



CENTER FOR GLOBAL
ENGAGEMENT

2021 Annual Impact Report

Rebuilding and Restoring UT's Global Engagement Model

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CENTER FOR GLOBAL
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The Center for Global Engagement provides leadership to strengthen the university’s global reach and impact, foster international and intercultural awareness and understanding, assist faculty to internationalize their teaching and scholarship, and prepare students to become globally engaged citizens.

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Rebuilding and Restoring UT's Global Engagement Model

Dear Stakeholders,

The 2021 CGE Impact Report focuses on the innovation of rebuilding. Just as the COVID-19 virus knows no borders, neither should the solutions to it. As we emerge from this crisis, the Center for Global Engagement is focused on internal growth and enhancement. Strengthening our human capacity internally allows us to better serve our stakeholders on and off campus. Through the building of this team we will provide learning opportunities as well as academic and professional programming to best prepare our students for a global workplace; comparatively, scientists will be provided with comprehensive support to generate solutions for global grand challenges.

The UT Global Vision pays particular attention to internationalizing our campus. As Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations, has observed, the challenges of our world today are “problems without passports” for which we need “blueprints without borders” (1998). The notion of internationalizing higher education was on the minds of campuses 25 years ago – thus it is not a new concept. However, it has never been more urgent. The Pandemic has inspired CGE to heed the call of an interconnected world and recreate ourselves to reflect the changing nature of the society we are serving.

Our tradition of educational access and opportunity, our heritage of discovery and service to our state and communities, and our engaged partnerships provide the foundation and the template for a mission that integrates an international perspective into our ongoing mission. CGE is poised to rebuild and own our responsibility to lead UT in taking its global engagement from the periphery to the center of our institutional teaching, research and engagement commitments. In short, internationalizing our campus will require transforming our paradigm – a transformation that demands committed expertise of a passionate team.

I cannot be more proud of the team that has weathered the storm of the last 2 years. They are truly amazing individuals and heroes to our students, faculty and staff. I am lucky to work with such talented people. The vision requires us to increase our human bandwidth and our campus deserves this support. We are steadfastly working to recruit the top talent in our field and we look forward to working side by side with you to be the change we wish to see.

I wish you all peace and health in 2022! Go Vols!

Dr. Gretchen Neisler

*Vice Provost for International Affairs
Director, Center for Global Engagement*



Headshot of Gretchen Neisler from Center for Global Engagement (photo by Steven Bridges/ University of Tennessee)

From Bangkok to Gay Street: An ELI Alumna's Journey

by Alexandra DeMarco

Nestled between the bright lights of the Tennessee Theatre and the Regal Riviera downtown is a cozy restaurant that some call home: Fai Thai Kitchen ร้านผ่ายไทย.

At Fai Thai, food preparation is a labor of love. The idea for the familial restaurant, which has met much success in its first few months open, grew from the determination of Kultida “Fai” Blais.

Fai grew up in Bangkok, Thailand, where she says many residents don't have kitchens and instead dine off of the delicious street food prepared by Bangkok chefs. Fai attended journalism school and graduated with honors from Bangkok University before working as a public relations executive at the luxury Athenee Hotel.

After a few years in her position, however, Fai decided to take a leap and head to America to join her parents, who were already living in New York, and work at improving her English skills.

“I decided to come to America, and it was such a dream,” Fai said.

After initially moving to New York, her parents' brief stints at jobs in Knoxville led Fai to East Tennessee. Here, she discovered the English Language Institute at the University of Tennessee and enrolled in an English program.

“You feel very comfortable [at ELI] because all the teachers will try to accommodate you, like try to teach you, and all the friends, they're all international,” Fai said. “So it's opened my mind to understand we don't have to be the same. We don't have to do the same exact thing and people in general, we seek out different things.”

While her parents headed back to New York, Fai finished up her studies at ELI, where she made friends she keeps in touch with to this day, and put

down roots in Knoxville; she met her soon-to-be husband, Nathan Blais, and settled into life in East Tennessee.

Seven years later -- seven years that Fai says are the best of her life -- her world is radically different.

“It's like, so thriving for these seven years, to be here in America,” Fai said.

Ambitious to start her next endeavor, Fai began investigating opportunities to launch her own business after graduating from ELI. Though, growing up in Bangkok, she did not have a lot of experience cooking herself, both of her parents are experienced chefs and had instilled in her a deep appreciation of food -- especially food prepared with family recipes passed down through generations. So, with support from a loan designated for minority-owned businesses from the Knoxville Area Urban League, she decided to try her hand at running a food truck.

The process of actually starting the food truck was not always easy, Fai said. She and her husband, both in their twenties at the time, were cheated out of investment money while initially launching the business, she says.

“We were young and stupid, so we lost a lot of money through that, but we finally got the food truck. ... Luckily, I have my parents. ... They taught me, and I have the basic skills already, so I can just pick it up and do it,” Fai said.

With a lot of hard work, business for the food truck eventually picked up. Fai was grateful for advice from mentor Kumi Alderman, director of the Knox Asian Festival, who she says is really like her “second mom”.

Fai worked in the food truck herself, cooking food from recipes passed down from her parents and grandparents, even while she was pregnant. Her husband Nathan Blais continued working with the food truck as well.



Fai with her parents, mom Suri “Tik” Wattanakul and dad Chatchai “Fa” Puchakanit (Photo by Brittany Sidwell)



Fai and her husband, Nathan, pose with the Fai Thai food truck

“The same recipe, but the cook is different,” Fai said. “He has 30 years of experience, versus like none at all and just kind of jumped the gun.”

Fai enjoys her dad’s cooking just as much as any customer and regularly stops by the restaurant to eat even on her days off, she says, reflecting on how lucky Knoxville is to have access to the delicious food prepared by her dad.

“It’s such a comfort to me to have food from my parents, and you know it’s going to be good no matter what,” Fai said.



