

The Student Affairs Diversity Council (SADC) strives to cultivate an environment that embraces and promotes the broad scope of diversity within the division.

# An International Student Perspective

*Below are the interviews of two International Students who are currently studying at the University of Utah. In this interview, the students speak of their positive experiences and challenges studying abroad. Through their stories, they hope to leave you with insights, which will help others understand the perspective of what a typical International Student experiences while studying at the University of Utah.*

**Why did you decide on the University of Utah?**

**Duonghwi:** I am LDS, but I did not want to go to BYU. I knew that the University of Utah had a good science program, so I decided to study at the U.

**Ayoung:** Honestly, I like sports. I learned that Salt Lake City had the 2002 Winter Olympic Games, so I decided to come to Utah to study.

**What is the biggest cultural difference you faced when first arriving to the U of U?**

**Duonghwi:** In my home country, people always expect you to be humble. However, here, if you accomplish something you are expected to speak about it so everyone can know about it.

**Ayoung:** When I walked around the campus, there were many strangers who I never met that said hello. I think people here are so kind. In South Korea, we don't say hello to strangers.

Also, another cultural difference is feeling isolated in class because I am the only Asian. I feel nervous to speak English

during class so I have some difficulties in making new friends.

**Q: What do you appreciate about your own culture now that you have experienced life at the University of Utah?**

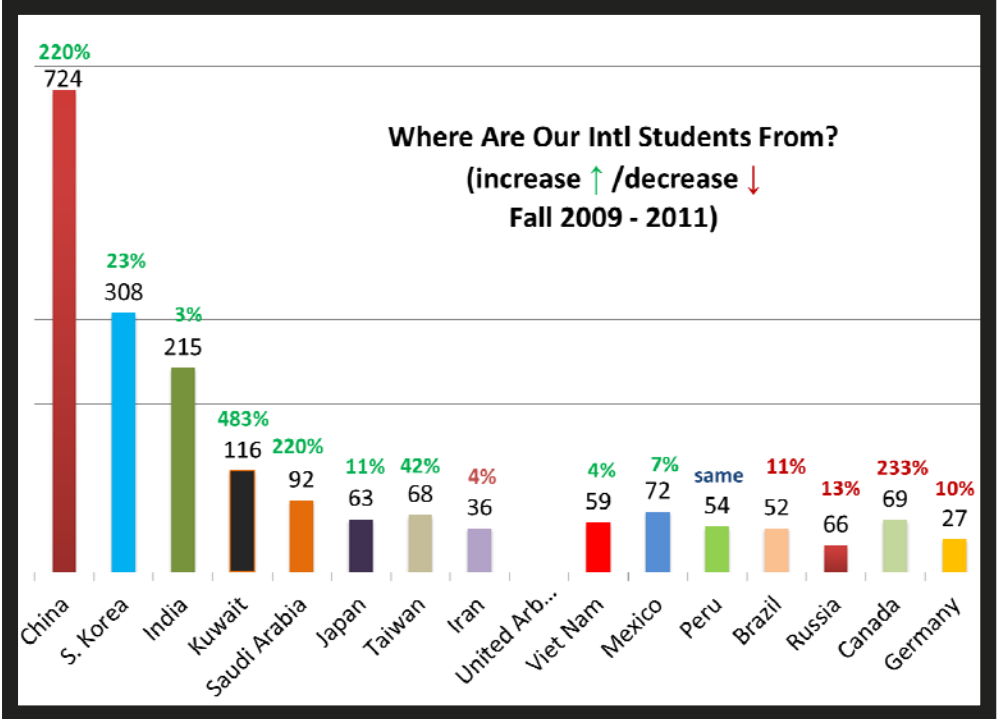
**Duonghwi:** In South Korea, everyone is very respectful of their professors and elders. In my country, we never call a professor by their first name. However, here in the U.S., it is common for students to call their professors by their first name or last name, without a title. I feel like a lot of students are not as respectful to their professors as they could be.

**Ayoung:** In Korea, many people help each other without asking. However, here in the

U.S. you must learn to ask for help. Since I have learned to ask for help, I notice that everyone is so kind and are willing to help me.

