other reason is we just don’t

know enough yet about mixing different vaccines,” Hamer said. “We don’t want to force people to have a second vaccine when we don’t know how a series would be in terms of reactions.”

Some smaller colleges are considering each international student’s situation individually. This is the case for Albion College in Michigan, which expects to enroll about 30 international students this fall, according to Matt Arend, the college’s COVID-19 coordinator and associate dean for wellness and director of athletics.

“We are truly evaluating on a case-by-case basis,” he said. “We’re working with our local health department in trying to assess the different vaccines that are out there.”

Sudhanshu Kaushik, executive director of the North American Association of Indian Students, urged colleges to have “a little bit more empathy and a lot more context in terms of understanding” what their vaccine requirements mean for international students.

“Just putting it on them and saying you have to get this vaccine or you won’t be allowed to enter on campus or attend in-person classes” is inappropriate, he argued, noting that this comes after nearly a year and a half of many international students paying tuition to take their classes remotely.

Cheryl Matherly, vice president and

vice provost for international affairs at Lehigh University in Pennsylvania, said questions about Lehigh’s vaccination requirement are “hands down the biggest set of questions we’re getting” from international students.

She said Lehigh officials are fielding questions from students in India, for example, who can get one dose of a COVID vaccine before they travel to the U.S. but not a second, and are questioning whether they should get that first dose. University officials are also getting many questions from students about quarantine and what that means: students who are not vaccinated with a FDA- or WHO-approved vaccine will need to arrive on campus seven days prior to the Aug. 15 orientation to quarantine.

Added to that, Matherly said students from many countries are finding it difficult to find flights to the U.S. at affordable prices.

“We have people trying to balance time to quarantine with availability of flights,” she said.

“Each individual piece has to line up to make it possible for the student to get here, and it’s requiring that we be extraordinarily flexible with students on everything from arrival dates to housing to how we’re going to handle orientation to even the start of classes,” Matherly said. “At the end of the day, it’s requiring that as an institution we be consummately flexible.” ■

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<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2021/07/06/colleges-requiring-covid-vaccines-consider-how-enforce-these-requirements>

'Studying Abroad, Speaking Out'

Report on speech policies for students studying abroad speaks to tensions in balancing student rights and student safety overseas.

By [Elizabeth Redden](#) // October 12, 2021

A new report analyzing college policies on speech and political participation by students studying abroad found that colleges often have difficulty balancing students' rights and student safety.

The [report by the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education](#) speaks to the tensions colleges must navigate when they send students overseas, including to countries where speech rights are far more limited than in the United States. FIRE, which works against restrictive speech codes, acknowledges that universities "are in a delicate position" when trying to balance free speech against safety, but it warns against the adoption of vague prohibitions on student speech or political expression.

"University policies on speech in study abroad programs should make clear that students are bound by their destination country's legal systems, that they may be required to leave the program and country if legal concerns or serious threats of violence are posed in response to their expression, and that administrators may be unable to provide aid in certain situations," the report argues. "The policies should make clear what expression has the potential to violate foreign laws or customs or partner institution policies and what speech-related consequences students can expect

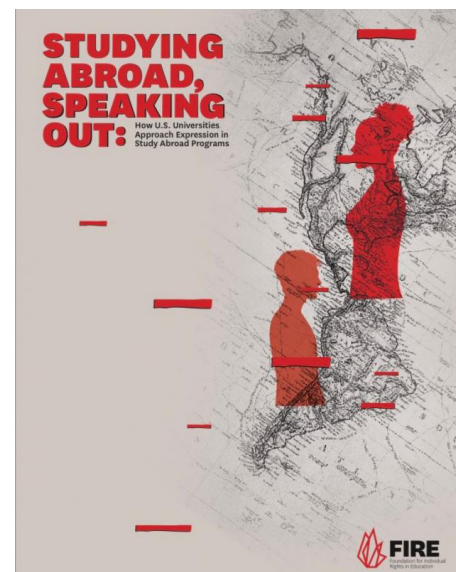
from state officials, immigration authorities, and partner university administrators. But universities should not develop vague policies that create additional confusion among students and the potential for self-censorship and administrative abuse."

