

*Some came from around the world to study here,  
while others moved to America and now attend Sacramento State.*

***Listening to  
Students from Around the World***

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**Listening to  
Students from Around the World...**

***“It is a pleasure to come to the United States and attend Sacramento State University.”***

—I am international student

***“It was very hard adapting until I fully learned English and got rid of my accent.... All of the faculty were so supportive of me learning English and understanding my situation as an immigrant.”***

—Arab-American male

***“I learn every semester, from all people. The language is a challenge, but it is something that I can fight, plus my teachers make me challenge and it is good for learning.***

***Teachers see me and grade me as all students and that makes me feel part of this country and classes.”***

—Nicaraguan immigrant

***“CSUS is a good place for international student for learning. Many students are very friendly and willing to help us. Even my English is poor, they still listen to me and help me.***

***I met some American friends in one fraternity...he helps me a lot during my exchange year. I’m very happy to meet him.”***

—International Student

***“A long hard adjustment to move to this country. It was worth it.”***

—moved to US 2010

***“CSUS is a good place for international students for learning. It’s a friendly campus. Local students are friendly to me when I have interviews with them.***

***The beautiful campus with many trees. It’s a good campus for studying.”***

—international student

***“It’s a challenge because I have no family members whom I can count on when it comes to college education. Also, because of my language barrier & because I’m the first person in my family to go to college. Not an easy experience. It’s difficult.”***

—Mexican born & raised, 23 years old, first generation student who attends college in my entire family. Move to the US 10 years ago.

***“It was difficult to be a bilingual student, because of the limited language sometime I feel left out from others at first. But now I feel better because I kind of getting familia with the school, professors, and friends.***

***When I first step in the...class, I feel that im the only student with the Vietnamese accent, I was scared that my classmate will ignore me and think that im a weird. However they was nice to me instead”***

—I come from a family without knowing any English, we came to America five years ago from Vietnam. A 13<sup>th</sup> year old girl knowing 0 english come to school with all different kind of people in the world. It wasn't easy at all, however, for a better education

***“Born in Michoacan, Mexico and arriving into a new culture was not easy because everything was different (language, culture, traditions, school, and the environment) adjusting was not easy.”***

—undocumented student

***“I feel that the campus is very diverse but being from South America, I have a harder time identifying with Latinx b/c I'm not chicana.”***

—Latina (F) age 23, 1<sup>st</sup> to graduate

***“I like studying here. I like to learn the culture.”***

—International Student

***“I...speak at least two language, and study abroad.***

***Most people in the U.S. are very nice to foreign people, but it's a little bit hard for us (international students) to get involve in the American students' circle.”***

—International Student

***“Nice experience, exploring something new overseas. Interesting to see your perspective in the U.S. Sometimes I feel a lot older than students here, everyone is younger doing education than Swedish students. But in general a great experience!***

***Everything has been fun and exciting. Only challenge would be the second language English that I'm not used to. Everyone is nice and welcoming, interested in me as a foreign student.***

***I feel that my classes are not challenging at all, sometimes a little too easy from what I'm used to in Sweden. That's probably because all my classes are undergraduate.”***

—girl, 23, exchange student from Sweden

***“Some of the challenges I have faced here at CSUS are language, and the fact that I am the first one in my family to go to college. The language has been a difficulty because I don’t understand it very well and also because when it comes to speak it I don’t speak it well enough. It makes harder my communication with professors and classmates.***

***Sometimes I feel lost in my classes because while I am confused, everyone else seems very comfortable with the topics.”***

—Latino, 19 years old, that came to the U.S. without knowing any English

***“My family came from Europe 6 years ago. Learning American culture was hard and exciting.***

***I like this college.”***

—22

***“It’s okay, just a new student trying to graduate.”***

—Central American, 20 age

***“It is a privilege to be in this country to study and learn more about the United States. The experience and memories I will keep for a life time”***

—international student

***“It is very diverse here at CSUS.”***

—from another country

***“It feels good that this was the only college I applied to and got an early admission***

***I like that it has a good program and flexible schedule.”***

—an immigrant from Europe

***“Sacramento State is a good university. I am proud to come here.”***

—South American

***“It is a great experience.... I like the green campus and the programs that are offered. EX: PARC, English Lab.***

***I like that most of my classes were small. It makes learning easier. I did not like that one of my classes was really big and long. That made it difficult to learn because one teacher could not address the needs of so many students.”***

—New to college, first generation, low income family, female 18 years old. Moved to US in 2004 Trilingual (Russian/Ukrainian/English).

