

A World Awaits You

A Journal on People with Disabilities Traveling with a Purpose



International Students with Disabilities Study in the USA



National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange

Make #Access2USA A Reality

Are you a person with a disability that has thought about studying in the United States, but had some doubts about how it could happen? Yes? Reading this issue of A World Awaits You (AWAY) is a great place to start!

Record high numbers of international students are coming to the United States to pursue higher education and to study English, but students with disabilities remain underrepresented among them. What's stopping you?

The National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange has launched the #Access2USA campaign to increase participation of international students with disabilities studying in the United States and wants you to start accessing all of the possibilities. And there are many!

This issue of the AWAY, includes stories from students with disabilities, including those who are blind, Deaf, or wheelchair users, and those who have learning disabilities and traumatic brain injury, that have studied in the United States. The students share information about the impact of their program and tips for future students.

Funding can be one of the biggest barriers to studying in the United States. Read stories of students who found scholarships to study, such as the Fulbright scholarship. This is one of many scholarships available to you! Read more to find further options.

Accessibility in one country can look very different in another. Find out what types of accessibility these students experienced and what types of accommodations are available when studying in the United States.

In order to qualify for many opportunities to the United States, English language is essential. Learn more about the resources and services with The National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange, such as finding online English classes and coming to study English in the United States to open further opportunities for you.

Together we have to focus on understanding and removing access barriers, educating overseas counterparts and prospective students on accessibility in the United States, and creating effective recruitment and accommodation strategies.

Join us to take part in the #Access2USA campaign to increase the participation of international students with disabilities studying in the U.S.A.

No matter what your disability, no matter where you are from, no matter what you would like to study, there are options and opportunities! The time is now to start your #Access2USA story!

Our goal is to empower people with disabilities to take advantage of the same international exchange opportunities as everyone else, navigating access barriers along the way. For over two decades, free services and resources have been made possible by the National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange, a project sponsored by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State and administered by Mobility International USA.



www.miusa.org/ncde





Your Official Source on U.S. Higher Education

With thousands of accredited U.S. colleges and universities in the United States, how do you find the one that is right for you? EducationUSA Advisers around the world offer information, orientation, and guidance as you search for higher education institutions in the United States that fit your needs.

EducationUSA makes applying to a U.S. college or university clear EducationUSA Advising Centers

Over 400 Centers Worldwide

Provide Information to international students on

- Accredited U.S. colleges and universities
- Financial aid
- The student visa process
- Standardized testing

Serve the U.S. Higher Education Community by

- Organizing school visits, college fairs, virtual and on location
- Sharing information about foreign educational systems and scholarship programs
- Connecting U.S. and foreign educational institutions

Learn more at educationusa.state.gov



EducationUSA is a network of hundreds of advising centers in more than 170 countries, supported by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. EducationUSA Advising Centers actively promote U.S. higher education around the world by offering accurate, comprehensive, and current information about accredited educational institutions in the United States. To find an advising center, visit EducationUSA.state.gov.



Your Official Source on U.S. Higher Education



Table of Contents

PAGE 5

Affecting Change on a Continental Level

Hilda Bih Muluh



PAGE 21

Knocking on Closed Doors

Reem Abou Elenain



PAGE 9

A Circle of Support

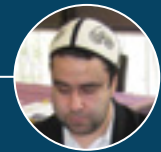
Gabriela Cordovez



PAGE 25

On the Go Globally

Mohammed Ali Loutfy



PAGE 12

7 Steps for #Access2USA

Floriane



PAGE 27

Distances Worth Discovering

Floriane



PAGE 13

More than a Language

Badri Ghimire



PAGE 31

Access to All Fields of Study

Noah Al Hadidi



PAGE 17

Succeeding at Your Own Pace

Mayuko Abe



PAGE 35

Infographic: Join the Numbers and Start Your #Access2USA



Home
of Champions

B
GATE



Home
of Cha



INTERNATIONAL
EXCHANGE

NAME

HILDA BIH MULUH

FROM

CAMEROON

TO

BERKELEY, CA

PROGRAM

YALI/MANDELA WASHINGTON FELLOWSHIP
PROGRAM - UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
(UC), BERKELEY



Affecting Change on a Continental Level

“There I was, near the Ed Roberts Campus at the University of California (UC), Berkeley, where the independent living movement all began and I was telling myself it could happen in my country too.”

Reflecting on her Mandela Washington Fellowship, the flagship program of President Obama’s Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) Hilda Bih Muluh says it starts with public policy.

“If we can change the national policy, then it will change a lot for people with disabilities both now and even those in the future; not just one person or one part of the country, but the nation together.”