The report, which is titled "Studying Abroad, Speaking Out: How U.S. Universities Approach Expression in Study Abroad Programs," contends that local context matters.

"Students traveling to France, for instance, should not be given the same warnings about expressive activity as students traveling to China," it states.

"The main takeaways should be that universities should be doing a little more of the heavy lifting to make sure their students understand what speech issues abroad mean for them specifically," said Sarah McLaughlin, director of targeted advocacy for FIRE and author of the report. "The other side of that is universities need to be very careful to understand the role they play, where they need to be warning students and they need to be teaching them, but they don't necessarily need to be adopting oppressive speech codes of their own just because they're sending students to countries with those codes."

FIRE's report is based on an anal-



ysis of 100 universities' written policies on student conduct during study abroad. The survey found that 39 of those universities have publicly available warnings against engaging in speech overseas, including warnings against attending protests or demonstrations or posting political views on social media.

According to the report, these warnings generally advise students of the risks of engaging in certain expressive activities while abroad "but do not have clear university disciplinary action associated with them."

FIRE's survey found that 18 universities, including some public universities, "went further and crafted policies that confusingly incorporate foreign laws into university conduct policies or govern what students

'Studying Abroad, Speaking Out' (cont.)

can say abroad, raising questions about what an American university's role is in handling student expression overseas."

The report notes, for example, that Georgetown University's [conditions for participation](#) in study abroad programs state that attendance at rallies or "participation in political activities" put students at risk of potential dismissal from the program.

"Political activities' is an incredibly broad phrase," the report argues. "Would wearing a pro-LGBT pride pin count as a political activity? Would writing an op-ed discussing foreign policy count? What about a student's tweet criticizing their host country's president? It's not clear from Georgetown's policy, meaning that students taking part in the university's study abroad program may reasonably conclude that they should self-censor potentially political speech rather than risk dismissal from their program."

McLaughlin said she was particularly troubled by the broad language included in the University of California Education Abroad Program's [Student Conduct and Discipline Policy](#), which outlines actions that "in the judgment of UCEAP officials, jeopardize a student's welfare [or] that of fellow students." Such listed actions include: "violation of the laws of the country or host institution," "open abuse of the customs and mores of the community," and "inappropriate, disrespectful, rude, or aggressive communication or actions toward others, and uncivil behavior or communication."

Media relations representatives for Georgetown and the University of California president's office did not respond to several requests for comment.

Melissa Torres, president and CEO of the Forum on Education Abroad, an association for study abroad professionals, observed that FIRE's report "only analyzed policies and did not include discussion with the people in charge of creating or implementing those policies."

"A single study of this kind can't capture the full picture of how students on education abroad programs are prepared by their campus study abroad office and on-site resident directors to exercise their rights safely while abroad," Torres said via email. "In general, students have many more points of contact with staff and faculty involved in the preparation and delivery of EA [education abroad] programs in the U.S. and on-site in which rules like the ones FIRE have identified in the policies they've studied can be contextualized, explained, and explored in more depth, particularly when students are headed to places that are known to be especially stringent or related to particular issues (e.g. religious freedoms, anti-LBGTQ laws, etc.)."

"International law and risk management are complex and best practice in our field dictates that institutions should be referring to multiple sources to inform their risk management decisions," Torres said. "Unfortunately, this sometimes means that being transparent with students and their families can't

be accomplished in a single sentence or with a reference to a single source of external information. There should be a certain level of maturity and responsibility expected of students who participate in all types of programs sponsored by their college or university, including study abroad."