***“To be only 18 years old and an international student at the same time it is hard. For me it is hard because most of the stuff that the professor expect me to know what it is or how to do it, when in fact I know nothing about it. But at the same time every time I would go to the professor and explain to them my situation they always help me.***

***I didn’t know that you can’t copy from online website, but when I talked to the professor in private she explained to me and gave me another chance to make up the assignment.***

***It is a great school. I like how they build the ‘well.’ It is my favorite place on campus.”***

—No student specifics given, other than what is stated above

***“Not a lot of people know where Kazakhstan is or that it is a real country. Being 19 people ask if I remember being in Kazakhstan.”***

—Kazakh age 19 female

***“Being from a different country & speaking different languages has helped me see things differently, I believe. And coming from that perspective, I often see American practices that shock me & would shock Americans if they weren’t so used to it.”***

—Ukrainian, female, 21, straight, I don’t like to label my challenges for it makes me feel like I can’t overcome them!

***“I am a young lady who came from Europe 6 years ago. I am my parent’s dream. They wish for me a better life and good education. I do not forget this, each day I work hard.”***

—20

***“America is as expected. At times is less, mostly it is more, much more.”***

—moved to states 2009 with family

***“People are nice and friendly. I enjoy my studies here. I will be sad to leave and happy to return to my home.”***

—International student

***“It is very typical. I was very well taken care of and all of the information that I could possible take in I did. I did not have many challenges because of a very supportive family and Financial aid. Without it I would never be able to be here.***

***CSUS has been a dream-come-true for me. Being able to study at a University, not having to leave my family and get financial aid as well as emotional support from the University has been rewarding”***

—a female immigrant from Eastern Europe, low income, 18 years old and a first university student as well as a first generation in USA.

## Students Who Have Come from Around the World

The Sacramento State student body consists of students from 120 plus nations around the world.

Many move from other countries to start new lives in California, a state with the highest number of immigrants, and now attend Sacramento State to achieve their higher education.

Some came to study in California, a state with one of the largest number of international students, and are a part of the International Student Program here at the university.

Students who come from countries around the world bring valuable global perspective, enriching classroom discussion, enhancing campus climate, and helping to increase the cultural awareness and competency of all. We gain so much from their presence at Sacramento State, but may not always fully realize the struggles they may encounter in studying here.

### The Pressures They May Face

Whether immigrant or studying abroad, students here from other countries...

- May experience culture shock—a different country, a different home, a different school. Change can be exciting, but the unknown can also be very stressful. This can sometimes be overwhelming.
- May feel homesickness—missing terribly their family and friends back home. The loss of close proximity to favorite people and familiar surroundings, foods, and activities can be devastating. This can sometimes result in very real anxiety, depression, or loneliness, which, in turn, can take a toll on physical health in so many ways.
- Tend to experience language barriers—difficulties in trying to express themselves clearly and understand others accurately in the classroom, out on campus, and in the larger community. This can sometimes cause worry, embarrassment, confusion, misunderstanding, and mistakes for the student.
- Often come with different expectations regarding instruction than what they find here—may have experienced very different teaching styles, assignments, and classroom norms in their homeland. This can sometimes cause confusion or misperception regarding the role of the student and/or the instructor in education.
- Tend to lack “cultural capital”—knowledge of the general cultural expressions, customs, and practices that the other students and their instructors talk about and are seen in campus life. This can sometimes result in the student feeling lost, left behind, or excluded in conversation or in class.
- May run into bias or discrimination regarding immigration status or language proficiency in the community or on campus.

## International Students

While some students moved from other countries to live in the United States, others are here temporarily as students with the campus International Programs and Global Engagement (IPGE).

In past years, Sacramento State has been home to international students and research scholars from close to 60 different countries around the world, according to the IPGE. The Office of Institutional Research, Effectiveness, and Planning reported that there were over 1,000 International Students attending Sacramento State in the Spring 2017 semester.

### The Additional Pressures They May Face

International students may experience any of the stressors common to students coming from another country, including culture shock, homesickness, language barriers, and more, described in the page prior.

International students also typically face academic pressure to succeed and potential financial concerns.

- They tend to have higher GPAs; good grades are important to them. And, remember, they are striving to excel academically while potentially experiencing any or all of the factors listed above.
- They may really be worrying about money and need to work, given the expense of their education here: According to the IPGE, total estimated costs for one academic year for Fall 2018 total \$30,300 for tuition and fees, room and board, and miscellaneous costs. However, immigration rules don't allow off-campus employment in the first year and make it difficult to get a permit in the time thereafter, too. This means that they may be struggling financially if they haven't found employment at the university. If they are able to find a job on campus, then they're working to make ends meet on top of everything else.