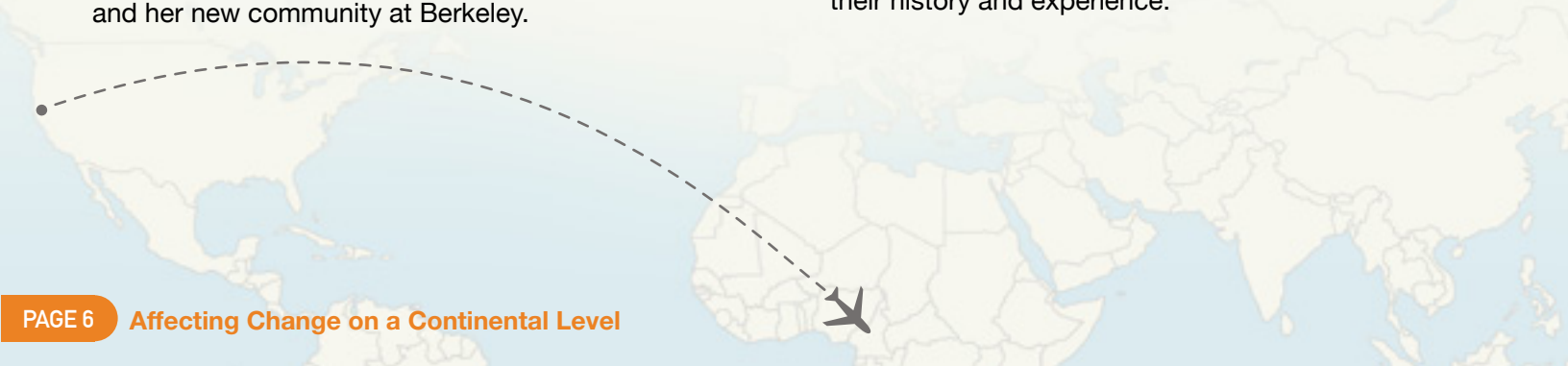
After acceptance in to the Mandela Washington Fellowship, sponsored by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State, Hilda was very nervous and had apprehensions. She was used to being around her family and had never left her country of Cameroon before. As a woman with muscular dystrophy, Hilda was also concerned because she knew she would need a full-time personal assistant. Luckily the program was able to provide assistance with the visa process, airfare, and living expenses to bring her sister as her personal assistant. This provided a lot more opportunity for Hilda to fully participate into her program and her new community at Berkeley.

During Hilda’s program at UC Berkeley’s Goldman School of Public Policy, she learned how to network more effectively with other people and organizations.

“I am more intentional and more strategic with my advocacy. As opposed to only focusing on case by case situations, I am now also looking at the bigger picture to affect greater change.”

Hilda not only gained knowledge from the Goldman School, but also by connecting with her Mandela Washington peers. She met others working on similar projects and found out what was going on in other African countries. “Together, we all came to learn from the American experience and then how to return home and cause change in our various countries.”

It was the first time Hilda experienced such independence and the first time she used a power wheelchair. She was able to get around independently, enter buildings on her own, and the first time she could get on a train without being carried by others. All of these first experiences had an impact on Hilda when she returned home. Looking around when she reached home she started thinking, “How did the U.S. achieve more accessibility? It’s not perfect in the United States, but we can learn from their history and experience.”





She has already reached out to other Mandela Washington fellows in Cameroon and the YALI initiative provided her a platform to talk about disability issues. “People listen more now that I’ve been a part of this program and they want to know what it is like in the United States, how we can make Cameroon better.”

Hilda is working on using the media to change perceptions of disability in the rural communities. Since radio and television are most common communication in Cameroon, Hilda has created both a radio and TV show to reach a larger community.

The Mandela Washington Fellowship “gives you a voice and it puts you into this powerful network, which should encourage more young African leaders with disabilities to apply.”

“As the program continues to grow, imagine the impact of having the voices of thousands of young leaders who are passionate about bringing change to Africa.”



Young African Leaders, It's Your Turn to Apply!
yali.state.gov



**INTERNATIONAL
EXCHANGE**

 NAME

GABRIELA CORDOVEZ

 FROM

ECUADOR

 TO

FORT LAUDERDALE, FL

 PROGRAM

**THE ART INSTITUTE OF
FORT LAUDERDALE - GRAPHIC DESIGN**



A Circle of Support

Life was easy for Gabriela Cordovez back home in Ecuador. She has a very supportive family that taught her many life skills and pushed her to always achieve her dreams. Gabriela knew with this support that she wanted to challenge herself to achieve more. With her family photos, favorite music, and favorite yucca breads packed, Gabriela was ready to pursue her studies at The Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale in Florida.

Gabriela has a learning disability and wanted to take extra preparations for her arrival to campus to ensure a successful and enjoyable experience. The transition of arriving into a new culture and academic system can cause stress that she preferred to reduce. She found it a great challenge to stay completely focused and to retain information. At home, she never felt any struggle because her family was always very patient and supportive.

“I think that for someone with my situation, the United States offers the best support and opportunities to help me succeed.”