**Q: While attending the U, what struggles have you, as an International Student, been through that the average American student does not have to worry about?**

**Duonghwi:** Even though I had been here in Utah for a long time, writing was difficult—especially writing for Humanities or Social Science classes. However, when I had difficulties with writing, I would go to the Writing Center in the Marriot Library and they really helped me. Also, literature was very difficult. I don't even understand literature from my home country, let alone





## SEPTEMBER SEMINAR SERIES

### Mindfulness and Social Justice Activism

Promoting social justice and advocating equal rights can be difficult and, at times, exhausting. Activists frequently experience strong emotions and encounter periods of feeling the work is not making lasting changes. Mindfulness is a practice that offers social justice activists a way to be less reactive to others, more patient with the process, and open to noticing small present moment changes. Please join us for a panel presentation and conversation with three social justice activists who try to integrate concepts of mindfulness in their work.

Wednesday, September 19  
12:00 PM—1:30 PM  
Parlor A, Union

Presented by:  
Karen Cone-Uemura, PhD  
Jim Struve, LCSW  
Jonathan Ravarino, PhD, LCSW



English literature. For example, when I read Beowulf, I thought, “what are they talking about?” I feel that many International Students feel similarly about the difficulty of reading English literature, too.

**Ayoung:** In class, I have many difficulties and troubles. At first, it felt like the professors speak too fast and it is hard to understand everything. In South Korea, there are a lot of lecture classes. However, here we have discussion classes and we have to actively participate, which is a struggle. To overcome this struggle, I always introduce myself to the professors and the more I listen to my professors’ lectures, the easier it is to understand them.

**Q: When first arriving at the U, what was the classroom experience like?**

**Duonghwi:** During my Freshman year, all my classes were very large and it got pretty loud, so that was hard to overcome. There were many students who talked during the class so that was bothersome. I learned to sit at the very front of the class to overcome this difficulty.

**Ayoung:** The reading assignments are overwhelming for me. Maybe many American students feel like the reading assignments are not too much, but for me, I have to spend more time and sometimes one or two days reading the classroom assignments.

**Q: What helped you in making that transition to the University of Utah easier?**

**Duonghwi:** The International Center definitely helped make the transition to the University of Utah a lot easier. When I arrived, I had a lot of questions about my visa status and general questions. They were very helpful. Some professors have been very supportive. For example, Professor Owens from the College of Science—he is just an awesome guy. I remember studying really hard for my first chemistry exam in my General Chemistry course, and I did worse than my roommate who only studied two hours. I didn’t understand what happened, so I went to talk to Professor Owens and he gave me a lot of advice.



Ayoung

He not only gave me advice on how to learn Chemistry, but how to learn in life. It was very helpful and he became a mentor for me in that class. He probably does not remember me now, but he had a big impact on me.

**Ayoung:** I think there are a lot of programs for International Students. For example, the iMentor program. My mentor gives me good advice and always sends me emails. The program has good events to help international students make new friends. My friend Duonghwi who has been at the U of U, gives me good advice and tells me about volunteer opportunities.

**Q: What has been your best experience at the U of U?**

**Duonghwi:** The best experience I have had is recently getting the Myriad Scholarship through the College of Science.

**Ayoung:** I like sports and I went to the U of U football game and it was so fantastic! The big stadium with so many people was such a great experience for me!

**Q: What advice would you give to a new International Student coming to the University of Utah?**

**Duonghwi:** Keep in contact and visit the International Center office if you have any questions or if you have trouble. Also, get advising from your department. Also, get involved. I found that getting involved is really great. This year I became an International Center ambassador and it was a fun experience and it was great to get to know a lot of international students and other ambassadors. I know it is kind of hard to get involved, especially if you consider yourself a “nerd”. I feel guilty if I am not always studying, but I think time management is a skill to learn and it is good to get involved and balance both school and campus



Duonghwi

life.  
**Ayoung:** Although I have not been in Utah very long, I would tell any new International Student to be confident and push yourself to meet new people. I am shy and at first when I came here, I had difficulties making new friends. However, I have to push myself and because I have I have grown and gained confidence.

## TOP 10 TIPS TO BETTER SERVE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

**10. Help unlock the mysteries of a new culture and system.** International Students are not only dealing with the stresses of university life, but also with navigating cultural differences, homesickness, lack of familiarity with our procedures, and language barriers.

**9. Take a moment to get to know the person you're working with and show that you care about their situation.**

**8. Listen to what is being said rather than how it's being said.** In a second language vocabulary is often more limited, so what is said might not be what is meant.

**7. When referring a student to another office, write down the name of a person to ask for and specific instructions.**

**6. Negotiating is the norm in many cultures, although it isn't always appropriate in the US.**

**5. Validate the person's needs and the situation.** Let students know you care about their situation. Don't promise things you can't deliver.

**4. Remember that less-than-perfect English doesn't mean a less-than-intelligent person.** Use simple vocabulary and avoid acronyms and jargon. Adjust depending on ability.

