



The life-changing experience of global education

Kent State students, both domestic and international, are exploring cultural diversity at home and abroad—and becoming citizens of the world.

BY BETHANY SAVA, BS '12, AND JAN SENN

With eight campuses in seven counties throughout Northeast Ohio, Kent State University radiates a welcoming hometown atmosphere. Each campus feels integral to the communities it serves, providing exemplary education and unique experiences for all students.

Kent State also has been a purveyor of global education for more than half a century. Its history of international collaboration includes an educational exchange with the Soviet Union during the Cold War and student exchanges with Iran prior to its revolution in 1978-1979.

Today, Kent State's global reach has expanded to six continents, with full education abroad programming in Brazil, the Czech Republic, Egypt, France, Italy, Jordan and Switzerland; study abroad partnerships with countries such as Australia, Bolivia, Japan, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Singapore and Uganda; and outreach centers in China and India. The university currently hosts international students from 99 countries and provides 200+ programs in 60+ countries for both domestic and international students to immerse themselves in global education experiences.

Students who study abroad are better prepared for a world that is increasingly interconnected and multicultural. As they engage with different cultures, people, languages and ideas, students become comfortable with the unfamiliar, increase their global awareness and develop an appreciation for other ways of living.

At the end of their study abroad program—whether it be a few weeks, a semester or a full academic year—students have gained not only a global perspective and memories to last a lifetime, but a new confidence and sense of self. And as they embark on their careers, their ability to communicate and collaborate with colleagues from different backgrounds is an essential 21st-century skill.

WORLD-RENOUNDED KENT STATE HONORED FOR ITS COMMITMENT TO INTERNATIONALIZATION

Kent State has integrated international education throughout all facets of the university and its campuses—through competitive research,

comprehensive education abroad programs, international curriculum development and robust international student and scholar programs.

Unlike many universities, Kent State boasts a centralized system for internationalization with both education abroad and international student programs housed under the Office of Global Education, which can trace its roots to the Center for International and Comparative Programs in the College of Arts and Sciences.

"Kent State has always had a global presence in one way or another, but what we've been able to do over the past 50-plus years is to build that intentionally," says Melody Tankersley, PhD, senior vice president and provost. "Every day, we're looking to have more opportunities for our students to study abroad and see the world, as well as to bring the world to Kent State's campuses and our global partners."

Earlier this year, Kent State was the only university in the United States to receive the prestigious 2022 Senator Paul Simon Award for Comprehensive Internationalization from NAFSA: Association of International Educators. The award recognizes outstanding innovation and accomplishment in campus internationalization efforts as evidenced in mission, strategies, programs and results.

"The Senator Paul Simon Award is our nation's top prize for excellence in global education," Kent State President Todd Diacon says. "It is a richly deserved award that highlights our excellent education abroad programs and our ongoing success in enrolling and graduating international students."

The award is made even more meaningful by the timing of its presentation. Despite challenges posed by the pandemic and an emerging sense of xenophobia following months of isolation and fear of the coronavirus's spread, Kent State remained a stalwart supporter of global education.

"Having received the Simon award at this very moment validates the hard work of the people in the Office of Global Education, but also the vision and the motivation of Kent State to guarantee all of its students be immersed in an international environment," says Marcello Fantoni, PhD, vice president for global education. ➤



THE WORLD IS OUR CLASSROOM
EDUCATION ABROAD

Kent State University oversees its own study abroad programs, which allows the university to ensure the academic integrity of its offerings no matter where its students are studying. The academic rigor in each of Kent State's study abroad experiences is parallel to the curriculum taught at its Ohio campuses.

"We select institutions that have similar rankings or accreditations as us so our students can stay on track for graduation by taking credits that will be applicable," says Amber Cruxton, director of education abroad in the Office of Global Education. "Then we work with the academic units here to develop meaningful partnerships that meet the needs of their missions as well."

Students can select the length of their study abroad experiences, including a full academic year, a semester or a four-week institute. They also can participate in faculty-led trips and alternative spring or winter breaks, which are often shorter and less cost-prohibitive than a traditional semester abroad.

Kent State students from every Regional Campus participate in study abroad. Kent State University at Stark has an Office of Global Education Initiatives, which has a similar function as the Office of Global Education on the Kent Campus. The Stark office has some of its own international partnerships and programming, including Kent State Stark courses in Florence, Italy, that students can take at the regional rate.