Fai Thai Kitchen, located on Gay Street in downtown Knoxville (Photo by Brittany Sidwell)

At Fai Thai Kitchen, the carefully-crafted cuisine is just one part of the dining experience, Fai says. The jazz music playing in the background, accompanied by soft lighting, sets the stage for the family-run restaurant of just eight tables, which Fai says is more like a café where she encourages people to sit and read if they would like.

“This place is like the home. ... You come to my home to eat my food made with the family,” Fai said.

Though she’s always open to improvement, customers don’t always understand what Fai Thai is trying to accomplish, Fai says. They sometimes expect a more fast-paced restaurant experience instead of the personal, family-oriented one Fai offers -- an experience where her parents carefully craft each meal ordered, a job she expects customers to respect.

“It’s like they come in and they want it quick. They want it fast,” Fai said. “It’s like, dude, it’s not McDonald’s, it’s Fai Thai Kitchen. ... Being an Asian in general is not hard, it’s just like maybe we feel lesser. ... But you come in here, this is our house.”



Pad Thai with shrimp, prepared at Fai Thai (Photo by Brittany Sidwell)

Fai, who loves her job, asks that customers talk to her respectfully when they have a concern with their food -- and she’ll be happy to fix it for them.

“You tell me like I’m a human being. I’m a mother. I’m a wife. I’m a daughter. I’m here to do your job, to service, as best as I can,” Fai said.

Now a successful business owner, Fai says her blooming restaurant is really just the beginning of Fai Thai. She has now sold the food truck to focus on the downtown location, and there’s no predicting exactly what the future holds. Fai plans to lean into the homey atmosphere for future iterations of the restaurant -- hopefully including a restaurant in an actual house evoking a comforting “grandma” style, featuring a biergarten and outside seating.

“My end goal is to build my place. ... That’s such an imagination though, but yeah, that’s the indefinite goal that I would like it to happen,” Fai said.

Visit Fai Thai Kitchen at 522 S Gay Street for a delicious dine-in or take-out experience, fueled by recipes passed down through generation after generation.



Coupon to Fai Thai Kitchen that must be used between March 15–April 30, 2022

UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

As the state's flagship university and a public land grant institution, UT's mission includes contributing to the economic, social, human, and environmental capital of the U.S. and globally. Through such engagement UT embraces the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as one means to understand as well as gauge our impact. The SDGs serve as a call to action for all countries to promote prosperity while protecting the planet and UT is in an excellent position to contribute to achieving these goals because of the existing knowledge, research and innovative thinking that is foundational to the institution.



Meet the Inaugural SDG Faculty Fellow

Hannah Herrero, Ph.D.
SDG Faculty Fellow and Assistant Professor
Department of Geography



Scan to Learn
More About
UT Courses
Aligned with
SDGs



MEET THE CGE TEAM

Gretchen Neisler

Vice Provost and Director
International Affairs and Center for
Global Engagement

Lauren Wood

Director, International House

Carolyn Becker

Director, Programs Abroad

Em Chitty

Interim Director, English
Language Institute

Rachel Rui

Director, Asia Engagement and Communications

Erik Simons

**Interim Director, International
Student and Scholar Services**

Jamie McGowan

Director, Global Research



The **English Language Institute** offers in-person English language programs at all levels for international students, local professionals and local residents. ELI is growing a welcoming and diverse community where students feel they belong and can learn the language skills they need to succeed.

An Expanding Menu of Services

Previously Offered Services

1

Intensive Academic English
Prepare for undergraduate or graduate studies
8 weeks
4-5 hours per day

Currently Offered Services

1

Intensive Academic English
Prepare for undergraduate or graduate studies
8 weeks
4-5 hours per day

2

General English
Improve your English for everyday life
8 weeks
3 hours per day

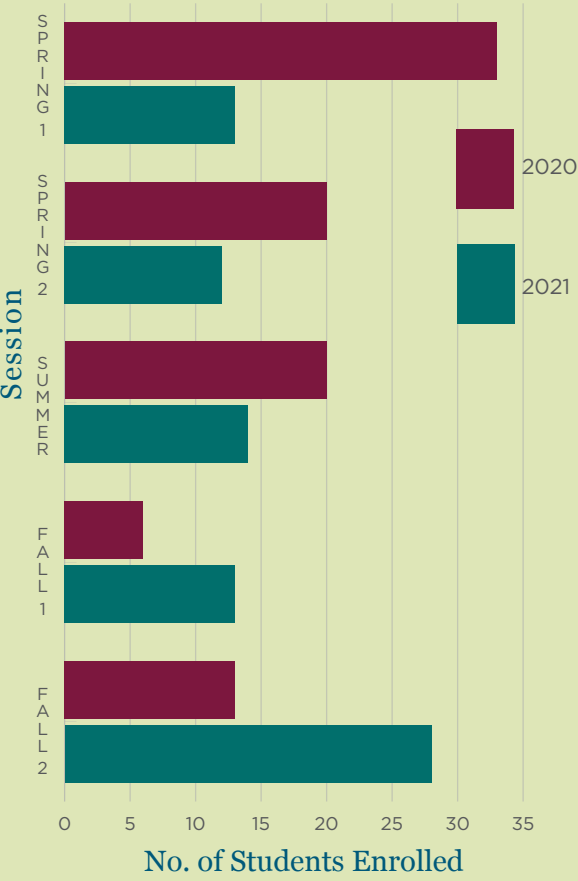
3

Saturday Workshops
Polish your English in 4-week workshops
4 sessions
4 hours each

4

Custom-Designed Programs
Specialized in-person or virtual programs based on your needs

ELI Recovery from the Pandemic



Expanding Services. Growing Community.



María Arancibia in Knoxville during her time as an ELI student

English Language Institute Offers Meaningful Educational Experience for International Students

by Alexandra DeMarco

María Arancibia was 26 years old when she decided to pack up her life in Santiago, Chile, and move to Knoxville.