**3. Be patient- be willing to rephrase and say things in different ways.** Have students tell you what you told them, to be sure they understand.

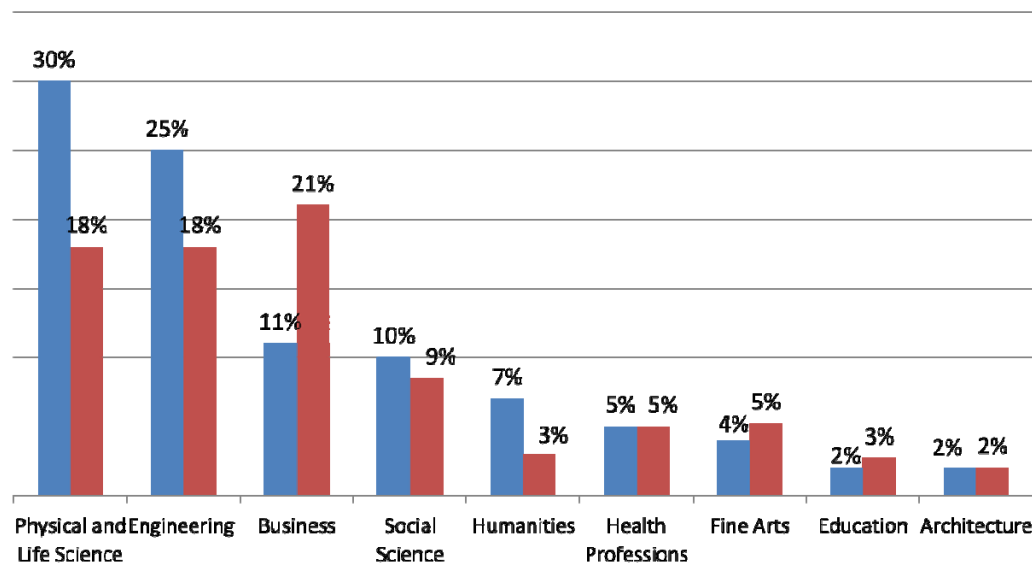
**2. Hear them: even if you think you know what's being asked.** Make sure you get ALL the information about the situation. Ask a lot of questions: students may not know where to start or what to say, so lead by asking.

**1. Don't be afraid to ask for help or to refer students.** The International Center is always willing to answer questions about interactions with international students, policies, resources available, and best practices.

## WHAT DO INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS STUDY?

■ University of Utah

■ United States



## EVENTS



- ◆ International Café  
Every Friday  
3:00-5:00 PM  
Bldg 601
- ◆ Panel Discussion:  
"40 Years of Title IX in Utah"  
Sept. 17, 12:15 PM  
Moot Court Rm,  
S.J. Quinney  
Law School
- ◆ Applications available for  
the Ambassador & iMentor  
Programs  
Sept. 24
- ◆ Pride Week:  
"Pride has no Borders"  
October 1—5, 2012
- ◆ International Student  
Social and Movie "A  
Separation"  
Fri., Nov. 16 @ 5:30P  
Post Theatre
- ◆ International Education  
Week  
Nov. 12-16th

## International Center Scholarship

The International Center at the University of Utah seeks to award five scholarships to international students who are pursuing an undergraduate degree. Each scholarship is valued at \$4,000 and will be applied as a tuition waiver of \$2,000 in fall 2012 and spring 2013. The scholarship is based on academic merit and campus and/or community engagement. Please refer students to the International Center website to download the application. <http://ic.utah.edu>



Debra Daniels, Co-chair Women's Resource Center  
Kari Ellingson, Co-chair Student Development  
Kajsa Berlin-Kaufusi, Center for Learning Abroad  
Michael Bard, Registrar's Office  
Arlyn Bradshaw, Dean of Students Office  
Karen Cone-Uemura, Counseling Center  
Branden Dalley, Union Administration  
Adrienne Howell, TRIO  
Scott Jensen, Housing & Residential Education  
Suzanne Jones, Registrar's Office

Kathryn Kay, Orientation/Leadership Development  
Jessica Schlotfeldt, International Center  
Carol MacNicholl, Center for Disability Services  
Kai Medina-Martinez, LGBT Center  
Susan Miller, Campus Recreation  
Sana Muller, ASUU  
Cynthia Powell, Student Health Center  
Erica Rojas, Financial Aid & Scholarships  
Claudia Snow, Union Administration

For more information and  
recourses, please visit:  
[sadc.utah.edu](http://sadc.utah.edu)