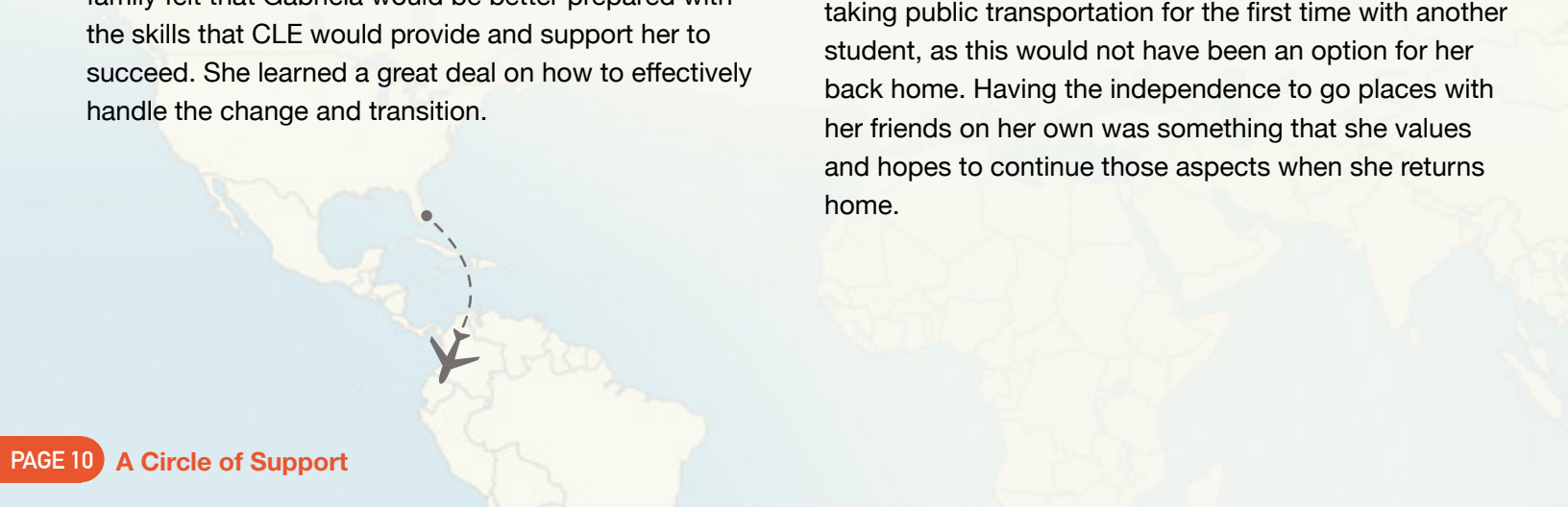
Gabriela’s parents found out about the College Living Experience (CLE) program, an organization that supports students with disabilities to successfully complete their degrees by offering instruction such as independent living skills, social skills, and academic tutoring. Her family felt that Gabriela would be better prepared with the skills that CLE would provide and support her to succeed. She learned a great deal on how to effectively handle the change and transition.

“I had my doubts about not being able to handle all these changes, but I learned it is important to not miss the big picture and focus on the result that would come at the end, which would be completing my studies and preparing myself for a bright future.”

Gabriela recalls that the first week was a bit nerve wracking, not knowing anyone, and being outside of her comfort zone. Her housing situation was challenging, since it was the first time she lived on her own and was doing everything herself. She remembers the Art Institute campus, where she is studying graphic design, as being intimidating because of the size. She quickly learned her way around though and was relieved to meet other international students at CLE that spoke Spanish. CLE also played a crucial role to support Gabriela meeting deadlines and staying on track with her studies.

“CLE helped me with time management, school support, motivation and challenged me to do my best.”

As Gabriela reflects on her first year in the United States and her most rewarding experience, it reminds her of taking public transportation for the first time with another student, as this would not have been an option for her back home. Having the independence to go places with her friends on her own was something that she values and hopes to continue those aspects when she returns home.



“I realize that the most valuable gift is the opportunity for independence that I have been given. I am able to control what I choose to do and this is a great responsibility. I am grateful to my parents for providing me with this wonderful opportunity, and I want to give back to all those that have made this possible for me.”

Gabriela’s Tip: “Proper time management between study and personal time is one of the most complicated issues to deal with as a new student. Make sure to make all necessary arrangements before arriving to the U.S. and take time to orient yourself to a new culture, community, and campus.”



Learn More about College Living Experience
experiencecle.com

7 Steps for #Access2USA

There are seven days of the week, seven colors of the rainbow, seven seas, seven continents, and seven steps to study in the USA as a student with a disability!

- 1 START LOOKING!** Remember that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) gives you the right to access educational programs offered on U.S. soil, so find an opportunity that fits your interest.
- 2 APPLY!** You have the right to an accessible application and admission process, if needed. Many programs will allow you access to an advisor who will provide assistance.
- 3 START STUDYING!** You have the right to an accessible test for admission purposes, such as the TOEFL and GRE, if needed. Start studying and preparing for the exams.
- 4 PREPARE!** If you need disability-related accommodations, request them as soon as possible. The testing agencies will provide you reasonable accommodations for exams such as the GRE, TOEFL, and SAT's, but you need to request them far in advance.
- 5 LEARN!** You should have access to classrooms, labs, libraries, housing, transportation, and cafeterias to ensure you can focus on your academic goals.
- 6 ASK!** While you will have many resources and opportunities available, no one is going to assume that you want them. Don't be afraid to speak up, and advocate for yourself.
- 7 HAVE FUN!** Engage in adaptive sports, recreation, and other exciting on-campus activities. Many find that this is a great way to make friends and feel more included.