When COVID-19 lockdowns began, Arancibia found herself bored and itching to learn something new. An avid traveler, she looked into opportunities to improve her English and stumbled across the English Language Institute at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. In less than a month, Arancibia quit her job and bought a plane ticket to America, taking a leave of absence from her home country.

In March 2021, Arancibia arrived in Knoxville for what was supposed to be a stay of just a few months.

However, her experience at ELI was so wonderful that she studied there through December 2021, before moving back to Santiago.

Arancibia, who has a bachelor’s degree in business and a master’s degree in marketing, now works as a project manager in Chile and says her expanded English vocabulary is quite helpful in her career.

“Just like a week ago ... I was having meetings with companies from other countries completely in English,” Arancibia said. “That was something I was not able to do 10 months ago.”

ELI’s instructors were instrumental to her experience, Arancibia says. Always eager to answer students’ questions, her teachers and Interim Director of ELI Em Chitty were more like family by the time Arancibia left Knoxville.

“ELI is what it is because of them. ... The experience that they give you and how much they care about each student is what for me made it so special,” Arancibia said.

Arancibia advises other students learning a new language to practice unabashedly.

“Don’t be afraid or embarrassed to talk or try to speak or write or read in public,” Arancibia said. “We are all learning, and you’re never too old to learn a new language.”

Though she now lives in another hemisphere, Arancibia’s connections to Knoxville, her “favorite city in the world,” and the best friends she made at ELI remain steadfast.

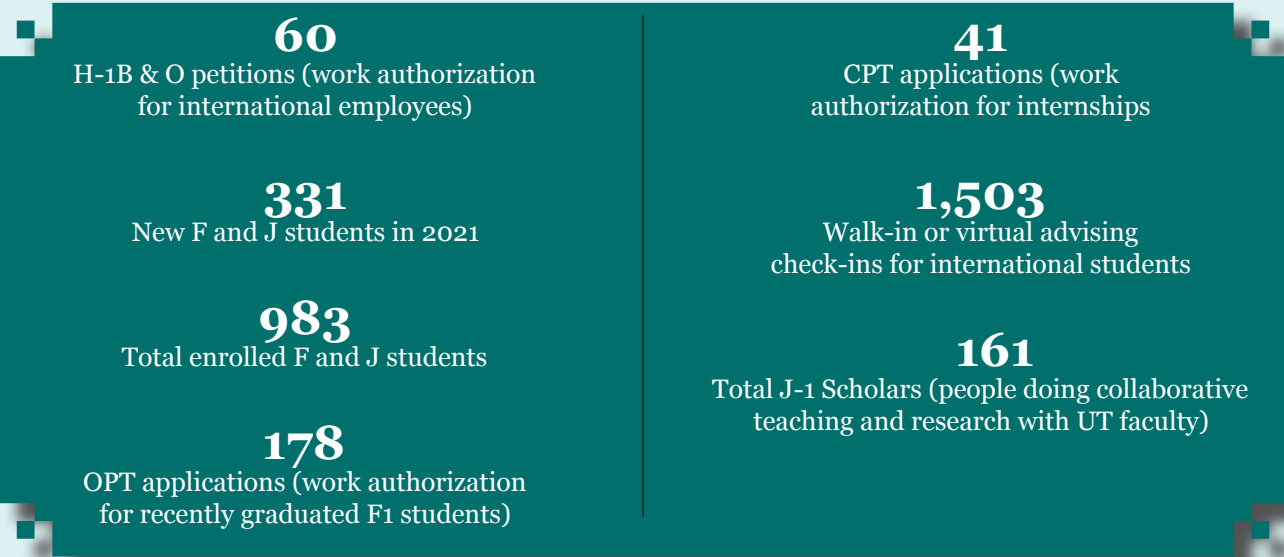


María Arancibia in front of World’s Fair Park and the Sunsphere in downtown Knoxville

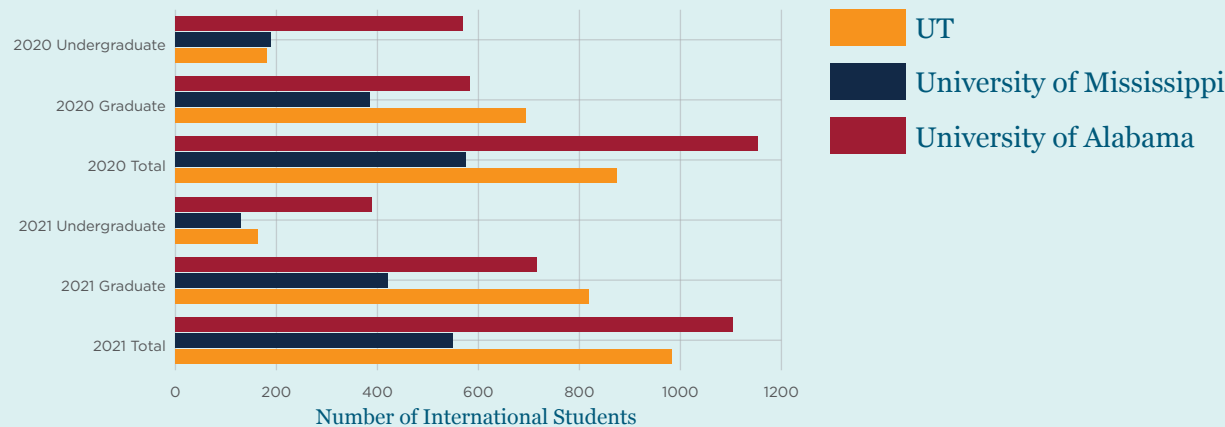
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT & SCHOLAR SERVICES

The **International Student & Scholar Services** office is committed to offering immigration advising and support to our international student and scholar population.