Andrea Bordeau, president of Pulse: International Health and Safety Professionals in Higher Education and director of global safety and security at Vanderbilt University, said, "There's a delicate balance as a student traveler -- when you are going to another country, you are essentially agreeing to abide by local laws and customs. For universities, for a long time the mission has been to say to students, 'Do you know what that means; are you comfortable with that?' ... Our duty of care is such that we will guide students on how any decision they make may affect their risk profile."

Bordeau said that one reason colleges might have more restrictive policies is because some are more limited than others in the resources they have to advise students on specific country circumstances or to assist them in case of an emergency.

"That's something for universities to balance in a way with the amount of resources they have and what they can provide," she said. "I think some will only ever be able to point students to do their own research and prepare themselves, and others will have much more of an ability to tailor their guidance individually and help best prepare." ■

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<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2021/10/12/report-focuses-speech-codes-students-studying-abroad>

Study Abroad Programs Resume After Pandemic Hiatus

Some students who lost out on studying abroad because of the pandemic are turning to alternative programs. Others are going abroad their senior year, a little later than intended.

By [Maria Carrasco](#) // January 20, 2022

Andrea Boe had always planned to study abroad as part of her college experience. During her sophomore year at Tufts University, she began looking at programs in Spain for the following year.

Then, in March 2020, the coronavirus pandemic hit. Classes went remote, and many students who were already studying abroad came home early.

By the time Boe started her junior year in fall 2020, she realized her plan was doomed: Tufts canceled its study abroad programs for spring 2021 due to COVID-19.

“Studying abroad was the No. 1 thing I wanted to do in college my whole life,” said Boe, now a senior. “My older sister studied abroad in Prague when she was in college, and I watched her do all of that. And so I think it was devastating. And even now, I’ll think about it, and it can make me very sad.”

Unwilling to abandon her dream of spending time abroad, Boe turned to [Workaway](#), a platform that allows users to arrange homestays abroad in exchange for work, such as teaching children English or helping a host renovate their home. But rather than give up part of her senior year to go abroad, Boe said she plans to travel to Spain for



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Many students who lost out on the study abroad experience last year because of COVID-19 are finding ways to make it happen this year.

three months this summer after she graduates.

“Having a program that would allow me to be placed with people who could be a home base for me and give me guidance on the area is appealing to me,” Boe said. “And part of my desire to go abroad was to get really good at Spanish and use it. If I was just traveling around, I feel like I’d be spending less time in a specific place. This program gives me the ability to stay for however long I want.”

Many students who lost out on the

study abroad experience last year because of COVID-19 are finding ways to make it happen this year. Some, like Boe, are creating their own trips on their own time; others have simply delayed their study abroad programs a year. Either way, many study abroad programs are back on track, though their overall numbers are still down.

According to [data released](#) by the U.S. Department of State and the Institute of International Education in November, 162,633 American students [studied abroad](#) for academic credit during the 2019–20

Study Abroad Programs Resume After Pandemic Hiatus (cont.)

academic year, which includes summer 2020. That's a 53 percent drop from the 2018–19 academic year, which saw 347,099 U.S. students study abroad.

Numbers for the 2020–21 academic year have not been released yet, because there is a yearlong [data lag required](#) for credit transfer to take place after students return to their home campuses. But according to the Institute of International Education's fourth [COVID-19 Snapshot Survey](#), released last June, roughly half of the 414 U.S. institutions that participated said they anticipate an increase or stabilization in study abroad numbers in the 2021–22 academic year.

For spring 2021, 43 percent of institutions canceled all study-abroad programs, 16 percent offered both in-person and online study abroad, and 15 percent maintained in-person-only study abroad. The outlook improved by summer, when only 12 percent of institutions reported canceling all study abroad programs, while 35 percent reported offering in-person study abroad and 14 percent allowed both in-person and online study abroad.

Looking ahead to spring 2022, 42 percent of institutions said that they would allow in-person study abroad, and only 2 percent vowed to cancel all programs; 43 percent hadn't yet made a decision as of June 2021. But anecdotally, at least, it appears that many programs are plowing ahead.