There are many more steps to take, such as confirming funding options, health insurance, and immigration matters. Start early and don't forget the steps above!



Check out more tips and resources

miosa.org/plan/coming-to-us



NAME

BADRI GHIMIRE

FROM

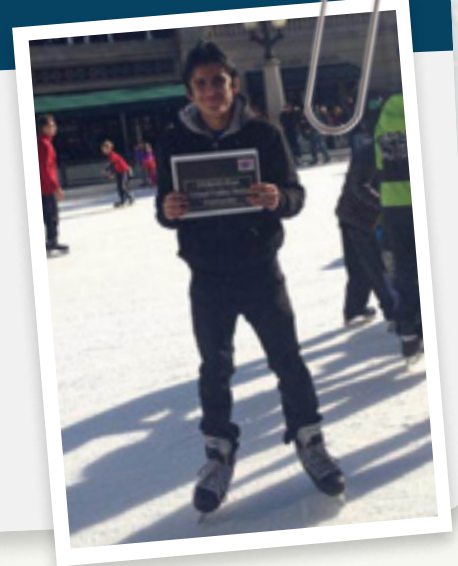
NEPAL

TO

GRAND VALLEY, MI

PROGRAM

GLOBAL UNDERGRADUATE EXCHANGE
PROGRAM - GRAND VALLEY STATE
UNIVERSITY



More than a Language

“It was wonderful. I had never had that experience before, being in an environment surrounded by so many people who were hearing. It was a great education for me.”

Badri Ghimire was born Deaf and grew up with three siblings who were also Deaf. His mother raised the kids on her own and always encouraged them to pursue their passion.

Badri’s passion is accounting and math, but he never thought he would have a chance to put that interest to work, especially in the United States (U.S.). Badri was accepted to the Global UGRAD program at Grand Valley State University in Michigan, a program sponsored by the U.S. Department of State’s, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA).

During his program, he had the chance to obtain an accounting internship at the Mercantile Bank of Michigan. This was the high point of his program. He enjoyed working with figures and ensuring all of the transactions matched and were in order.

Growing up in Nepal, Badri had gone to a school for Deaf children and youth. He primarily learned Nepali and Nepalese Sign Language. His school provided basic English skills, but they did not offer further opportunities to advance in the language. Once he felt his interest in learning a higher level of English, he decided to teach himself. He also learned basic ASL on his own before arriving to the U.S.

When he first started attending classes at Grand Valley, he was shocked to discover he was the only Deaf student in the classroom.

“I wondered, ‘How am I going to communicate with people?’ I didn’t know ASL [American Sign Language]. But there were many international students and they helped me out.”

Badri had support from three interpreters, but they all used ASL and signed very quickly. Initially he was frustrated, but over time he and his interpreters made things work.

“It took practice, a lot of repetition, patience, and being willing to make the communication work. I’m glad I had my English background, which provided me an added benefit when we got stuck.”

At Grand Valley, Badri studied ASL, English composition, math, accounting, civics, and history. His biggest boost in learning ASL, he says, was a trip he took during his winter break to Rochester, New York, to visit his brother, who is also Deaf. Rochester has a large Deaf community, and Badri was thrown into the middle of it.

“Everybody signed so quickly—it was like being back home in Nepal. I picked up ASL very quickly. It was a very accessible environment.”

Badri also visited New York City, where he experienced more aspects of U.S. culture, and discovered some welcome familiarity—Indian restaurants.

“Indian culture and Nepalese culture are very similar and so is the food. I was very excited to get real, authentic Indian food in the United States.”





Badri integrated into his community as much as he could during his time at Grand Valley. He volunteered with a community art project and also joined a Deaf Club for students who wanted to learn about Deaf culture and ASL. Often when his friends in the club texted or spoke to him in English, Badri would teach them how to communicate the concept using ASL.

“Even though they were hearing and I was Deaf, we were all learning about the American Deaf experience. It was a struggle at first, but over time I developed friendships with people in the group, and we were able to progress together. It was a reciprocal, beneficial community.”

Badri knows that changes need to be made at high levels of Nepali government in order to change public perceptions of Deaf people. He is part of a group that is advocating to have Nepali sign language recognized as a national language.

“We have lots of room for improvement in Nepal, especially for people who are Deaf, who want to be successful and can be successful. Education is the number one need. They can see me as a role model now. I worked in a bank at the same level as my hearing peers. I can share that with the Deaf community.”

There are no interpreting services in colleges in Nepal, except for one that only offers Education as a major for Deaf students. Therefore, Badri hopes to return to the United States and attend Gallaudet University in Washington D.C., a university for Deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing students, or Rochester Institute of Technology to pursue his degree in Business to get a career in banking or finance.

“I want to finish the work that started with my world changing experience in Michigan.”