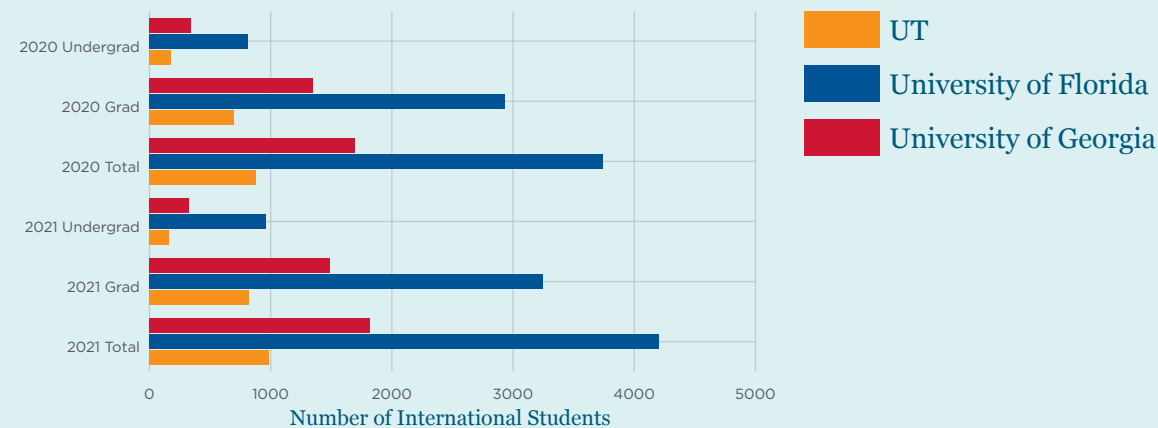
By the Numbers



UT in Relation to Peer Institutions



UT in Relation to Aspirational Institutions



Supporting International Students & Scholars.

IN THEIR WORDS



International student athletes at an event in Fall 2021 (photo by Caitlin Ryan)

Thornton Athletics Student Life Center Partners with ISSS to Advise International Student Athletes

by Alexandra DeMarco

For international student athletes, who have to anticipate NCAA rules in addition to immigration paperwork, navigating college can be especially complicated.

That’s why Caitlin Ryan, assistant director of Student Athlete Development, and Denise Jilka, assistant director of Academic Services, of the Thornton Athletics Student Life Center have made a commitment to thoroughly advising international student athletes.

Each year, the University of Tennessee, Knoxville welcomes about 50 new international student athletes to campus. When these students first began heading to Ryan with questions, she found herself struggling to find answers.

Ryan reached out to International Student and Scholar Services and soon began a lasting partnership. Ryan and Jilka regularly communicate with ISSS and make it a priority to recognize international student athletes’ unique needs.

“Now I feel very confident that all of our student athletes are actually keeping up with all of these pieces that they should be doing,” Ryan said.

Maintaining these “pieces” is extremely important. In sports, circumstances rapidly change, and staying ahead of immigration paperwork can be daunting.

“Everything is constantly in flux, but as an international student there’s preparation for that. ... You can’t stay in the country if you didn’t fill out your paperwork,” Jilka said.

Communication between Thornton and ISSS has been especially key during pandemic lockdowns, Ryan says.

“We’re very proud of the fact that we got all of our international student athletes back from the pandemic when a lot of schools didn’t, and I think it’s because we have formed this amazing partnership with the CGE,” Ryan said.

For as much as Ryan and Jilka learn from ISSS, they’re also constantly learning from students themselves.

“We’re learning about their home countries, their experiences, the differences that they’re facing when they come here,” Jilka said.

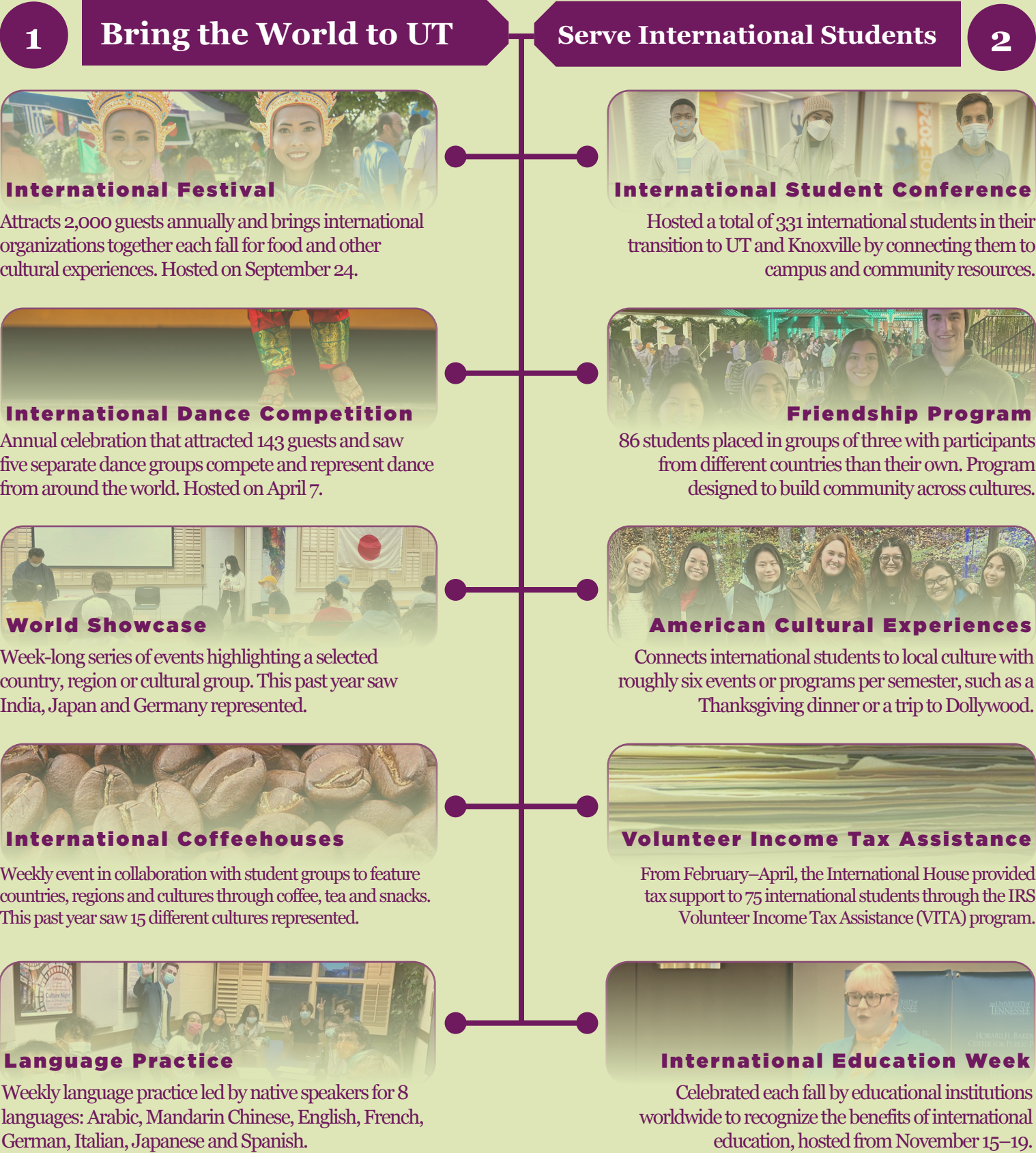
With a map hanging on her office wall, Ryan’s students often point out their home countries to her.