Europe In, India Out

COVID-19 has affected the destinations students choose, however.



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IIE's Snapshot Survey noted that for the 2021–22 academic year, the four most popular countries for study abroad were France, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom. Only five of the top 15 destinations were outside Europe—Australia, Costa Rica, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea—and fewer than 10 percent of institutions planned to send students to India, “likely due to the serious, ongoing COVID-19 outbreak,” the report speculated (the Delta variant was first detected in India in February).

Melissa Torres, president and CEO of the Forum on Education Abroad, a membership association of education abroad professionals from over 800 institutions, confirmed that the uptick in study abroad enrollment is concentrated in certain regions.

“As compared to fall 2021, many Forum members have resumed study abroad programs, although for colleges and universities, that frequently means a restricted subset of their portfolio of destinations and programs,” said Torres. “Ed

abroad organizations are generally reporting steadily increasing numbers of both applications and student mobility, particularly for programs in Western Europe.”

However, Torres said, the latest COVID-19 Omicron surge has hit institutions at a hard time, as many are struggling to decide whether or not their spring and summer programs can run. In addition to worries about the highly transmissible variant, institutions have to navigate constantly changing international visa and entry rules as well as testing and vaccine requirements.

Melanie Armstrong, assistant director of global education at Tufts University, said that based on the high number of open or pending applications to study abroad in 2022–23, which are officially due Feb. 1, students seem eager to make up for lost time.

“A fair number of them originally applied to go abroad in 2020–21 but were unable to and reapplied for this year,” Armstrong said.

Stephanie DiLeo, currently a se-

Study Abroad Programs Resume After Pandemic Hiatus (cont.)

nior at Tufts, was planning to study abroad in Seville, Spain, during her junior year, before Tufts pulled the plug on the program.

“When it got canceled, I called my mom in a panic,” DiLeo said. “And I said, ‘This is what I’ve been wanting to do since I was 15 years old.’ I was really, really frustrated with the whole situation.”

While not her initial plan, DiLeo decided to go abroad her senior year. Though the Seville program is running this semester, she opted instead to go to Madrid through the Council on International Educational Exchange because the timing worked better with her graduation schedule. The two courses she’s taking—an intercultural communication and leadership class and a photojournalism class—are not for credit, since they’re not required for her degree in international relations, but at least she’s getting her abroad experience by taking them in Madrid. The only class she’s currently receiving credit for is her senior capstone, through Tufts, which she’s completing virtually.

DiLeo said the Omicron surge made her nervous about going abroad, but she flew to Spain without any issues, arriving in Madrid Jan. 3.

“I’m so thrilled to be in any capacity abroad,” DiLeo said. “I know there’s things going on back at school, and I’m sure I’m going to miss out seeing my friends, but I keep reminding myself that I’m in Spain and this is just such a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”

Rebounding Numbers

After a big drop in students study-



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ing abroad last year, Elon University in North Carolina has seen its numbers bounce back. Nick Gozik, dean of global education, said Elon, which uses a trimester system, currently has over 900 students abroad for winter term, which runs from Jan. 4 to 27. Gozik noted more than 1,200 students applied—the highest number the university’s ever seen for its winter term.

Most of the programs filled up right away, Gozik said, leaving some students on wait lists.

“This year, we’ve seen rebounds both for fall and for spring terms—a bit lower in the fall than usual, but robust numbers,” Gozik said. “For the winter term, interest was just off the charts, [though] we will end up having fewer students because of cancellations, and a lot of that is driven by individual countries.”

The Netherlands program, for instance, was canceled after the government imposed a lockdown, Gozik said.

