

A Day in the Life of an International Student

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No matter where a student is from, they want to see the world. Studying abroad is an increasingly popular option to help young people broaden their horizons, especially after the difficulties of the early pandemic. Of course, there's the challenges and all the different experiences that international students can face while living in another country, but that is what's most interesting, as the search for knowledge in an international academic environment not only enriches education, but also offers a glimpse of what life might be like living and studying in another country.

Traveling forces people to enrich their knowledge and perspectives and leave their comfort zones. Adapting to a new people, culture, and language can be tough for students. However, there is no experience quite like studying in a new country, even if only for a semester. From classes and cultural interactions to the challenges and joys of living far from home, an international experience becomes unique in the lives of those who are willing to live it all.

Starting in Fall 2020, Alvernia has averaged at 100 international students per academic year. Nursing has seen the largest enrollment of international students, and Saudi Arabian students are the largest national group on campus. This



International Students Studying in the Library

Credit: Mariana Trevisol Bridi

semester, counting visiting study abroad students, students on religious visas, and a few other special visa categories, Alvernia has 101 international students.

Dr. John Hepler, director of multilingual success at Alvernia, says that a growing number of students are coming from Latin America, with the largest group coming from Peru and Ecuador. He also adds that Alvernia counts with a few Brazilian students, averaging 2 to 3 per year on one-semester and one-year study abroad programs. "We, as a university, and most importantly as a Franciscan community, believe the diversification of campus is a positive development for all students, faculty, and staff, for intellectual as well professional experiences," Dr. Hepler says.

The presence of international students at community college has a significant impact on everyone involved, both in academic and

cultural dimensions. The interaction between local and international students, whether in classroom or outside, brings with it a diversity of perspectives, offering not just a single worldview, but several. Not to mention that all of this becomes an opportunity for individuals of diverse backgrounds to share their thoughts, cultures and learn from each other.

David Smyth is a transfer international student from Ireland, majoring Business. For him, an international experience, and the fact of being able to exchange cultures and knowledge with other international and local students is very enriching in all aspects. "For me it's all about the experience of studying in a new place, it's very valuable to your own personal development," David says. He shares room with another international student from Peru and the apartment with other two American students. He comments that

the accommodation here and at his university in Ireland are different, but that he enjoys the experience of sharing a room and apartment with people from distinct cultures than his. "Living with new people, learning their ways, it takes a adjust. It's something new but they are nice, and I settled well." David finishes.

International experience also brings with it the process of cultural adjustment, which plays a significant role in student's adaptation. It is common, in the first few months, to face a cultural shock due to immersion in a new culture, with a new language, new values and in an environment completely different from what is usual. The adjustment period can often be difficult, slow, and challenging, but as time passes, this immersion also offers opportunities for personal enrichment and growth and to form new connections.

Humberto Salgueiro, transfer student from Brazil majoring theater, plays with the analogy that studying abroad is like a roller coaster, it has its difficulties but, in the end, it is all worth it. "In the first few weeks everything is very new and cool, then you get used to it, but you start to miss your family, your culture. The experience itself of living and studying in another country is very enriching, but you must come with an open mind and ready to embrace it all," Humberto says.

The academic part of life as an international student

is a challenging journey. As you are in a different environment and in a different culture, you wake up with new opportunities for learning and personal growth from the first day to the last. For Abigail Rojas, first-year international student from Peru majoring digital media marketing, the most challenging part of the international experience is studying in another language. "Sometimes you need to translate the words, and, in that process, you can miss some information," Abigail says. She also adds that despite the difficulty, the fact that she is studying and learning in a new language helps her to pay more attention and be more focused in class. "For me especially, in my mother language I have some problems to pay attention to the class, so the fact that I'm learning in a new language makes me focus more." Abigail finishes.

An international experience is a mixture of many feelings, opportunities, and emotions, but it is also an incredibly challenging journey that has the power to change lives. It not only broadens horizons but also gives the chance for unique personal and cultural growth. With its growing population of international students, Alvernia fulfills this role of reflecting and embracing this spirit of diversity and enrichment very well.

Mission Moment

"Learning Never Exhausts The Mind"

Leonardo da Vinci