"The fact that this is a strategic priority of the university indicates its commitment to cultivating all of the good things that global education fosters, such as cultural awareness and broadening perspectives," says Sarah Schmidt, assistant director of global education initiatives, who oversees the Kent State Stark Office of Global Education Initiatives, is an instructor of peace and conflict studies and is pursuing a doctorate in cultural foundations of education at Kent State. "As a university-wide priority, global education should be accessible to every student at Kent State."

International students also have the opportunity to complete a study abroad experience during their time at the university. By coming to Kent State, they gain access to the culture and academic offerings of not only the United States but the rest of the world. From 2018 to now, more than 200 international students at Kent State have studied abroad.

The Office of Global Education and several colleges throughout the university offer funds to help domestic and international students overcome the financial barriers that can be associated with studying abroad. And Kent State's Division of Philanthropy and Alumni Engagement recently established an endowment fund with the aim of providing a global education scholarship for all incoming students who wish to study abroad (see page 14).

From help obtaining a passport to covering travel expenses, tuition and more, the university is endeavoring to bring the world to its students.

Learn more about education abroad programs and scholarships at www.kent.edu/EducationAbroad. Read stories about study abroad programs on pages 16 to 39.

THE WORLD
AT OUR DOOR
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT
PROGRAMS

The world has taken notice of the outstanding educational opportunities Kent State has to offer," says Sean Broghammer, PhD, Kent State's vice president for enrollment management.

"Our Office of Global Education has successfully shared the good news around the globe that we have much to offer for students seeking a degree in the United States."

This Fall Semester 2022, Kent State University is host to 1,648 international students from 99 countries, a nearly 18% percent increase from the previous fall. Of that total number of international students, 967 are graduate students, a 37% increase from the previous fall. (See page 11 for more statistics.)

That robust international student population brings a wealth of perspectives, experiences and cultures to share with domestic faculty, staff and students, as well as with fellow international students from other countries.

"International students enhance the learning environment of a university," Marcello Fantoni says. "The diversity they bring enriches culture and opens individuals' minds."

For Maham Khan, a Fulbright scholar from Pakistan studying literature, coming to Kent State was an opportunity to access a better-quality education and to push herself beyond her comfort zone. Because of Kent State's support services, she connected with other Fulbright scholars before arriving in the United States, which eased her transition. She has since made even more friends, including other international and domestic students.

Though she came to Kent State with the understanding that being an international student would benefit her, Khan has since realized that the surrounding community benefits as well. The presence of international students offers an opportunity for people to confront their own prejudices and empowers personal growth that will impact themselves and the communities in which they live and work.

"We really need to work on finding each other, connecting with each other and reminding one another of our shared humanity," Khan says. "So many of the prejudices that people have can be unlearned just by having a conversation with another person."

See list of international student programs and resources on pages 12-13.

WORLDWIDE WELCOME
INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Kent State University has a long history of collaborating internationally. Its many partners include universities, institutions of higher education, governmental agencies, non-governmental agencies and private sector companies.

The most successful and active partnerships typically are a result of one or two committed faculty members from each institution who coordinate and promote the collaboration among their peers and students.

"International partnerships are one of the key components of international education," says Sarah J. Malcolm, BS '98, MA '05, executive director of Kent State's Office of Global Education and director of international partnerships, marketing and communications. "They help build a foundation for faculty and students to meet their international goals through research, faculty and student exchange, and international program development."

The International Partnerships division in the Office of Global Education assists with developing formal documentation of the relationship, such as a Memorandum of Agreement or contract.

"The work of international partnership development is often the behind-the-scenes work of relationship building, program design and contract management," Malcolm says. "This work helps lay the foundation for sustainable and long-term international education efforts that ensure faculty and students have opportunities to meet their international goals." ⚡