When the pandemic first hit in spring 2020, Elon brought back stu-

dents who were studying abroad, but the university was able to send students overseas again that fall, Gozik said. Elon’s annual Isabella Cannon Global Education Center [report](#) for 2020–21 noted that 13 undergraduates studied abroad during the fall term and 46 did so for the spring term. Study abroad programs for winter 2021 were canceled, Gozik said, but those students were offered a study abroad term in May 2021 instead, which 32 undergraduates attended.

Similarly, Middlebury College in Vermont suspended all study abroad programs during the first months of the pandemic but restarted some programs in fall 2021 in countries that permitted it, said Carlos Vélez-Blasini, dean of international programs. For the forthcoming spring 2022 semester, 311 Middlebury students are enrolled in study abroad programs—about twice as many as studied abroad last fall, but 25 or 30 percent fewer than during the pre-pandemic spring of 2019, Vélez-Blasini said.

“Some students may be more

Study Abroad Programs Resume After Pandemic Hiatus (cont.)

cautious, but that is understandable given the circumstances,” Vélez-Blasini said. “We have also heard that because the pandemic caused disruptions in students’ college experience, many decided to forgo or at least postpone study abroad to be able to have the opportunity to attend college the way they had originally intended.”

Senior Year Abroad

University of Richmond students are also beginning to venture overseas again. Most of the university’s study abroad programs restarted last fall, said Ellen Sayles, associate dean and director of education abroad, when 250 students participated. During a typical, pre-pandemic fall semester, close to 300 went abroad, Sayles said.

For the spring 2022 semester, 119 University of Richmond students are either already in their program country or preparing to go abroad soon.

“It’s a big increase for us in the spring,” Sayles said. “And I think the reason for that is because of pent-up demand. We’ve seen more seniors who are going this year, when it’s more traditionally a junior semester abroad.”

Gozik noted that a high percentage of Elon students studying abroad this winter are seniors who weren’t able to go earlier or who didn’t feel comfortable traveling. Seniors applying to study abroad got first dibs in program selection, since a lot of them missed out on the opportunity to go their junior year, he said.

“Because a number of students couldn’t go last year, and they want to make sure that they get this experience before they graduate, we’re seeing a lot of students say, ‘I really, really want to go,’” Gozik said.

Sayles noted that the latest COVID-19 surge has impacted students studying in countries that introduced new rules and regulations, like France, where the government recently implemented a vaccine pass to enter public places.

As people learn how to live with COVID-19, interest in studying abroad will likely increase, Sayles said.

“I do think we’ll see some stronger interest in the next year or two,” Sayles said. “Assuming that COVID does not get worse than it is now.” ■

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<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2022/01/20/students-venture-back-study-abroad-programs>

Far and Away

During the pandemic, people should stop asking international students “when will you go back home?” writes Gloria Paidamoyo Chikaonda.

By [Gloria Paidamoyo Chikaonda](#) // November 5, 2021

I have been studying abroad for a long time -- a decade, to be exact -- and for all of those 10 years, people have repeatedly asked variations of the question “Do you plan to go back home?” As both personal and professional commitments abroad and in my country of citizenship become more intertwined, that question has become increasingly difficult for me to answer. In fact, it’s become a trigger.

As I have been reflecting on my time as an international student, first in South Africa and now here in the United States, I have looked back, somewhat critically, if not with more than a little disillusionment. Dehumanizing visa application processes and the frustrations of navigating the convoluted international student bureaucracy have always made me feel as if my presence in my adopted countries was not because of government institutions but in spite of them.

Even more, the longer I live and study abroad, the more aware I am of the anxieties that studying abroad induces in international students from poor countries -- anxieties born of the tensions of existing between two places across the globe. Those anxieties have only been further heightened by the maze of considerations as

a result of the COVID-19 pandemic that have made travel back to one’s country of origin much more complicated.

In the present circumstances, even when faced with the horror of a losing a loved while tens of thousands of miles away from family and friends, we cannot just pack our bags and leave our country of study. And even when gripped with fear at the state of a world that is falling apart around us politically and socially, we cannot simply run to our community -- from which we can draw comfort and strength, share financial resources, or acquire mental health support.