“As many different perspectives and life experiences and diversity, in a sense, that we can bring into our population, the better, because it helps just everyone learn and grow,” Ryan said.

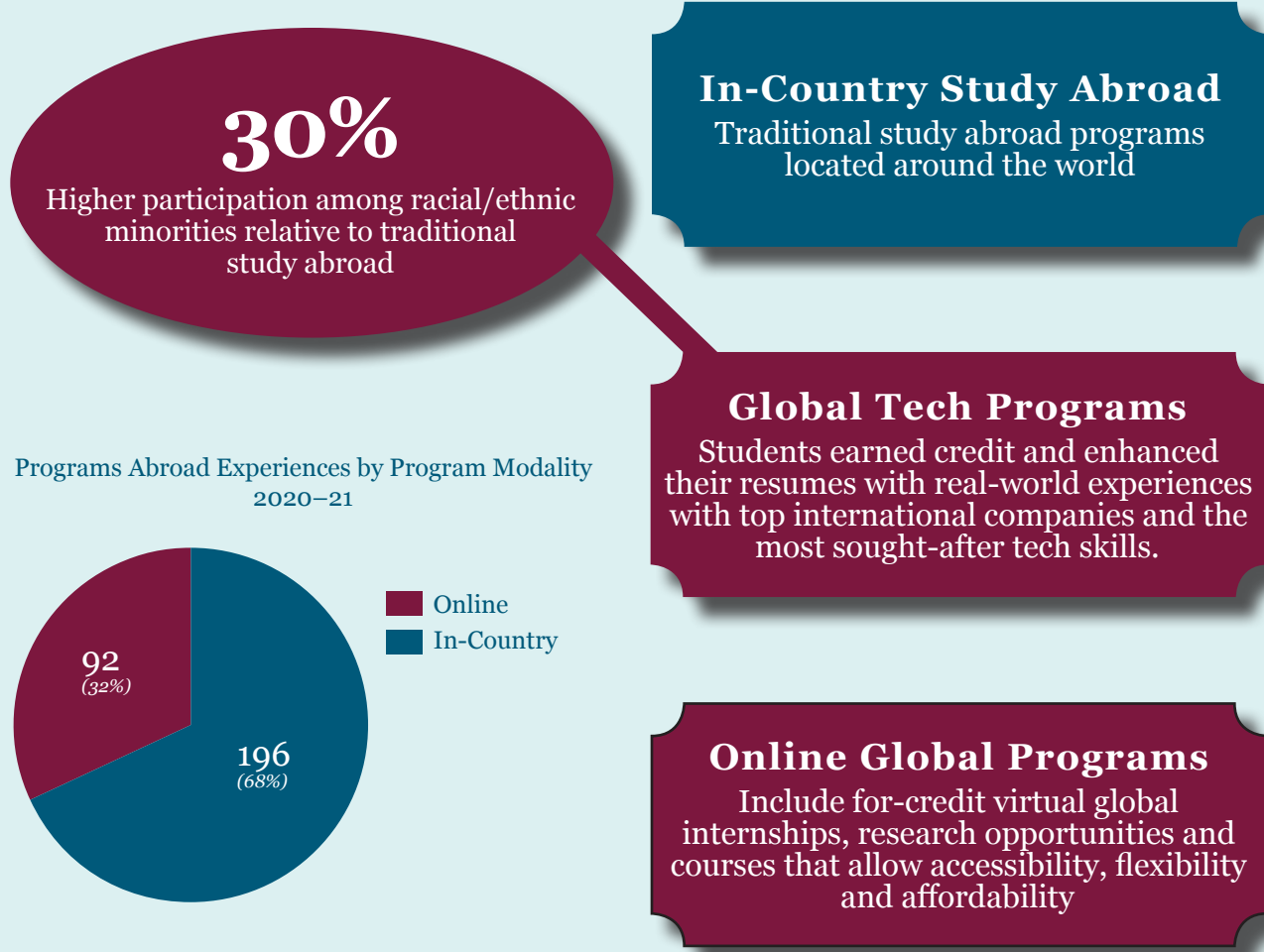


International student athlete participating in the VOLeaders Academy

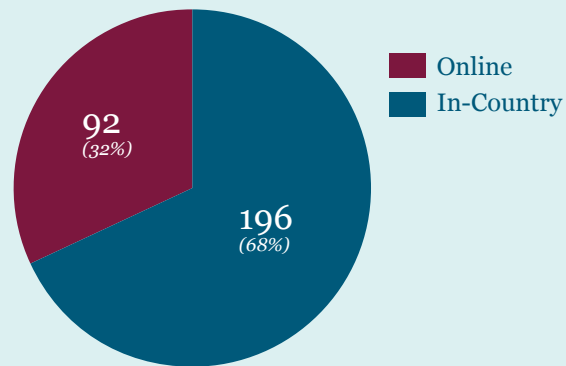
The **International House** offers a variety of events and programming designed to accomplish two goals.