International students may experience a number of different challenges in their education here, and those in need may be referred to the IPGE Office, which can support and assist international students in so many ways.

#### International Student and Scholar Services (International Programs and Global Engagement)—

Provides a wide range of services to newly admitted and continuing international (F-1 and J-1 visa) students and visiting scholars, including orientation, cultural and social events that allow students to share their national heritage and get involved, immigration and cultural adjustment advising, tax preparation assistance, and information for on- and off-campus resources.

Location: Library 1001

Phone: (916) 278-6686

[International Student and Scholar Services Website](https://www.csus.edu/international-programs-global-engagement/international-student-scholar-services/) <https://www.csus.edu/international-programs-global-engagement/international-student-scholar-services/>

## Immigrant Students

The immigrant population stands at more than 42 million people, a little over 13% of the total number of people in the nation, according to the Migration Policy Institute. California is the state with the largest number of immigrants (10.5 million) and share of immigrants of the total state population (27%). The challenges are many for all immigrants, depending on how long they have been in the country, and especially those who are undocumented.

### Coming Here

They come from different places around the world, and they may have been brought here as babies, small children, or teens. The reasons for coming are many, including the need to escape poverty, political oppression, or other life-threatening situations in their country of origin, the desire for a more stable and better life, or to unite with family members already living in the U.S. Depending on if and what they remember, there may be different emotions in recalling their past life or the journey coming over into this country, including sadness or trauma.

### Being an Immigrant

Once they're here, immigrants face the tremendous challenges of a new home and new people, places, norms, and customs. There will likely be culture shock, language barriers, acculturation pressures, and encounters with prejudice or stigma. Parents may find it hard to obtain work, resulting in hardship of housing and living conditions, and children might find their new school difficult, in terms of learning and interactions with their American classmates. In some cases, children may be without parents, siblings, or other family members who were left behind or sent back, and missing terribly these loved ones. Such stressors may make family life harder in the struggle to acclimate, and all of this, too, may be experienced and remembered as a time of real upheaval, upset, and ordeal.

### Being Undocumented

Undocumented immigration status can greatly impact one's sense of self, making one feel sidelined, invisible, ostracized, stigmatized, "other than," "less than." You feel the significant and multiple limitations on you of freedom, rights, and opportunities that others have, so many doors shut to you, paths blocked, options limited. You feel the uncertainty of how to obtain work, get into college, find help, and of what the future holds for you and your family. And you may feel guilt, self-blame, shame, anger, isolation, helplessness, hopelessness, anxiety, dread, depression, and constant fear that you or someone you love will be caught, detained, or deported. Students who are undocumented or those with family members who are may be referred to:

#### Dreamer Resource Center (DRC)—

Helps undocumented students and students with mixed-status families to overcome challenges that get in the way of academic, personal, and professional excellence.

Services include financial and academic guidance, support, events, a free legal Immigration Clinic, a Dream Connections support group, the Dream Leader Internship Program, DRC Student Emergency Grant, a Dreamer Experience Seminar to help students navigate college life as an undocumented student, and more.

Location: River Front Center 1022

Phone: (916) 278-7241

[DRC Website](https://www.csus.edu/student-affairs/centers-programs/dreamer-resource-center/) <https://www.csus.edu/student-affairs/centers-programs/dreamer-resource-center/>

### What We Can Do

Be aware that there may be key differences between the student's country of origin or family's cultural background and the United States in terms of the following:

*Manner of speaking:* In some cultures, people have a more indirect style of speaking than the more direct style of Americans. This might be shown in a more roundabout manner of making a request, tentatively expressed opinion, or subtle way of indicating “no,” all of which might be missed or misinterpreted by people accustomed to the more direct style of “speaking plainly” and “direct talk.” Some cultures may also be more formal in speaking, while others are informal, and there may be varying levels of comfort with different topics (e.g., romance and sex, politics, religion, and certain historical events or cultural customs). Vocal characteristics, too, may differ, such as rate, volume, and degree of expressiveness.

*Use of nonverbal communication:* Just as there are differences in language, so, too, are there differences in “body language” norms across cultures. Some cultures see sustained and direct eye contact as a sign of honesty, respect, and attentiveness, while other cultures would view this type of eye contact as inappropriate, rude, disrespectful, threatening, or offensive. There are also likely to be other cultural differences, including the use of gestures, amount of smiling, and meaning of facial expressions.