As international students, we have to think about the implications of leaving our country of study to go back to our country of origin and possibly be locked out indefinitely. What would that mean for our livelihood and our future, and the future of those people who depend on our success? We must think about the cost of flights and, nowadays, the costs of COVID tests and quarantines, too. We must also consider the risk of catching the Delta variant or another variant -- or worse, bringing it home to our often-unvaccinated loved ones.

In the 2020 academic year, [some](#)



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[colleges and universities expected a drop of 30 percent of continuing international students](#), which -- in addition to a projected losses of new international students of up to 88 percent -- would contribute to significant revenue losses for those institutions. In January 2021, an [executive order](#) announced by the U.S. government restricted travel for returning students coming the Schengen Area, the United Kingdom (excluding overseas territories outside Europe), the Republic of Ireland, the Federative Republic of Brazil and the Republic of South Africa.

Far and Away (cont.)

Fortunately, this order has recently been updated to allow students and academics on the F-1 or J-1 visas to enter the U.S. under the National Interest Exception. But up till then, those of us students who would have liked to go home to these countries to support our families have had to think about whether, when and how we could come back to the United States during this academic year, given that many colleges and universities are now conducting their classes in person.

Global travel is complicated at the best of times, but right now, our choices as international students about where and with whom we can be while the world goes through the greatest global catastrophe of our time are constrained by circumstances in constant flux: travel restrictions, study visa regulations, university policies, academic program rules and cost, to name but a few. We are locked in a cage of indecision because of the many moving parts involved with travel home in the current times. It is a crippling kind of mental torture, endured silently because few people around us understand the problems or have the capacity to assist.

The international student experience is often paradoxical in that it offers so many opportunities in some ways yet robs us of other experiences that are the source of our humanity. We get to see the world, become educated and often have access to a standard of living much higher than what many of us would have in our home countries. But at the same time, we miss many significant events in life that give it meaning: weddings, birthdays and, increasingly now with COVID-19, deaths. That chips away at our sense of belonging to the world, and as local students around us can leave campuses easily to support their loved ones in need, we are forced to remain alone. And to be alone at such a time as this is like floating on a raft -- we are even more uprooted from what is familiar than we already would have been and literally lost at sea. It is not simply loneliness. It is the worst kind, where you are surrounded by others who have very little capacity to empathize.

It is important for noninternational fellow students, faculty members and administrators to consider the many challenges international students face that they may not

be aware of. As we continue to weather the ups and downs of this pandemic, international students need universities to continue lobbying immigration departments to be flexible with visa requirements allowing international travel and/or hybrid study. They also need international student offices to be highly responsive to student queries and to increase services that will provide mental health and emotional support targeted to international students still on campus.

Home should be a right. Everyone should have a place where they can seek refuge when the world rejects them or seek comfort while the world is at its breaking point. But going home, I have come to learn, is a privilege that many students like myself don't possess.

And so, as my 10-year anniversary as an international student passes, and when people ask, "When will you go back home?" I always take a little breath before I respond, preparing myself to explain this complex dilemma to a person who, while well-meaning, cannot fathom the trauma that that question invites. "When will I go home?" I quietly think to myself before responding that the truth is, I don't know. ■

Bio

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<https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2021/11/05/challenges-international-students-during-covid-opinion>

The Imperative to Support Muslim Students

Two decades after Sept. 11, we're still letting them down, Kevin Singer writes.

By [Kevin Singer](#) // October 13, 2021

Sadaf Jaffer recently completed two terms in Montgomery Township, N.J., serving as the first Muslim mayor in the United States. Now a postdoctoral research associate at the Institute for International and Regional Studies at Princeton University, on Sept. 11, 2001, she was a freshman at Georgetown University, where she could see the Pentagon burning from campus. "I remember just a sense of fear, certainly among the Muslim students, about not wanting to be alone around campus," she told *USA Today*.