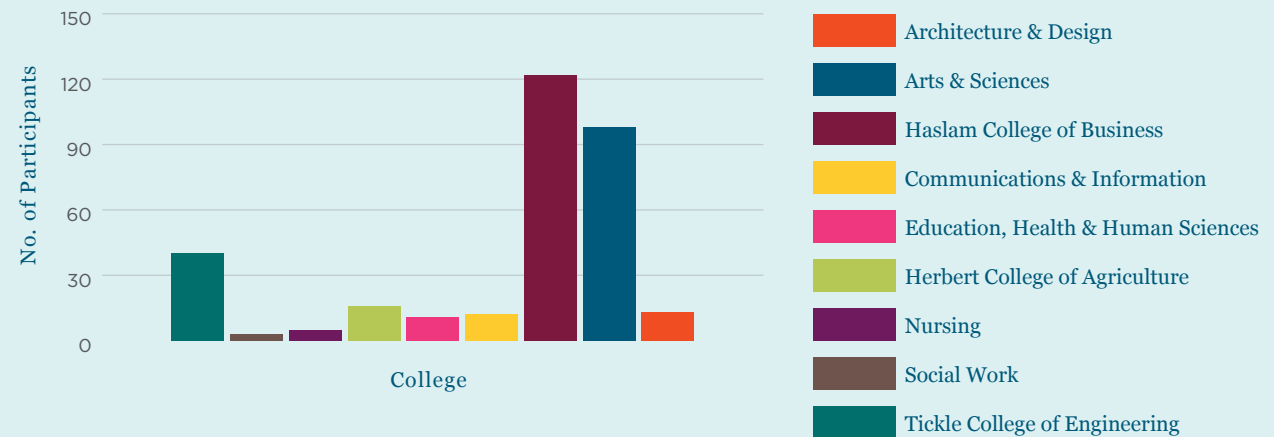
The **Programs Abroad Office** is committed to fostering global awareness and academic, personal and professional growth by offering a broad range of traditional and online study, intern, research and service-learning opportunities outside the United States.



Programs Abroad Experiences by Program Modality 2020–21



Programs Abroad Participants by College 2020–21



Expanding Access. Removing Barriers.



Students enjoy a meal during the UTK Engineering in London study abroad program

Students Delve into Rich Engineering History During Engineering in London Program

by Alexandra DeMarco

For students deciding to study abroad, it can be difficult to narrow down a location. But Michael Berry, professor in the Min H. Kao Department of Electrical Engineering & Computer Science, has a simple solution when deciding where to plan study abroad programs: follow the history.

Berry runs Engineering in London, which will celebrate its tenth trip this summer. Now one of Tickle’s largest study abroad programs in terms of enrollment, Berry collaborated with other faculty members to found the program.

When deciding on a program destination, London was the easy choice. It was there that so many feats of engineering were accomplished over the last 200 years: Alan Turing’s theory of computation helped crack the German Enigma code during World War II in the same city where, a century prior, the Victorians’ novel steam engine launched England

into the Industrial Revolution.

While abroad, students take two typically 16-week-long courses: ECE 301 - Circuits and Electro Mechanical Components and ME 331 - Thermodynamics. Outside of the classroom, students explore engineering history with excursions to sites like the Faraday Museum, home of the first surviving electric motor, and a running steam engine hall.

“It shows them how engineering has social impacts in a very significant way on how you improve the quality of life,” Berry said.

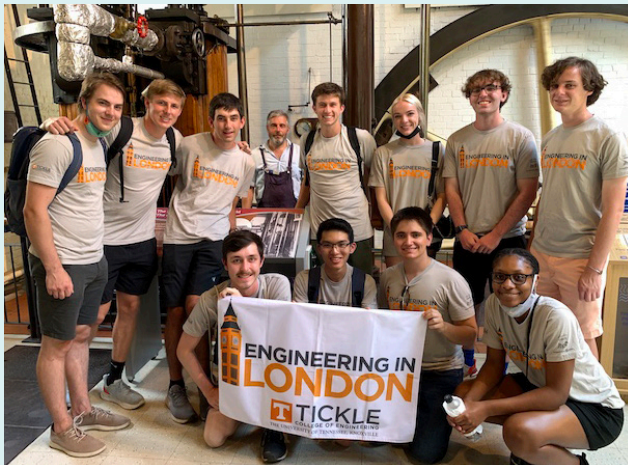
The trip is also practice for professional life; students study from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. while navigating a metropolitan city.

“We want to make sure they understand that there’s no free lunch,” Berry said. “You have to really work hard through, maybe the issues you deal with today related to the pandemic, maybe it’s politicalization. You’ve got to work through these issues to innovate.”

As a professor, watching students grow through their experiences abroad is extremely rewarding, Berry says.

“We’re very proud of the fact that I think we’ve had a lot of global engagement with our students,” Berry said.

Engineering in London students will embark on a historical journey this summer from June 10–July 9.

