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10-26-2022

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Recommended Citation

Platt, Chloe, "2022-10-26 International Redhawks Soar Out of the Pandemic" (2022). *The Spectator Online*. 750.

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The Spectator • October 26, 2022 • <https://seattlespectator.com/2022/10/26/international-redhawks-soar-out-of-the-pandemic/>

International Redhawks Soar Out of the Pandemic

Chloe Platt, Managing Editor

With most countries no longer imposing extensive travel restrictions and campuses lifting COVID-19 regulations, major barriers for international students have been relieved. However, there still remain hurdles for international students to navigate which have not been entirely alleviated by recent policy changes.

Tashi Rabgey, assistant director at the International Student Center (ISC), acknowledged the difficulties faced by international students during the pandemic and the subsequent consequences this has on their education and cultural connection.

“International students have had some challenges entering, reentering and returning home during the pandemic. Also, for most domestic students, I think it has been a challenge having to take online classes in a less personable setting, something that many were not accustomed to,” Rabgey said.

For international students, forming connections often became more difficult due to taking classes online from different time zones, sometimes with limited wifi. This came in addition to the stringent immigration barriers imposed during the pandemic. This, however, did not deter Seattle University’s international students or those who work at the ISC. Rabgey introduced a hopeful caveat with a change in inflection.

“Despite these challenges, most of our international students have not wavered in their pursuit of higher education at Seattle U, and the retention has been positive,” Rabgey said.

Seattle U’s ISC reports a strong increase in international student population this year, as students are benefiting from easier travel due to the lessened travel restrictions.



Peiran Liu

International students gather in the Outreach Center of the Student Center

“Total active students are at record highs approaching 1000,” Dale Watanabe, director of the ISC, eagerly noted.

When asked to compare the 2022-23 academic year to earlier pandemic years, Sandra Bui, assistant director at the ISC, mentioned the resurgence of activity and excitement from international students and the spirited attitude she is noticing amongst international students.

“This year has been an exciting return to campus, and we can definitely feel the energy has really returned to the international student center,” Bui said.

Vanesa Monica Wie, a fourth-year marketing major from Indonesia and office assistant at ISC, recounted how Seattle U’s international community has helped her through pandemic-related challenges.

“When COVID-19 hit, I couldn’t meet my friends because we were doing lockdown, and that was where I felt my homesickness...but I think the international program helped me a lot and the Indonesian community [at Seattle U],” Wie said.

Various programs are offered by Seattle U to support international students on campus and make them feel at home. Programming for international students also focuses on the hoops students need to jump through if they are from abroad.

“It really helps me with so many immigration things that international students need to understand, and by doing this job I learned a lot about that. Not only that, but also I grew personally and in my character, I learned to be organized and goal-oriented and meet more international friends,” Wie said.

Chloe Thomas, assistant director at the ISC, encourages domestic students to get involved and support their international peers.

“We really want to help international students feel welcome on campus and hope that our domestic students will really want to get involved with our iBuddy and Global Ambassador communities,” Thomas said.

The iBuddy program at Seattle U is a project designed to help international students get involved with American and Seattle culture, as well as to make friends and connections with individuals who are interested in supporting them.

After filling out a brief survey, students are randomly assigned to an international student based on mutual likes, major or language. They will then be able to take advantage of events organized by the ISC and Education Abroad Office around the year, such as students talking over coffee and boba or potlucks – where they encourage students and their buddy to connect and mingle.

Seattle U students can also get involved through the ISC’s Global Ambassador Program, in which they plan quarterly events to bring international and domestic students together while helping international students acclimate to the new culture and experiences.

Tashi Rabgey offered an optimistic reflection on the future of international students at Seattle U

“With the growing number of international students, I think the best times for the [ISC] are ahead of us. With so many more international students on campus, we hope our programs will grow in participation,” Rabgey said.

While Seattle U will be able to adequately support international students in the midst of economic and socio-political challenges will be dependent on university leadership, the ISC and university community is invested in the well-being of students from outside the U.S..