Global UGrad

exchanges.state.gov/non-us/program/global-undergraduate-exchange-program-global-ugrad



 INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE

 NAME

MAYUKO ABE

 FROM

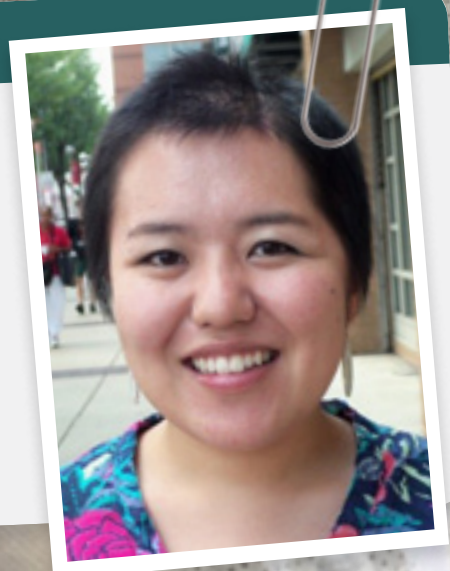
JAPAN

 TO

PHILADELPHIA, PA

 PROGRAM

TEMPLE UNIVERSITY – NEUROSCIENCE AND AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES



Succeeding at Your Own Pace

Arriving to Temple University in Philadelphia confused and excited like many other international students, Mayuko Abe attended the orientations, walked across the large campus, got lost many times, but easily asked for help to get from one building to the next. She came to the United States (U.S.) from Japan to pursue her studies in Neuroscience and African American Studies. It wasn't until the following spring, however, that she would discover the disability services office, after a car accident caused her to have a traumatic brain injury as well as fractures to her ribs and pelvis. What did this mean for Mayuko?

As challenging as it could be, Mayuko decided to shift her priorities to ensure she had the proper support to still achieve her goals for coming to the United States. And through this process, she gained tremendous skills, personal development, and self-worth.

“Talk to staff at the International Office and Disability Services Office. They will provide you with great advice and support. Also join student organizations to meet new people and feel more integrated on campus.”

Immediately after her accident, Mayuko received one month of inpatient treatment and a full year of outpatient therapy, including art therapy. She found that art therapy helped her with expressing herself and reflecting on her

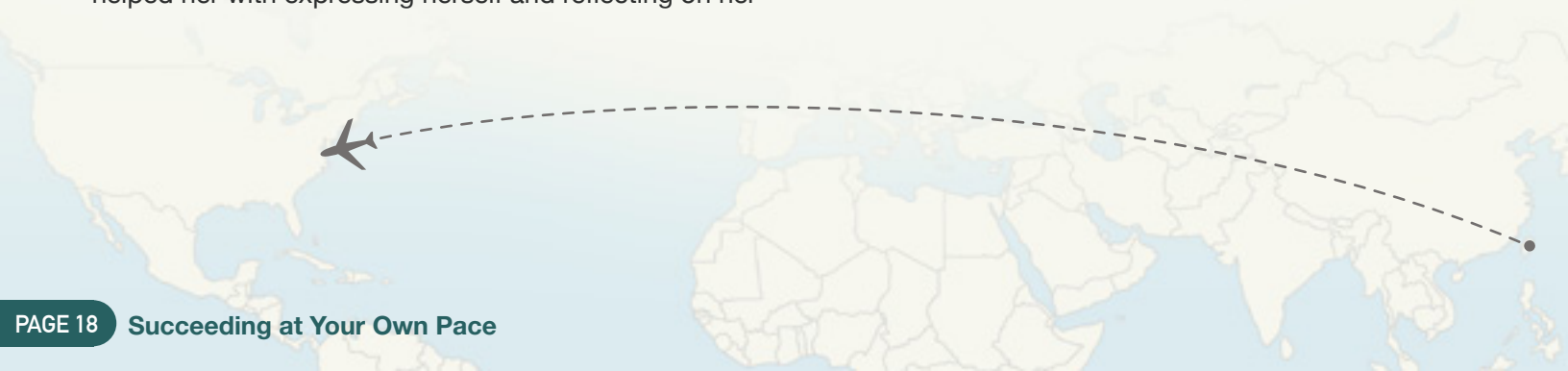
own thoughts and feelings. Many art programs involve individuals coming together and drawing, painting, and doing other non-rule oriented art work. This allows people who have sustained a traumatic brain injury to explore art at their own pace. The class was in a quiet setting, which provided the individuals time for self-reflection as they comfortably returned back to their routine.

“It helped me remember who I was before the deep coma caused by my brain injury. Since then, it still helps me avoid feelings of loneliness.”

Mayuko found so much value in her art therapy classes that she began taking art classes at Temple University. This supported her as she re-integrated into her program and to continue her self-reflection as she faced new challenges. After starting classes again, she remembers feeling like a perfectionist and that she had to work even harder after her brain injury. The stress and pressure caused her to have heightened medical issues.

“I'm a person with disabilities, so the most important thing is to stay healthy by eating and sleeping well, doing exercise, taking my medication, and not to look down on or discredit myself.”

Along with Mayuko's art therapy, she also received a lot of support from the international office, disability services office, friends, family, medical professionals and student organizations. She joined the international student association and met many new friends. She also worked as a Japanese language class assistant on campus to meet people interested in her culture.





She spoke about her disability with friends and others she met, as she occasionally found it difficult having a non-apparent disability when people would make assumptions or make her feel uncomfortable if they didn't know about her disability.