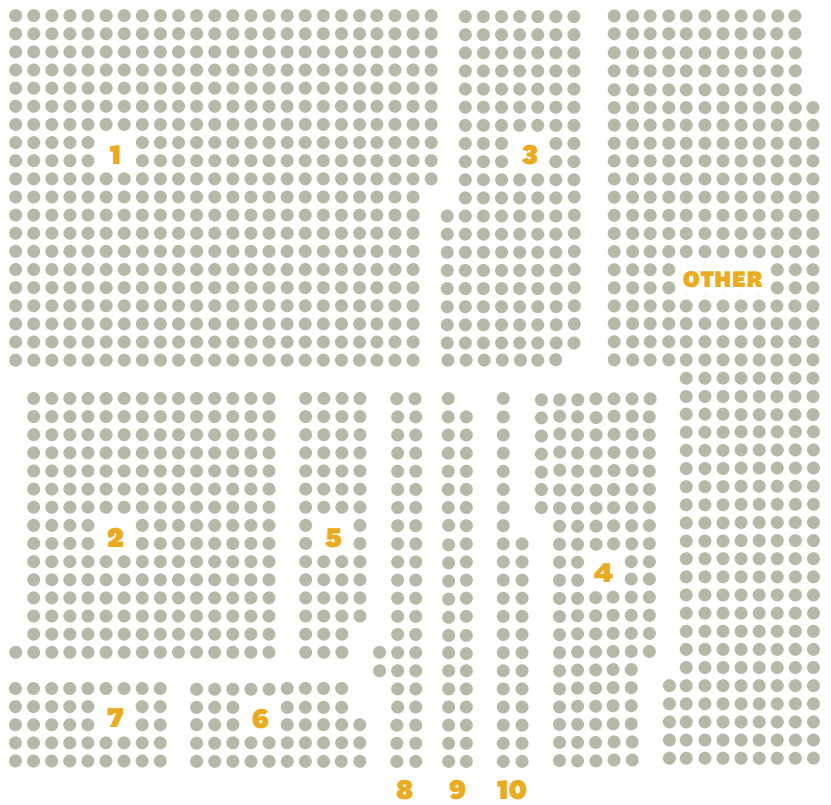
Learn more about international partnerships at www.kent.edu/globaleducation/international-partnerships.

International Students
at Kent State

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT FACTS AND
FIGURES FOR FALL 2022

Total Students: **1,648** | Total Countries: **99**

"We are proud to say that our international students are present in every Kent State University college," says Salma Benhaida, director of International Recruitment and Admissions and Sponsored Student Services in the Office of Global Education. "We also have 21 students at the Regional Campuses and students in the College of Podiatric Medicine. We do notice a large number of our international students gravitate toward STEM and STEM-related fields."



TOP TEN
SENDING
COUNTRIES:

1. **INDIA**
470 students (28.5%)
2. **BRAZIL**
211 students (13%)
3. **SAUDI ARABIA**
148 students (9%)
4. **CHINA**
127 students (8%)
5. **NIGERIA**
58 students (3.5%)
6. **NEPAL**
48 students (3%)
7. **BANGLADESH**
45 students (3%)
8. **SOUTH KOREA**
44 students (3%)
9. **CANADA**
41 students (2.5%)
10. **OMAN**
34 students (2%)

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES

To recruit and support the success of its international students, Kent State provides many programs and resources throughout the university, including the following:

INTERNATIONAL ADMISSIONS Based in the Office of Global Education, International Admissions supports Kent State University's goal to engage the world beyond its campuses. It recruits academically talented and culturally diverse international students, evaluates credentials received from institutions abroad, advocates on behalf of international applicants, facilitates international credit transfer and enhances administrative systems to smooth the process for international students to come to Kent State.

"Having been an international student myself, I have developed a passion for helping international students and their families find their home away from home at Kent State University," says Salma Benhaida, director of International Recruitment and Admissions and Sponsored Student Services. Fluent in English, Arabic and French, she came to Ohio as a student from Morocco. She earned bachelor's and master's degrees from The University of Akron and is pursuing a doctorate in education at Kent State.

"Moving to the United States has enabled me to understand some of the challenges international students face on their study abroad journey," Benhaida says. "My goal is to make the application and admission process as stress free and welcoming as possible."

Learn more at www.kent.edu/admissions?au=international.

SPONSORED STUDENT SERVICES More than 30% of international students enrolled at Kent State are partially or entirely supported by governments (U.S. or foreign), international organizations, public or private companies and other third-party entities. Countries represented by sponsored students include Brazil, Ecuador, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Namibia, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Russia, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Vietnam.

"Kent State University benefits from having sponsored students on campus as much as the students do," says Stacie Ansley, senior international admissions coordinator. "My sponsored students have exposed me to parts of the world I have only seen in my dreams."

Based in the Office of Global Education, Sponsored Student Services serves as a central point of contact for (and liaison among) sponsoring agencies, sponsored students and several offices across the university.

Learn more at www.kent.edu/admissions/sponsored-students.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT AND SCHOLAR SERVICES Based in the Office of Global Education, International Student and Scholar Services is a resource for maintaining students' immigration status, acclimating them to the United States and dealing with other issues international students face.

