

Culture is Good When Shared

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"My exchange program has been instrumental in my personal growth. It has taught me how to adapt, make new friends, and find comfort in unknown places. Sharing our culture with people from other countries is a wonderful experience, and it has opened a world of possibilities for exploration and self-improvement", shares Humberto Salgueiro, an international student from Brazil.

The United States boasts a diverse cultural landscape enriched by traditions, languages, and beliefs. International students contribute to American culture, further enhancing its diversity. These students come from various parts of the world and experience American culture firsthand, immersing themselves in a new and unique way of life, from eating habits to local traditions. However, this cultural exchange is

not unilateral. In addition to immersing themselves in American culture, international students aim to share their cultural backgrounds with their American peers.

Universities have the power to bring together diverse cultures. It is a place where students worldwide can meet, share knowledge, and grow together somehow. Alvernia is no exception. Over the years, the number of international students on campus has grown increasingly.

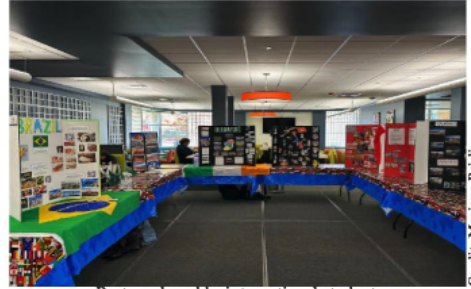
For Humberto, the experience of being around people from around the world and learning about their culture is incredible. "Every day, I can interact with people from Peru, Ireland, Puerto Rico, the United States, and Saudi Arabia. Each one offers a unique perspective on the world and life. Some things may seem unusual initially, but it is important not to judge based on upbringing. Embracing these differences

helps me understand and appreciate others better," Humberto says.

This exchange of cultures goes far beyond superficial experiences and promotes a deeper understanding and mutual respect.

International students become ambassadors for their cultures, challenging stereotypes and allowing Americans to explore the world through new perspectives. The classroom also benefits from enriching debates, in which different world views increase discussions and stimulate learning.

Zaid Alhumid, an international student from Saudi Arabia majoring in criminal justice, has been in the United States since 2018 and says that two of the things that impressed him the most at the beginning were the American lifestyle and the way they behave towards each other and that this helped him start to live his life differently too. "What is different here



Posters shared by international students

Credit: Mariana Bridi

is that people are more open-minded, unlike in my country. Here, they respect each other and talk to each other more easily than there. As time went by, this helped me be more open-minded and comfortable by explaining to people here how it is in my home country", Zaid says.

International students can observe and actively participate in their host country's customs, traditions, and beliefs. "One thing that I found fascinating here in America is how each family has their own culture and habits

because, in Saudi, the whole country should have one specific culture. I want to take this to my country and the way people behave with the other gender here in America because, back home, men and women do not often engage in open conversation with each other if they do not share a familial connection", Zaid finishes.

Within universities, cultural events become meeting points where

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diversity is celebrated and shared by international and local students. These events provide a cultural exchange, fostering a sense of unity in diversity. Alvernia is always organizing events of this type, with typical food, games, and other types of interactions, with the aim of international students not feeling alone and, simultaneously, feeling closer to home. Expect students to share typical dishes from their countries, teach traditional dances, and share knowledge.

For Kevin Davy, Assistant Director of International Student Engagement in Alvernia, international students bring benefits to local students, such as new ways of adapting and how to deal with and see new things from other points of view. "Alvernia values the presence of international students and sees it as an opportunity for our community to learn from others from around the world about how it is living in different parts of the world, how they treat each other and their cultures," Kevin says.

Studying in a foreign

country is a challenging and exciting experience, but it can also bring obstacles, from cultural adaptation to practical issues. In this context, universities ensure international students feel welcomed and supported. "As soon as we know who will join us, we try to be proactive. We try to create a fun and safe environment by doing some activities and some programs to connect international students, always trying to engage them in upcoming events on campus", Kevin finishes.

Cultural diversity between international and local students enriches the academic environment, promoting intercultural understanding. By embracing this diversity, students can expand their horizons, build meaningful friendships, and gain a deep understanding of different perspectives on the world. Culture is good when shared, especially if you can see and embrace it correctly.