“Not everyone is super rich. Not everyone is Miss Universe. Just enjoy your own life. Your life process is like a turtle, not a panther, but as long as you are healthy, have your own goals, and keep going forward, it's all good.”



**Read More About
Art Therapy**
arttherapy.org

Five Health Considerations

- 1 Health insurance can be complicated. Confirm you will have insurance coverage.**
- 2 Research what is covered by the health insurance, specifically for pre-existing conditions.**
- 3 Make sure to bring all of your health documentation with you and have it translated to English.**
- 4 Speak with your international office about reduced course load options for medical reasons.**
- 5 Stay healthy and learn about on and off campus support for students with disabilities.**

Knocking on Closed Doors

Many times it's not the experiences we have that are our biggest achievements, but it's what happens as a result of these experiences that has the greatest impact.

Reem Abou Elenain, who serves as an EducationUSA Adviser in Alexandria, Egypt, advises students who want to study in the United States. Before taking her position at EducationUSA, she was a Fulbright grantee for the Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) program, sponsored by the U.S Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, teaching Arabic at Allegheny College in Meadville, Pennsylvania.

When Reem returned to Egypt after her Fulbright program, she continued working as an English instructor, but also took every opportunity to share her experience and to encourage people to apply for degree programs or exchange programs to the United States.

"After I became an adviser at EducationUSA, my goal was to help as many students as I could, but I also wanted to engage students who would be intimidated to apply to study in the United States; those thinking these kinds of possibilities are not for them; or that it would not be possible for them to study in the United States."

After one year at EducationUSA, Reem realized that there was a group of people that she wasn't reaching and who face even greater challenges. This group of people were students with disabilities.

"I reached out to an association for visually impaired people and have started to learn about the challenges they face, and I wanted to plan a way to overcome them."

The Challenges Reem Learned

- 1 Many students with disabilities do not know that they are eligible to U.S. colleges and universities.**
- 2 Students with disabilities often do not have access to a quality education. Many times, their only option is to join special public schools that don't integrate non-disabled students.**
- 3 There is a lack of access to English language training for students with disabilities.**
- 4 Blind and low vision students are barred from pursuing many majors, especially STEM fields due to lack of technology and access to equal education.**



**Contact your local EducationUSA Office
to Start Your #Access2USA**

educationusa.state.gov



See Reem's Steps to Inclusion



Set Expectations, See Benefits

Know that students with disabilities are underrepresented in international exchange programs and that everyone should have **EQUAL ACCESS** to opportunities to study abroad. After students gain access to quality education, they can contribute the skills and access they experienced in the United States back in their home country.

“It would give them the tools to help other generations of visually impaired people to have access to better lives and more opportunities.”

Targeted Outreach

Be **PROACTIVE** by including students with disabilities in study abroad fairs. Low participation rates are likely not because they don't want to join, but they may not realize that they are welcome and that organizers can provide assistance. Reem has established a strong relationship with a blind association in Alexandria and is now looking to reach out to other disability organizations.

“I believe that everyone should have an equal chance to gain access to opportunities to study abroad.”

Educate Students About the Opportunities

Make sure to EDUCATE students with all types of disabilities about #Access2USA for their studies and understand what support they need to make it happen.

“I always tell all my students to knock on closed doors. When they think it is ‘impossible’ to gain admissions to U.S. universities. They simply don’t know, and often, many doors open.”

Plan and Find Solutions

Reem CONNECTED with a few local schools and invited their high level English-speaking students to volunteer to teach English to students with disabilities that had little English proficiency. She believes, change can only happen when people with and without disabilities are integrated together in society.



INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE

NAME

MOHAMMED ALI LOUTFY

FROM

LEBANON

TO

WASHINGTON, DC

PROGRAM

FULBRIGHT STUDENT PROGRAM - AMERICAN UNIVERSITY



On the Go Globally

“Universities in the United States work a lot to encourage self-expression, character, and confidence.”

The World Bank, Fulbright Program, and the World Blind Union are a few opportunities that has Mohammed Ali Loutfy moving across the world map. There could be no better fit for someone fascinated about international studies, different cultures, and learning about disability inclusion across the world.

Mohammed, who is blind, attended law school in his home country of Lebanon before arriving to the United States for a professional experience. He was offered a position at the World Bank in Washington, DC and thrived surrounded by such diversity and access for people with disabilities. His experience at the World Bank drove him to find further opportunities to enhance his personal and professional growth.

When Mohammed returned to Beirut, he applied and was accepted for a Fulbright scholarship, sponsored by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State, to pursue his Master’s

studies at the American University in Washington, DC. Mohammed was not new to international travel and has traveled to places like Dubai, France, India, Pakistan, Senegal and Spain, but his experience in Washington, DC remains one of his most enriching.

“I never imagined that I would experience such access to so many books, journals, and articles so easily.”

In addition to having access to these materials, it was refreshing and energizing for Mohammed to be in classrooms that encouraged open and straight forward discussions with professors. He learned many things during his studies at American University, but two personal points stood out for him. The first was how to take advantage of opportunities.

