

A GLOBAL CAMPUS EXPERIENCE

by Nathan Fuentez

Fresno State is opening the doors to an American educational experience for more international students than ever to introduce a more culturally diverse, global learning environment.

This fall, Fresno State has enrolled about 700 international students representing 65 different countries.

Sandip Roy came to the Central Valley from Kolkata, India, looking to expand his perspective. He found Fresno State's Craig School of Business.

“Like business, which is global, you want to go to college for that global exposure,” Roy says.

“You want to meet someone from another country with different experiences than you. It helps to teach you about other countries and cultures, which helps to lend a different perspective.”

Roy says it was a unique experience to be immersed into American culture.

“I've seen people form some really out-there stereotypes about other countries and people because of something they saw on TV or in a movie,” Roy says. “And having international students helps to correct these misconceptions.”

The presence of students from around the globe helps everyone on campus better understand other nations and cultures, says Paul Hofmann, Fresno State's assistant vice president for international affairs.

After experiencing American culture for the past six years, Roy says he will miss the experience when he leaves.

“I will be graduating next year, and I am happy but sad to have to leave,” Roy says. “I don't even feel like a foreigner. I feel like I grew up here because I know so many people and know the city.”



STUDYING ABROAD

International student relationships are a two-way street. A helpful community that embraces students from afar can be very reassuring.

Christopher Costello, 25, an American Fresno State alumnus who studied abroad his final semester, got a unique experience of his own.

Costello studied in Preston, Lancashire, England, and says the welcoming environment helped him get used to the differences overseas.

“The people I met in England were very respectful and helpful,” Costello says. “It definitely changed the way I view American culture and opened my eyes to different ways of thinking.”

He was amazed by the importance of punctual public transportation and how much English people relied on it. “When I was there, trains never ran more than five minutes late, something I had never really seen in America,” Costello says.

Costello agrees that studying overseas exposes students to cultures beyond what is portrayed in the media.





WHY FRESNO?

Hofmann says attending Fresno State is more affordable than some of California's other large universities.

This makes Fresno State a popular choice for international students who want to experience California while seeking degrees in subjects like business or engineering.

Students who have had good experiences at the University are more beneficial to recruiting than an advertising campaign, Hofmann says.

Fresno State had a record 300-plus new international enrollments this year.



“International students add to the diversity of thought, language and even religion at the University,” Hofmann says.

“One of our greatest strengths at Fresno State is that diversity.”

Hofmann says when he was in graduate school he, too, went abroad and studied in China.

“It was a good experience because I lived there, learned a little bit of the language and experienced a lot of the culture,” Hofmann says. “Doing so, unintentionally, prepared me to work in the field that I am in today.”

Incoming international students recognize the value of studying abroad and the community to which they are contributing, Hofmann says.

“Some Fresno State students might be unable to study abroad, so sitting next to a student from another country may be the only international experience they have,” Hofmann says. “International student numbers won’t continue to grow forever, but we need to make sure students are taking advantage of the benefits of this international community while they still can.”

— Nathan Fuentes is a mass communication and journalism student at Fresno State.

Top: Fresno State had a record 300-plus new international student enrollments this year.

Above: A rich diversity of cultural traditions are celebrated on campus each year.

Above right: Dancers perform at the Celebration of Diversity event.

Left: Student Christopher Costello was amazed by the importance of public transportation in Preston, Lancashire, England.