It strives to provide personalized support and make all international students feel connected to the university community well before they arrive in the United States—and for years after they return to their home country. International Student Orientation begins 10 weeks before students arrive at Kent State and includes a virtual course with short modules introducing students to everything they'll need while at Kent State, along with a GroupMe chat monitored by orientation leaders who answer students' questions in real time.

The International Student and Scholar Services team assists students through the entire process, from obtaining their visas to securing transportation from the airport. Once students arrive on campus, advisors meet personally with every international student to ensure they are adjusting, learning and connecting while at Kent State.

"The international character of Kent State University is in large part made possible by our more than 1,600 students from nearly 100 different countries," says Jef Davis, associate director of International Student and Scholar Services. "The International Student and Scholar Services team is here to help our international students and scholars navigate the university and U.S. culture. Our goal is to help them feel that Kent State University is not just a place they are visiting but is truly their 'home away from home.'"

International students can make new friends through programs and events hosted by International Student and Scholar Services, including the monthly Cultural Café (where international students present information about their home countries to other students, faculty and staff, often including traditional songs or dances) and the International Cook-Off (a competition each semester in which teams cook and serve food from their home countries). The cook-off is hosted by the Office of Global Education and supported by Kent State Dining Services.

Learn more at www.kent.edu/iss.

OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT AFFAIRS Kent State's Division of Student Affairs includes the Office of International Student Affairs, which aims to aid in the retention and academic success of international students by providing services related to cultural adjustment and a sense of belonging. Additionally, it implements strategies to help domestic students develop a global mindset and desire to study abroad.

The office facilitates two signature events each year: Homecoming International Celebration (an opportunity for international students to showcase their home countries and cultures during Homecoming Weekend) and International Talent and Fashion Show (an opportunity for international students to model traditional attire and participate in cultural performances each spring).

"The Office of International Student Affairs is devoted to being a support on campus for international students and domestic students alike," says Ash Mierau, interim director. "We help international students adjust to life in America and feel at home at Kent State, integrate global perspectives and build intercultural relationships that accurately reflect the wonderfully diverse community we have at Kent State."

"We do this through programs like the Global Village, a living-learning community for international and domestic students to intentionally live together; Conversation Partners, a program that pairs international and domestic students to meet once a week; and Res Airways, a biweekly program that lets international students teach students, staff and faculty about their home country—as well as many others."

Learn more at www.kent.edu/international.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS To support services, events and activities that benefit Kent State international students, the Office of Global Education collects a fee from international students each semester. A portion of those funds is available to international student organizations with a membership majority of international students. They can apply to use the International Student Event Fund for conducting activities and events that promote international understanding, facilitate interaction between cultures and enhance participation in university-wide events.

Kent State's Division of Student Affairs includes a Center for Student Involvement where international students can discover a number of student organizations to join, including those focused on specific cultures and countries.

Learn more at www.kent.edu/globaleducation/international-student-organizations.

THE GERALD H. READ CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL AND INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION The Gerald H. Read Center for International and Intercultural Education in the College of Education, Health and Human Services was created in 1987 through an endowment established by Professor Emeritus Gerald H. Read. Consistent with Kent State's strategic commitment to global cooperation, the center was designed to examine curricular issues related to international and intercultural education, to facilitate international student and scholar programming, to support exchange and research projects with an international and/or intercultural focus, and to support faculty-led education abroad in the college.

The Read Center has been the recipient of several federally supported grants and international scholar programs over the years. Sponsored through the U.S. Department of State, more than 350 international grantees from all over the globe have come to Kent State University through the International Leaders in Education Program as well as the Fulbright Teaching Excellence and Achievement in Media Literacy program.

Moreover, the Read Center, in its commitment to international exchange and scholarship, has hosted more than 200 visiting scholars from around the world, through the Aggarwal-Blackburn Visiting Scholars program. This program provides support for scholar acculturation and research via seminars and faculty mentorship while also introducing the Kent State community to new and culturally diverse scholarship. Finally, the center establishes linkages with stakeholders across Kent State and abroad in order to promote university internationalization and extend its impact.

"The Read Center is a peerless entity on the Kent Campus in that it acts as a catalyst for the advancement of international and intercultural education in diverse, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary ways," says Amanda Johnson, PhD, who became director of the center in 2020. "From leading and developing important relationships with international universities to supporting international education principles and practices with our local community educators, the center is in an incomparable position to lead the way for internationalization of the college and subsequently, the university as a whole." ⚡

Learn more at www.kent.edu/ehhs/ciie.