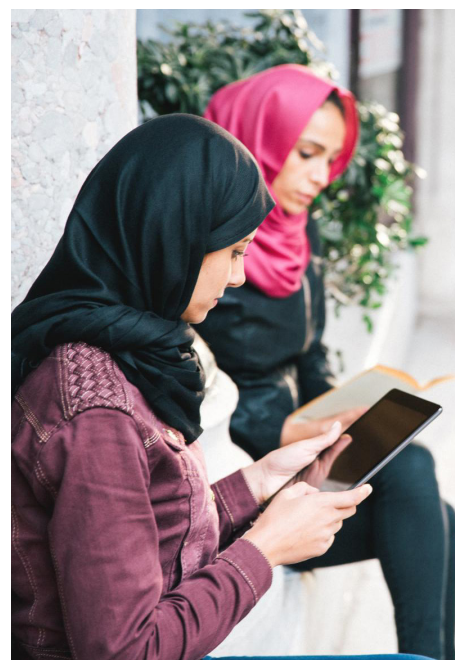
Just two years before, in 1999, Imam Yahya Hendi became the Muslim chaplain at Georgetown University -- the first full-time Muslim chaplain at any college in the United States -- where he says the "intensity and magnitude" of the job picked up after Sept. 11. "Sometimes you go home in tears," he said in 2017, when he was still guiding Georgetown students facing discrimination for being Muslim almost two decades later. "Sometimes it's been very exhausting." Muslim students, in fact, encountered a spike in [anti-Muslim sentiment](#) and [hate crimes](#) on campus during the Trump administration, as President Trump signed what would become known as the [Muslim ban](#) and attempted to [revoke F-1 visas for international students](#) taking online classes in fall 2020.

In the 20 years since the Sept. 11 attacks, which Americans memorialized just last month, strides have been made to make college campuses more inclusive to minoritized students. However, research suggests that higher education institutions have not done enough to address the distinct challenges that Muslim students continue to face. Broad efforts to promote diversity and inclusion have simply not been adequate. Intentional and focused initiatives on behalf of Muslim students are necessary to ensure they enjoy a safe and supportive campus experience.

Unsafe and Unsupported

Recent research shows that too often today the opposite is happening -- many Muslim students instead continue to feel quite unsafe on their campuses. And with good reason: between 2009 and 2017, the number of on-campus religion-based hate crimes -- mostly involving Jewish and Muslim targets -- nearly [doubled](#), according to the U.S. Department of Education.

In California alone, 40 percent of Muslim college students [reported](#) facing harassment or discrimination during the 2019-20 academic year. MSA West, a nonprofit serving 3,000 Muslim students across 30 California campuses, [discovered](#) that nearly four out of five women



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(79 percent) whom they surveyed in 2019 reported experiencing religious discrimination on campus, as did 63 percent of male participants. The survey also found that 38 percent reported experiencing abuse from peers, 15 percent from campus professors and 11 percent from campus administrators.

In a [nationwide study](#), the Interfaith Diversity Experiences and Attitudes Longitudinal Survey (IDEALS), nearly a quarter of Muslim students (23 percent) reported that faculty and staff members don't accommodate their religious holidays. Similarly, the University of Southern California's Center for Education,

The Imperative to Support Muslim Students (cont.)

Identity and Social Justice [surveyed Muslim students in 2017](#) and found that while participants reported receiving support from specific individuals on campus, most said they didn't feel that their campus or administration collectively did much to support them.

One participant of that study observed, "When it comes to policies surrounding religious accommodation, the [administration] might feel that they're all for it, but the onus is on students to make that actually happen. They aren't actively at the forefront trying to push for these types of policies." Meanwhile, as other survey respondents noted, Muslim students have felt tokenized by institutions' efforts to show them off in campus marketing to demonstrate that their campus is diverse, especially given the lack of support they perceive.

