

Center for Global Engagement 2024-2025 ANNUAL REPORT



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The Current State of International Education in the US

These are turbulent times for the field of international education. As I write this, the Department of State has a "pause" on new visa applications for F and J visa holders. There is a travel ban for certain Muslim countries. The US' most elite institution of higher education had their ability to accept international students revoked and is awaiting the outcome of a court battle to see if they will be able to continue to host international students. Now, more than ever, those of us who care about international education must remember our purpose and mission and be willing to act.

For me, those actions include amplifying the voices positively impacted by international education and strongly advocating the importance of open borders for our students. I have been a member of NAFSA: Association of International Educators for nearly 30 years and even worked there for several years before coming to the University of North Georgia. One relevant bit of information from NAFSA is that only 6% of all non-immigrants in the US are international students and yet they are the most vetted and monitored of all non-immigrants. US higher education is an important export for our country and NAFSA's latest analysis finds that international students studying at U.S. colleges and universities contributed \$43.8 billion and supported 378,175 jobs to the U.S. economy during the 2023-2024 academic year. NAFSA is an advocacy hub for action and information, and I encourage you to learn more on their [site](#).

One of the myriad reasons for students to participate in the high impact practice of study abroad is to prepare for their career. Career readiness centers around "durable" skills of adaptability, problem solving, critical thinking, and communication skills. These are the exact skills that our education abroad students hone while overseas or in our domestic study away programs.

And, of course, these are the skills that our international students develop and practice while on our campuses. In this annual report CGE is focusing on the narrative of student mobility programs that create life-changing experiences for our students. I hope you enjoy hearing our faculty and students' voices. We stand with our students, scholars, and community as we continue to provide these opportunities.



Sheila Schulte
AVP, International Programs

Education Abroad



UNG students have access to study abroad in over 150 countries on all 7 continents! Through our direct enrollment providers, exchange partner institutions, and Faculty-Led Programs (FLP), there are a wealth of options. Over the past year, UNG faculty led 13 programs in locations as diverse as Panama, Peru, and Spain. Overall, Italy, Japan, and the UK continued to be the most popular destinations for our students.



By the Numbers

257

Students
Abroad/Away

Countries
Represented

29

5

New Program
Proposals

***Totals include Fall 2024, Spring 2025
and Summer 2025 programs.**

**Interested in starting an
abroad program? Apply
for the EA Academy.**

All first-time faculty interested in initiating education abroad programs may apply to attend the Education Abroad (EA) Academy, a 3-part workshop that CGE hosts each spring. Prof. Robyn Hicks from the Communication, Film, and Theatre Dept participated in 2024, and successfully ran her first program in spring 2025. Learn more about her experience and the process on page 5.

Student Voices



“Edinburgh was one of my dream places to visit, so when I had the opportunity to study at one of the best schools in Edinburgh, I couldn't pass the opportunity. The history, the friendly people, and the Castles! It's a once-in-a-lifetime chance. The weather is beautiful and sunny in one moment; it is dark and freezing out the next moment. The rain and wind can come out of nowhere just as much as sudden sunshine. My advice is: if you're considering it and have the means to do it, do it. You only live once, and it is something you will never forget. The culture and even just the change in teaching style opens up your perspective so much.”

- Grace Holmes
CIEE in Edinburgh

"This changed my plans after graduation and changed the work I'm getting. I'm a lot more confident in my networking skills. The experience blossomed me when it comes to those interactions. I have such a heightened energy after going there, and I want to keep that going. It ignited more passion in me for the work I want to pursue."

- Claritssa Vargas
Film in LA



“Studying abroad in Peru allowed me to practice not only my Spanish skills but expand my cultural awareness. I really loved being able to take what we learned from the university and apply that knowledge to our excursions. Some of my favorite spots were Rainbow mountain, the Salt mines, and of course, Machu Picchu. I really enjoyed my time in Peru, and I would do it again. Studying abroad for me was so much more than I expected and to anyone who loves to travel and learn about another culture, I fully recommend it.”