Mohammed learned how to break barriers that he had within himself in order to apply for his Fulbright program. He assumed as many do, that programs are limited for people with disabilities. Now he knows that the opportunities are limitless and he can focus now on all of the possibilities rather than the barriers.

The second skill Mohammed developed was taking advantage of the resources all around him.

“It is an amazing experience to be at an institution that provides support for students to make life as easy as possible, so they can focus on their academic success.”

Mohammed utilized the support of the international office, disability services office, assistive technology lab, and students groups just to name a few.

Mohammed put aside any challenges about being in a new country and instead enjoyed working side by side with people from so many different backgrounds. As a person who enjoys interacting with people, it was the perfect setting for Mohammed to express himself openly and to not limit himself and his abilities.

“Studying in the United States is an opportunity in itself for the academic value, but also having access to the campus and the community is another opportunity for someone who has never experienced such a level of access.”

After completing his Fulbright program, Mohammed returned to Lebanon. He subsequently applied for a doctoral program at American University. He was accepted and once he completes Mohammed looks forward to joining a university or disability organization to promote disability inclusion and using his research to increase access and opportunities for people with disabilities.

Mohammed’s Motto: “Take the step, be brave, and don’t shy away. Go online and learn about the opportunities to study abroad.”



Apply for a Fulbright Scholarship like Mohammed!

foreign.fulbrightonline.org/about/foreign-fulbright



INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE

NAME

FLORIANE

FROM

FRANCE

TO

COLUMBIA, SC

PROGRAM

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA –
INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS



Distances Worth Discovering

Growing up in a French military family, Floriane traveled internationally from a very young age, including the diverse landscapes and people of America. Her next trip to the United States, however, would be on her own terms.

Floriane, who has muscular dystrophy, has been using a power wheelchair since age three, and when she was eighteen years old, she joined disability groups that planned holiday travels. She has traveled from her home country of France to the souks in Morocco to the museums in London.

“If you struggle at home, you won’t necessarily struggle in other countries. There are always great surprises!”

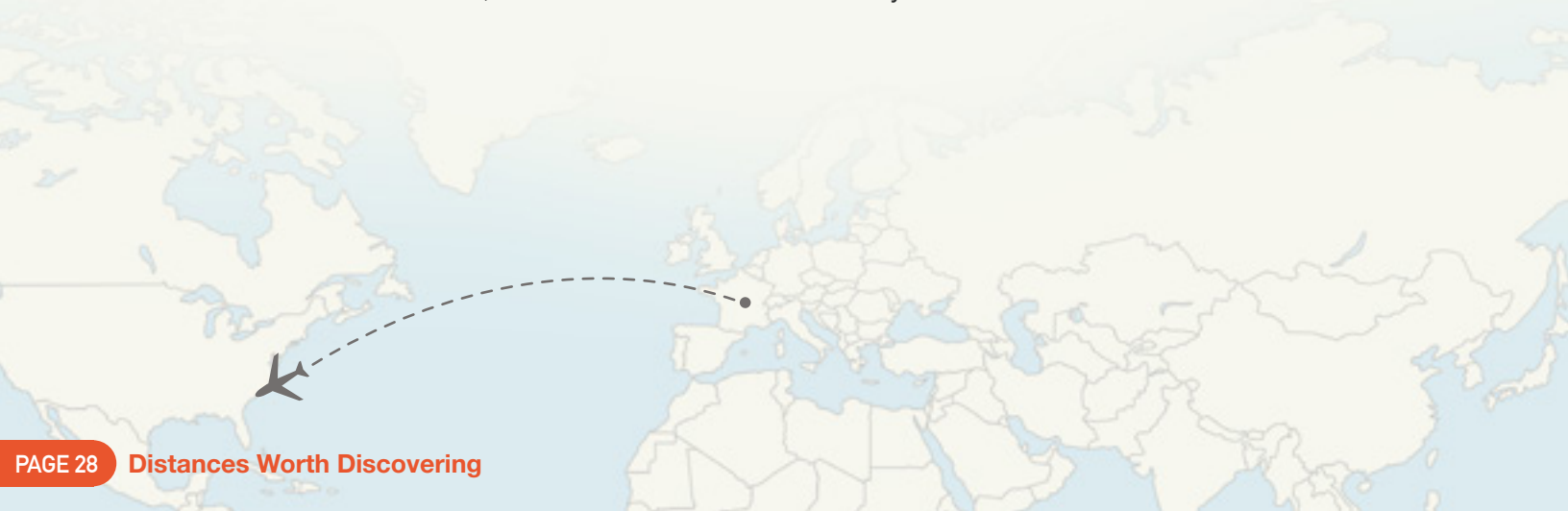
This love for discovery of cultures would carry on not only with her personal endeavors, but also her educational pursuits.

Floriane’s graduate program in Business Management in Paris offered an international component to complete one year in Spain and one year in the United States with the University of South Carolina’s Masters in International Business. This sounded just right for Floriane.

“Plan as far as advance as possible and think about what’s important for you to have a successful and enjoyable time during your studies.”