Diversity and Inclusion Are Not Enough

Muslim students shouldn't be saddled with the sole responsibility of advocating for their own safety and inclusion on campus. At the same time, administrators and faculty should not assume that diversity and inclusion programs alone will cover the distinct challenges that Muslim students face on campus. That's because many of those programs don't touch religious diversity and inclusion at all. The most recent IDEALS survey [discovered](#) that fewer than half of students across all institutional types, including just 40 percent of public university students, reported exposure to religious diversity education at orientation or other required campus events.



[M]any Muslim students instead continue to feel quite unsafe on their campuses. And with good reason: between 2009 and 2017, the number of on-campus religion-based hate crimes -- mostly involving Jewish and Muslim targets -- nearly doubled, according to the U.S. Department of Education.



And even when any campuswide efforts to recognize and celebrate religious diversity are offered, while they may be somewhat [helpful](#), they are far from enough. Researchers and experts -- many of them Muslim -- recommend developing other, more targeted, interventions to address anti-Muslim attitudes on campuses.

What might some of those interventions be? How can colleges and universities better support Muslim students and combat Islamophobia?

In 2017, the Center for Education, Identity and Social Justice hosted the [Summit on \(De\)Institutionalizing Islamophobia on College Campuses](#). More than 90 faculty, staff and students from 20 different higher education institutions and organizations attended or presented at the event.

Attendees were asked to draft a commitment to combat at least one aspect of Islamophobia at their respective institution or organization. Commitment themes included:

- Dedicating space, staff and resources to supporting Muslim students;
- Setting a campus definition and acknowledgment of Islamophobia; and
- Raising the visibility of Muslim students through data and programming.

The center has also [recommended](#) that institutions "invest and create a centralized mechanism to identify discrimination and hate directed at Muslim college students, investigate incidents of hate and discrimination, and follow through with actionable steps to address and resolve the issue."

Syracuse University, in conjunction with Muslim Student Life and Chaplain Amir Duric, began offering incoming Muslim students a "pre-welcome" [mentoring program](#) in August 2021. The program provides students with an opportunity to meet new people, receive guidance from peers, identify resources on campus and explore the campus

The Imperative to Support Muslim Students (cont.)

before classes begin. Shenandoah University hired its first [Muslim chaplain](#) in 2019 to address Muslim students' spiritual needs as well as create safe spaces where they can pray and discuss their concerns.

At Georgia Institute of Technology, biomedical engineering major Eeman Uddin was [sought out by a professor](#), who asked if she and her classmates needed a comfortable space to pray. "He offered an empty room and told us he would vouch for us if we had any unfortunate run-ins," she said, adding, "Even one teacher who recognizes me for who I am instead of solely my academic performance makes a drastic difference in the way I participate and show up in class and among my peers."

Based on my research on the topic, I also suggest that faculty and staff members should consider becoming a mentor for a Muslim student. My organization, Springtide Research Institute, recently [discovered](#) that a quarter of young Muslims say their lives lack meaning and purpose, a notably higher proportion than their Jewish (14 percent) and Christian peers (13 percent). However, even just one adult mentor -- whether it be a professor, religious leader, even employer -- can [significantly improve](#) a young Muslim's confidence that their life indeed has meaning and purpose.

Despite the [initial rush of unity](#) after Sept. 11, division and polarization now take its place in America. Part of that is manifested as a continuation

and even heightening of anti-Muslim bias. But Muslim students need and deserve the support of higher education institutions. The IDEALS survey discovered that out of all the religious and nonreligious groups in the study, Muslim students leave college the most committed to making [positive contributions](#) to society -- which includes having goodwill toward people of other beliefs and a willingness to work across differences to solve common problems.

American society needs more Muslim college graduates and should make them feel welcome and included here. Whatever investment that we in higher education can make to support their ability to flourish on our campuses will be well worth it. ■

Bio

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<https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2021/10/13/colleges-must-do-more-support-muslim-students-opinion>



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