- Destiny Strickland
Spanish in Peru



Faculty Reflections

In my approach to teaching film - I often ask myself, "what would have been meaningful to me as a young student?" Taking film students to "Hollywood" just makes sense - but it feels so far away and like a dream. I felt so inspired seeing Professor Mackenzie's study abroad program in Italy come together. As our film program has grown and attracted such passionate students, I knew the experience could be so beneficial - but I was still unsure about engagement. That all changed when I saw students signing up for Italy - so many of our students are hungry for travel, adventure and expanding their world beyond North Georgia. This really gave me the motivation to pursue the program.

The Academy prepared me in every way. First-hand experience from other professors who have gone through the process gave me a greater understanding of the purpose, challenges and triumphs that go into planning a program. I also appreciated the personal approach to helping compile the proposal, which would have otherwise felt daunting. Additionally, the greatest preparation provided to me was in funding the site visit. The visit allowed me to fully immerse myself in the city, make amazing connections with industry professionals who later participated in the program, and craft the program to meet the needs of our students.

Even with meticulous and thoughtful planning - unexpected circumstances arise. I was completely taken aback when the LA fires sprung up at the beginning of the year. I had already recruited students, and they had paid for the initial costs of the program. My first thought was in reaching out personally to all those we had been communicating with in LA - just to ensure they were okay and safe. I kept in conversation with them throughout to stay informed about what was happening on the ground. I appreciated CGE's thoughtful and measured response to the situation. As a team, we all came together to discuss the situation and talk through different tactics depending on how the situation progressed. Thankfully, the fires were eventually controlled and no locations or people associated with the program were affected - but knowing that I had a team to help face this challenge made it more manageable.

I have so many favorite memories - it's impossible to choose just one. From zipping around the Warner Brothers backlot or seeing Dorothy's ruby red slippers at the Academy Museum to networking in the Hollywood hills with leading industry creatives - the first run of the program was beyond successful! The most meaningful moments for me, however, were simply in watching the students. Most had never been to LA - the dream of Hollywood feels light years away from rural North Georgia. And yet - they belong there and anywhere else this journey happens to take them. Seeing them realize that in real time was most definitely the highlight of the experience for me.

You're in good hands with the team at CGE! Let them support you every step of the way - even when things feel daunting and a little too scary. Their belief in me and the program kept me going. Our students at UNG crave these experiences - they need you and your vision to help their dreams come true.

- Prof. Robyn Hicks
Film in LA Study Away Program



International Students

By the Numbers

141

International
Students

Visiting
Scholars

20

45

Countries
Represented

*The top 5 countries represented for 2024 were China, India, Vietnam, South Korea, and the United Kingdom.

Top 5 Majors

1. Business Administration - Management
2. Biology
3. Business Administration - Finance
4. Computer Science
5. Business Administration - Marketing



International Student Orientation is always an exciting day for UNG's new international students. In August 2024, there were almost 50 new freshman, transfer, exchange, and cadet students in attendance among UNG's campuses. **(Above)** Orientation on Gainesville's campus includes new students from the Cumming and Oconee campuses. **(Below)** Students in Dahlonega pause for a group picture after a campus tour.