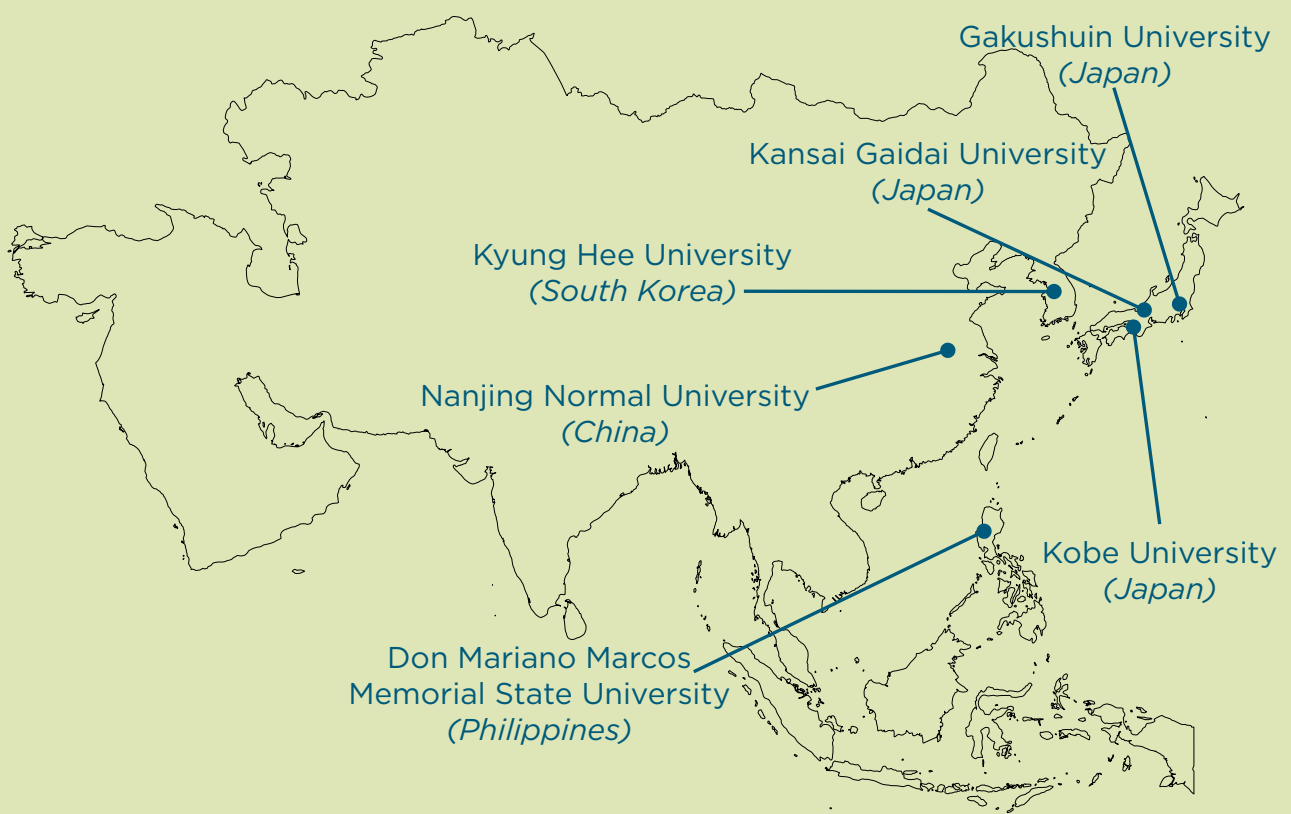


Students pose while in the field during the UTK Engineering in London program

The **Office of Asia Engagement** (OAE) provides strategic planning, support and coordination for UT's engagement in Asia.

Building Strategic Partnerships in Asia

As a part of the Global Partnership Committee, OAE leads efforts to building strategic partnerships in Asia. In 2021, OAE started to establish MOUs with and is actively collaborating with the following universities across Asia.



GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE



Em Chitty
Interim Director
English Language Institute
Center for Global Engagement



Wendolyn Davis, Ph.D.
Director
Transfer Center
Enrollment Management



Sonja Jackson, Ph.D.
Coordinator
Outreach and Recruitment
The Graduate School



Rachel Rui, Ph.D.
Director
OAE / Communications
Center for Global Engagement



Stephanie Sieggreen, MBA
Director
International Recruitment
Enrollment Management

Connect. Innovate. Support.

Increase UT's Global Visibility

WeChat and TikTok in China



WeChat post featuring Vol Town Hall Asia

OAE launched a UT CGE WeChat account and a Douyin account (TikTok's original version in China). These platforms were chosen because WeChat has over one billion daily active users while Douyin sees 600 million daily active users. OAE aims to facilitate recruitment efforts and engage alumni in Asia.

Collaborative Online International Learning

OAE works with faculty and academic departments to develop and implement programs that are flexible and innovative. COIL program connects faculty and students in different countries through collaborative projects and discussions as part of their course work. The first COIL program at UT was led by Professor Moonhee Cho in the Tombras School of Advertising & Public Relations, in collaboration with Nukus State Pedagogical Institution in Uzbekistan. Students from these two classes were able to explore strategies for engaging the UN Sustainable Development Goals, specifically climate action.



Screenshot of the COIL class



Connect Local Community

Support the AAPI Community



Heart to Heart Concert

OAE is instrumental in establishing the Commission for AAPI at UT. The commission is scheduled to be launched in Fall 2022.

"As a member of the AAPI subcommittee and a faculty of the AAPI community, I am so appreciative of the support that OAE has given to the AAPI community and me."

—Ling Zhao, MD, Ph.D., Professor of Nutrition at UT

Community Relationships

OAE frequently works with community organizations in order to bring cultural experiences and diversity to campus and to share campus resources with the local community. In 2021 OAE worked with the Asian Culture Center of Tennessee to provide holiday meals to international students who were not able to be with their families for the winter holiday. OAE also partnered with the Tennessee World Affairs Council to host the *Women in International Business* career panel event in October of 2021.



Asian Culture Center of TN staff hand out holiday meals

The **Global Research Office** catalyzes UT’s faculty to extend their research across the world. It does so by supporting faculty initiatives to cultivate mutually beneficial partnerships and international research initiatives. These initiatives can be broadly defined, but encompass collaborations that build on expertise across two or more countries, internationally-based or focused topics and research that is undergirded by an international affiliation or memorandum of understanding.