*Display of emotion:* Members of some cultures readily express feelings such as happiness, sorrow, anger, or fear, while other cultures discourage the open expression of emotion.

*View of silence:* While Americans typically place a premium on talk, other cultures may value silence and devalue speaking. Quietness may be variously viewed as a sign of self-modesty, respect for the other while listening, due consideration of what was said before responding, reflection on a topic before speaking, deliberation before acting, and connection with others on a deeper level than talk can achieve.

*Need for space:* Different cultures expect a certain amount of space to be maintained between people in interaction, and this may be much more or much less than what Americans typically prefer.

*View of time:* Being “on time” is a norm for some cultures, where folks are expected to be punctual and stick to schedules and deadlines. In other cultures, time is conceptualized as much more fluid, and acceptable arrival time and adherence to due dates may be a span of hours or more after the specified time, because sometimes the people or relationships of the circumstances of the day may be more important than going to or doing something on time.

*View of leadership:* Different cultures have different needs for leadership style, ranging from authoritative (directive) to more democratic (participatory) styles. Along with that, people from some cultures believe that leaders should be followed without question while members of other cultures believe that one may question the leader and provide input on issues or decisions regardless of status differences.

There are many more differences between national cultures than listed here, and, it should also be said, with the many co-cultures within this nation, too.

### In Conversation or Class

Understand that in some cultures, a student would never ask even a routine question in class of a faculty member (in the student's culture, it would be seen as possibly casting aspersions on teaching ability or expertise) or make a request to a staff member (it might be seen as inappropriate to position). This may put the onus upon us, faculty and staff, to take the extra step to check that the student understands what we are saying or has what they need. It would also be helpful to let the students know that asking questions is important, and all questions are sincerely welcome.

Be careful about referring to pop culture or cultural customs that students from other countries might not be familiar with or understand. Offering a quick explanation when you do use cultural references or others in the conversation use them can be helpful in such cases.

Be aware that American students might disclose more or broach topics that in some students' culture would be considered inappropriate or taboo. This may impact a student's comfort level with the discussion and/or with their peers.

Keep in mind that many cultures vary in their degree of comfort with competition and conflict. While competition is the norm in the U.S., other cultures may value more cooperation and compromise. This can make assertiveness, difference of opinion, and contests especially hard for the student. Debates in conversation or the classroom may also be harder for some students from a culture where conflict is avoided. Americans often express differing viewpoints and arguments openly, but people from other cultures may approach dissent and conflict very subtly or try to avoid it all together. Then, too, of a students has doubts or disagreement with faculty or staff, they may express this very indirectly or not at all to preserve harmony, which can result in the student's needs and concerns left unaddressed.

### In Class Discussion or Group Work

Be aware that students from some cultures might not understand or appreciate the value of classroom discussion or group work to learning (in contrast to the instructor lecturing), and it might be up to you to facilitate that realization. A simple statement might be helpful in explaining the well-documented benefits of student talk in terms of such things as deeper engagement with the material, more active learning, and greater exposure to different perspectives on the topic at hand.

Understand that some students might not be comfortable participating in class or group discussions. A multilingual student may be hesitant to contribute because they feel a little shaky in their English speaking and/or comprehension skills. Then, too, cultural differences may be at play. If you are from a culture where you were taught that one shouldn't assert oneself, then attempting to seize the conversational floor might be very difficult. If you are from a culture where silence or listening is valued, then speaking up may be hard, especially in a more public forum. Explicitly encouraging students to contribute and reminding everyone that a multiplicity of perspectives is valuable may make things easier in this regard, as would facilitating a class discussion or setting up group discussion protocols where all students are given opportunity and permission to contribute. Online group discussion may also be a nice option.

## With Written Work

Be aware when reading written work that cultural differences also impact writing norms. American students are taught to be direct in thesis, opinion, and argument, and to make their points clear to the reader. Other cultures may instruct students quite differently (e.g., put your thesis at the end after you have built up to it, make an implicit case in order to let others decide for themselves, let the reader take responsibility for clear understanding). Additionally, some cultures may not have the same rules for source attribution and citation, or emphasis placed on understanding exactly what plagiarism and copying of material are and how to prevent this.

Keep in mind that for some students, critical thinking may be unfamiliar or run counter to their cultural norms. In some countries, students are used to summarization or memorization of information, but not evaluation of it, making this an entirely new mindset and skill to develop. If you are from a culture where you were taught not to question authority or step out of position, critical analysis of the instructor's points, course readings, and the like in assignments may also be difficult.