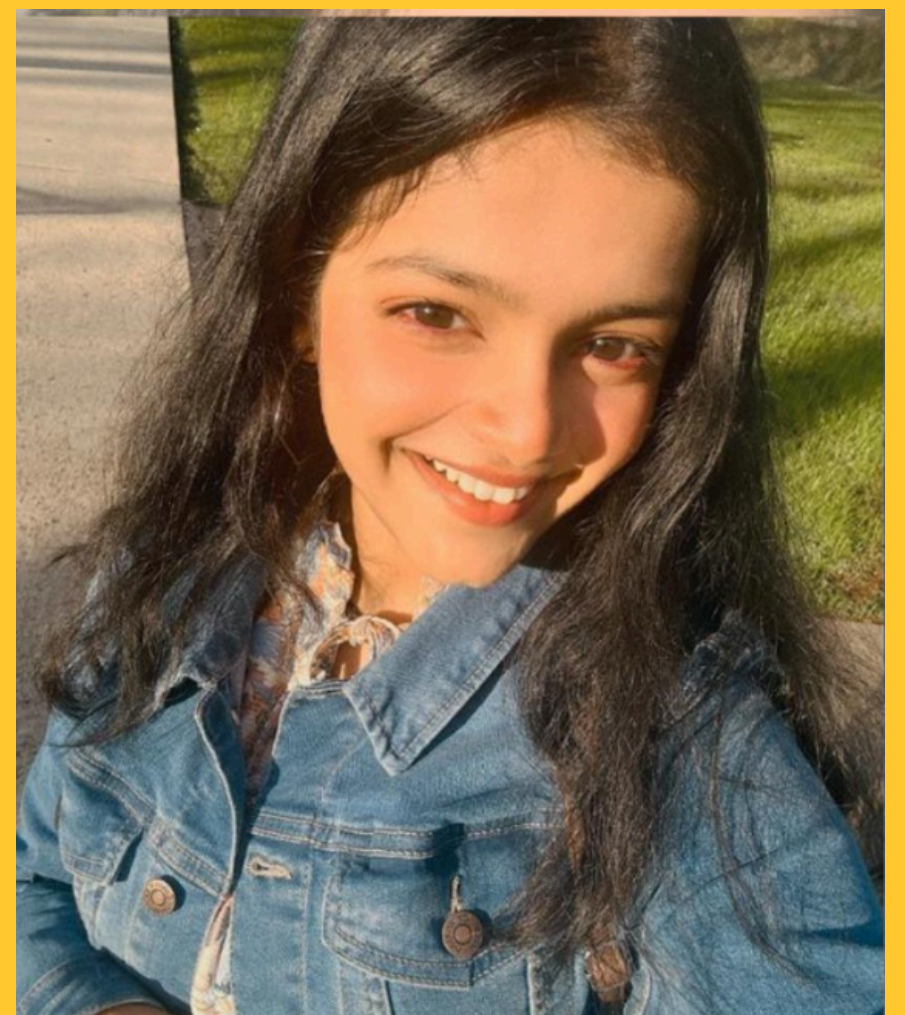
Global Ambassadors

This year, CGE initiated a new scholarship program for international students: The Global Ambassador Scholarship. This amazing opportunity awards recipients a full out-of-state tuition waiver for one academic year, and gives them the chance to intern with the CGE office, gaining valuable resume building experience. In 2024, the first recipients of this scholarship were Regina Montes De Oca Carreon from the Gainesville campus and Pavani Patel from the Dahlonga campus. Both students did an amazing job connecting the CGE office with international students by creating fun content, peer-mentoring new students, and hosting on-campus parties and special events. Get to know the Global Ambassadors by clicking the images below to hear interviews and learn why international students love UNG!



Regina Montes De Oca Carreon came to the US from her homecountry, Mexico, and currently majors in Business Management. Originally attending GSU, Regina quickly realized she was “just a number” at such a large institution, and felt she could get more involved and engaged at a school like UNG. She transferred in 2024 as a sophomore and her experience as an international student in the US completely changed. Getting involved in clubs like the Rowing Team and organizations like the Latino Student Association has helped Regina find community and feel like a part of a family—the UNG family. **Click her image to watch what a day in the life of an international student is like at UNG.**

Pavani Patel moved to the US from Zambia in 2023 to study Biology as a Pre-Med major at UNG. What Pavani enjoys most about UNG is the warm, welcoming atmosphere—especially on the Dahlonga campus, which offers a strong sense of community and plenty of events and activities to get involved in. She’s actively engaged on campus as a member of Livewell UNG, a club focused on promoting health and wellness, which aligns perfectly with her career goals. **Click her image to watch an interview with Pavani about why it’s great to be an international student at UNG.**



OUR MISSION

The Center for Global Engagement (CGE) facilitates cross-cultural experiences for students, faculty, staff and the greater community in order to better integrate the University of North Georgia into the globalized world.



Contact Us

CGE Office: Stewart Center 269
706-867-2858
global@ung.edu
www.ung.edu/cge

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