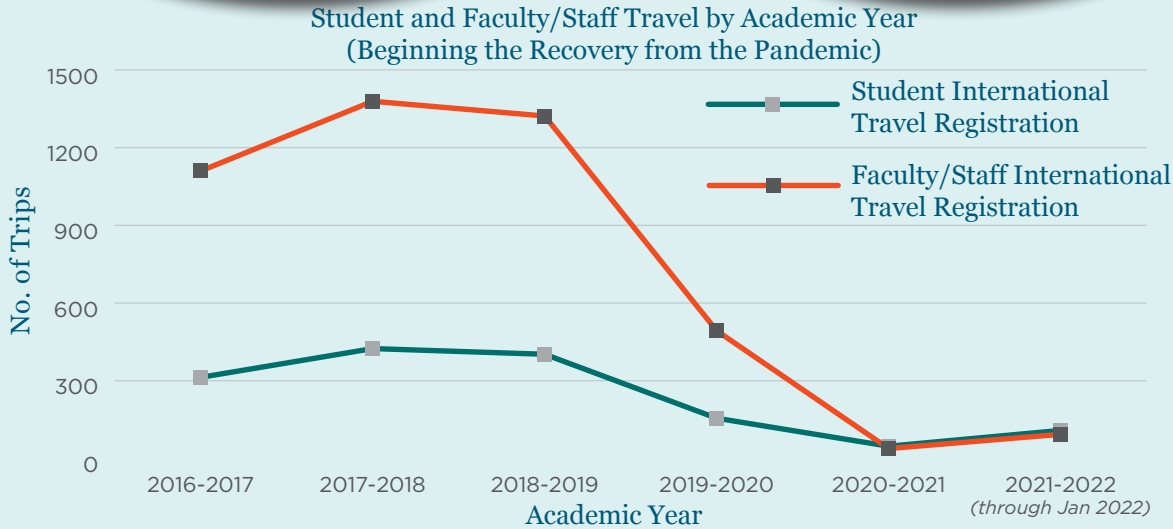
By the Numbers

\$656,756

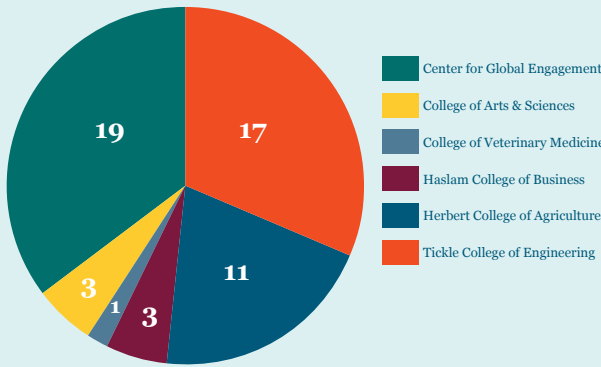
Successful international research grants supported by the Global Research Office across 2020–21

\$167,918

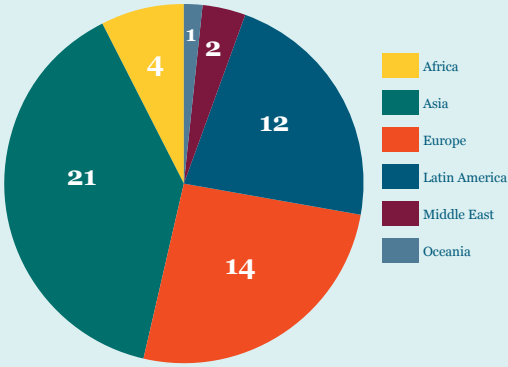
Global Catalyst Grant Award Amount for 2021–22. Joint effort between CGE and ORIED



No. of Active International Agreements by College 2020–21



No. of Active Agreements by World Region 2020–21



World Collaboration. Impactful Partnerships.



Professor Orou Gaooue conducts ecological research regarding human impacts on the environment in Benin

EEB Professor Gaooue Selected for NSF Grant to Lead Long-term Research Abroad Program to Benin

by Alexandra DeMarco

In Benin, human activity is threatening to disturb the mutualistic relationship between African mahogany trees and the weaver ants occupying their leaves.

Orou Gaooue, associate professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, observed this phenomenon while researching in Benin, where he was born and raised.

“Humans’ interference on the dynamics of native species is something that I’ve been interested in for a very long time now, because those species tend to have socioeconomic value for local people,” Gaooue said.

Gaooue channeled these interests into a now-accepted proposal for a National Science Foundation grant, “International Research Experience for Students,” which will fund student ecological research in Benin.

During the proposal process, Gaooue collaborated with the Global Research Office. Part of the office’s role is to support faculty members’ international research development, Director Jamie McGowan says.

“There’s few opportunities to connect students to Africa,” McGowan said. “Gaooue’s program is both valuable to advancing research around mutualistic relationships between species and to involving students in this research in a unique research setting.”

Faculty interested in conducting international research can contact the Global Research Office.

“My office is here to help and be a facilitating office, not an obstacle in any way shape or form, and we want to help advance faculty members’ global research agendas,” McGowan said.

Gaooue and cohorts of five students will conduct research in Benin for the next three summers. The program includes career-building opportunities, and Gaooue is focused on recruiting participants from groups underrepresented in EEB such as Black and women students. He hopes to see UT promote students’ achievements.

“When it comes to diversity and inclusion, lots of effort is made in terms of statements, but in terms of practical steps, there’s always something missing, which is the deliberate promotion of minorities,” Gaooue said

Ecologically, students’ results should uncover vital information.

“Ultimately, this research will lead to a conclusion about what harvest intensity can be tolerated that would promote the coexistence of the ants and the plants,” Gaooue said.



CONNECT



Center for Global Engagement
cge.utk.edu

English Language Institute
eli.utk.edu

Office of Asia Engagement
cge.utk.edu/oe

International House
ihouse.utk.edu

Programs Abroad Office
programsabroad.utk.edu

Global Research Office
cge.utk.edu/globalresearch

**International Student &
Scholar Services**
international.utk.edu



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Knoxville, TN 37996**

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