➤350
international
grantees
from
all over
the globe
have come
to KSU.

➤200
visiting
scholars
from
around
the world
have been
hosted by
KSU.

Expanding Access to Education Abroad

While one in four students currently studies abroad during their time at Kent State, many students are unable to access an international experience due to the cost. What if every student was able to receive scholarship funding toward global education? That question was the inspiration behind the Kent State Global Education Endowment.

Established with a lead gift from Valoree Vargo, vice president for Kent State University's Division of Philanthropy and Alumni Engagement and CEO of the Kent State Foundation, the endowment aims to provide every incoming undergraduate student with financial support for a study abroad experience.

"An opportunity to study abroad is an experience like nothing else," Vargo says. "Students are learning 24/7 when they're immersed in a new culture—both in and out of the classroom. The global education that Kent State offers our students is the best in the country, and I believe that access to that experience should be open to as many students as possible. To be able to support the Global Education Endowment personally and professionally is deeply meaningful to me."

Reaching an initial goal of \$20 million would provide a scholarship of approximately \$1,000 per student for the number of Kent State students who are currently studying abroad (about 25%).

The scholarships will be administered by the Office of Global Education, Division of Enrollment Management and Division of Philanthropy and Alumni Engagement.

The collective impact of \$20 million in one endowment is the fastest way to make more scholarships available to more Kent State students. This will be a differentiating factor for Kent State among public higher education institutions and will support enrollment and retention rates. Most importantly, it will enrich the student experience.

Kent State's greatest global education advocates who give a new gift to support the endowment will be welcomed into the Renaissance Scholars Society (see page 15). With their collective support, undergraduate students from every major and every college at any Kent State campus will be eligible to receive a scholarship from this fund once during their undergraduate career. The university will continue to grow the endowment to fulfill its ultimate goal of providing a global education scholarship to every undergraduate student who desires a study abroad experience.

Additionally, the Office of Global Education has a donor-supported fund specifically designed to assist students in obtaining their first passport or renewing an expired one. The cost of a passport can be a

stumbling block or stopping point for some students, preventing them from pursuing one of the many important global learning opportunities available to them at Kent State. The Project Passport Fund provides a portal to a future that includes global learning for students who have never left the country.

"At Kent State, we believe that exploring new places is vital to a greater understanding of the world around us," says Marcello Fantoni, PhD, vice president for global education. "We know that an international experience is one of the most direct and effective ways to change the life of a student for the better."

A global experience expands academic, professional and personal horizons and leads to greater employment opportunities. Kent State's Global Education Endowment will provide unprecedented access to global education, allowing students to dream bigger and gain a new world view. Studying abroad is the chance of a lifetime and, with this endowment, one that no Kent State student will have to miss. ⚡

Scan this QR code to give to the Global Education Endowment. Or go to <https://flashes.givetokent.org/campaign/global-education-endowment-fund/.C440600>.



JOIN THE RENAISSANCE

The Italian Renaissance was a cultural phenomenon that transformed our world forever—and the city of Florence was at its heart. As Kent State celebrates 50 years of its flagship program in Florence, Italy, the university has set its sights on the future. It has recently established the Kent State Global Education Endowment that, once fully funded, will provide access to a global education scholarship for all incoming undergraduate students who aspire to study abroad during their time at Kent State.

Such an ambitious goal would be the largest endowment in university history—and is only possible with philanthropic support. To help meet that goal, the university has created the Renaissance Scholars Society, a group of major gift donors who share the university's enthusiasm for a boundless education and an expanded worldview. The program aims to raise an initial \$20 million in five years or less to support the endowment fund and immediately help as many students as possible.

To become a member of the Renaissance Scholars Society, donors make a new gift (outright or five-year pledge) to the Kent State Global Education Endowment at one of five levels (\$50,000 to \$10 million). The society will offer exclusive opportunities to its supporters for travel and education abroad with renowned scholars, artists, lecturers, historians and faculty from Kent State and its international partners. It's a unique format that combines two of the university's core competencies: study abroad and lifelong learning.

Renaissance Scholars Society members will journey to Florence in October 2023 for the Kent State Florence program's 50th anniversary celebration, which includes a donor gala and access to experiences only available through Kent State. They also will receive advance invitations to attend future alumni and donor global education experiences at other locations beginning in 2024, as well as updates about global education.

Learn more about the Renaissance Scholar Society at www.kent.edu/renaissance.