Remember, too, multilingual students may also have problems with vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, spelling, clarity, or use of support and sources. If you aren't aware that the student is multilingual (not all will have a discernable accent), then you might receive a poorly constructed paper and assume that the work is a last-minute effort when, in fact, the student put in a considerable amount of time into the work but is struggling with English writing, which takes longer to master than speaking it.

## For Students Struggling Academically

Any student at any time might find coursework hard, but these students may encounter even greater difficulties due to cultural differences or language difficulties. The academic resources below offer academic help for all students in their coursework, as well as students who are multilingual.

### Peer and Academic Resource Center Workshops and Individual Tutors (WIT) —

Offers tutoring to students, including multilingual students, to help with assignments and homework in their classes. Students may go online, call, or come by for further information, availability hours, and appointments.

Location: Lassen Hall 2200

Phone: (916) 278-6010

[Peer Advising & Tutoring Website](https://www.csus.edu/student-affairs/centers-programs/peer-academic-resource/peer-advising-tutoring.html) <https://www.csus.edu/student-affairs/centers-programs/peer-academic-resource/peer-advising-tutoring.html>

### University Reading and Writing Center (URWC) —

Provides encouraging one-on-one peer tutoring for students, including multilingual students wanting help with reading and writing at any point in the process, including planning, organizing, developing, and revising a paper to understanding difficult texts. Students are welcome to come in with reading and writing assignments for any course in any academic discipline and learn how to become a more confident writer or reader.

Location: Calaveras Hall 128

Phone: (916) 278-6356

[URWC Website](https://www.csus.edu/undergraduate-studies/writing-program/reading-writing-center.html) <https://www.csus.edu/undergraduate-studies/writing-program/reading-writing-center.html>

### Smarthinking—

Provides online tutoring that enables students to get the help they need 24-hours a day, seven days a week, in many subject areas, one of which is English for Speakers of Other Languages, to help students to strengthen their English skills. A tutorial for how to access and use this online tutoring service is there on the website.

[Smarthinking \(PDF\)](https://www.csus.edu/student-affairs/centers-programs/degrees-project/_internal/_documents/degrees-smarthinking.pdf) [https://www.csus.edu/student-affairs/centers-programs/degrees-project/\\_internal/\\_documents/degrees-smarthinking.pdf](https://www.csus.edu/student-affairs/centers-programs/degrees-project/_internal/_documents/degrees-smarthinking.pdf)

### One Last Thing

According to the university Office of Institutional Research, Effectiveness, and Planning, in the last *Campus Climate Survey Report (Fall 2016)* 3.9% of the students responding to this survey reported that they very often or often have personally been harassed or discriminated against on campus based on foreign nationality/country of origin, and 10.0% very often or often have seen or heard insensitive or disparaging comments, behaviors, or gestures toward others on campus based on foreign nationality/country of origin.

Our students may see or hear the anti-immigrant sentiment rising in our society at this time, as well as ignorance and bias, and this can cause them to feel saddened, angry, or unsafe and shut down—making essential our ability to keep campus spaces safe in this regard.

Some in society hold that immigrants should learn the language faster and speak English only, not always realizing the great time needed and difficulty of doing so or significance of the intrinsic link between one’s language and cultural identity—or that exposure to other languages is beneficial for our nation in a global economy and world. Some may also believe that immigrants need to assimilate, to abandon the cultural practices, traditions, and heritage of their native country and immerse and identify themselves instead with their new country. Research tells us, however, that immigrants who maintain their native cultural ties and ways while also actively participating in the practices and customs of the new culture can adapt more easily and gain greater psychological well-being. The diversity they bring from their homelands, too, benefits us and has done so since the founding of this country.

We are a nation built on immigrants. Almost all of us are here because of ancestors who made their way to America. The nation has benefited from immigration to this day, making the United States a richer nation in economic and countless other ways. Immigration has also made the U.S. one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world, California one of the most culturally diverse states therein, and greater Sacramento one of the state’s most culturally diverse regions.

Migration is the age-old story of humankind, of generation upon generation of peoples’ need and desire for the right to move, and then the right to remain, in lands all over this Earth of ours.

For immigrants, this country is the beacon around the world for greater safety and prosperity for their future generations. They came for a better life—and, in some cases, to stay alive.

*“Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, ....  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”*

—from Emma Lazarus’ poem written for the Statue of Liberty