In France, students with disabilities receive scholarships to pursue higher education. Therefore, most of her funding expenses were set for her studies in the United States. Floriane then made arrangements for a friend to join her for the program to be her personal assistant for transferring to and from her wheelchair. Her friend joined her after applying for a tourist visa, and could not stay longer than six-month increments.

There are options to find personal assistant services in the United States, but Floriane enjoyed sharing new discoveries with her friend and it offered more flexibility for spontaneous trips to diverse cities, such as Atlanta and New York City.





When Floriane arrived to the United States, a big apartment on a beautiful, tranquil campus in South Carolina awaited her. Coming from Paris, she was used to being in a bustling city with much smaller flats. She also used many options of public transportation in Paris, which her smaller community in South Carolina did not offer. Getting around campus is easier in the United States without relying on a personal assistant as she did in Paris, but going to town would be easier with a car in South Carolina.

Access to public transportation is important to Floriane, and for some students it may be climate issues, such as navigating in the cold and snow or difficulties in hotter temperatures. These are all important factors to think about when deciding not only what to study, but where to study.

Floriane found that #Access2USA opens your mind, prepares you for future jobs, and gives you the opportunity to meet people from so many backgrounds.

“With the will you can travel everywhere and meet fantastic people. All of the energy to make it happen is worth it!”



Read More About “Using Personal Assistance Services Abroad”

miosa.org/resource/tipsheet/personalassistant



NAME

NOAH AL HADIDI

FROM

OMAN

TO

FORT COLLINS, CO

PROGRAM

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY –
COMPUTER INFORMATION SYSTEMS



Access to All Fields of Study

Blind international students from certain world regions have less access to math learning beyond primary school because their teachers often did not have the tools, such as alternative teaching methods, assistive technology, and/or tactile graphics. People who are blind often are funneled to certain fields of study, such as the arts, while the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields are frequently seen as not viable options. This was the reality that Noah Al Hadidi was not going to accept.

“When I was a little kid, I used to play with electronic devices and I loved how they helped people. Later I moved to computers, and that’s how it all started.”

Noah grew up in Oman, but entered high school in Saudi Arabia because he found that Oman did not have the resources he needed and there was a school for the blind in Saudi Arabia he could attend. He had a passion for computer science and stayed focused on achieving his goals. This motivated him to attend Colorado State University to complete his Bachelor’s degree in Computer Science and minor in Business and to continue on with his Master’s degree in Computer Information Systems.

Others who know Noah also recognized his academic talent and dedication. While in high school in Saudi Arabia, he worked for a company that distributes new technology and software for the blind community. His manager encouraged him to apply for admission to universities in the United States. So he did.

“Coming to the United States made me a different person, where I wanted to be challenged.”

He enjoyed the opportunities to participate in activities that weren’t possible for him back home, such as biking, camping, canoeing, hiking, kayaking, running, skiing, and more.

Back home, Noah found limited public transportation or services available for him. People with disabilities depended heavily on community support from family members or friends to get around. When Noah arrived to the United States, he enjoyed his independence by having access to public transportation and, when needed, paratransit services, which provides additional routes and door-to-door services for people with disabilities.



“In the United States I’m living independently. Most people back home are not gaining life skills, such as cooking and cleaning.”

Noah also started playing Goalball in the United States, a team sport designed specifically for blind athletes, with some American friends. He noticed that many of them had guide dogs. It wasn’t something Noah ever thought about having back home because it is not common at all. He asked his friends some questions about the benefits and process. He started to get excited about the idea to have a guide dog and become more independent. He contacted Guide Dogs for the Blind to get more information and went to their office for an initial assessment.

After a one year process, Noah soon met his companion and guide dog Amiga. Having Amiga has given Noah the opportunity to become more independent, accomplish things faster than before, navigate winters in Colorado more easily, meet more people, and most importantly enjoy having his companion by his side.

Noah could not be happier with his decision to apply and come to the United States, not only for his academics, but also for what he discovered about himself. When he returns home, Noah plans to start an organization to educate people who are blind about assistive technology, life skills, and access in the STEM fields.



Noah's Top Accessibility Tools for Blind Students:

- 1** For browsing the internet, reading books, and handouts, Noah uses a screenreader, such as Jaws.
- 2** To take notes, Noah uses a Braille Display.
- 3** To keep track in class, Noah makes sure to bring a voice recording device.
- 4** Noah uses a braille embosser to write math braille, also known as Nemeth code.
- 5** When listening to audiobooks, Noah prefers “Daisy books” and also uses VR stream and his iPhone.
- 6** For living independently, Orientation and Mobility (O&M) training can be found through blind organizations in your community or through your disability services office on campus.
- 7** To check the temperature when cooking meat, a talking thermometer helped Noah.
- 8** When shopping, Noah uses DigitEyes to scan the bar codes and a Money Reader to scan his currency, both available as iPhone apps.
- 9** Noah finds BlindSquare app on his iPhone useful so he know the places around him.
- 10** When on the road, Noah uses the National Federation of the Blind “NFB Newslines” to read the newspaper.



More Tips for Blind and Low Vision Students Studying Abroad

miosa.org/resource/tipsheet/blindtips

Join the Numbers and Start Your #Access2USA

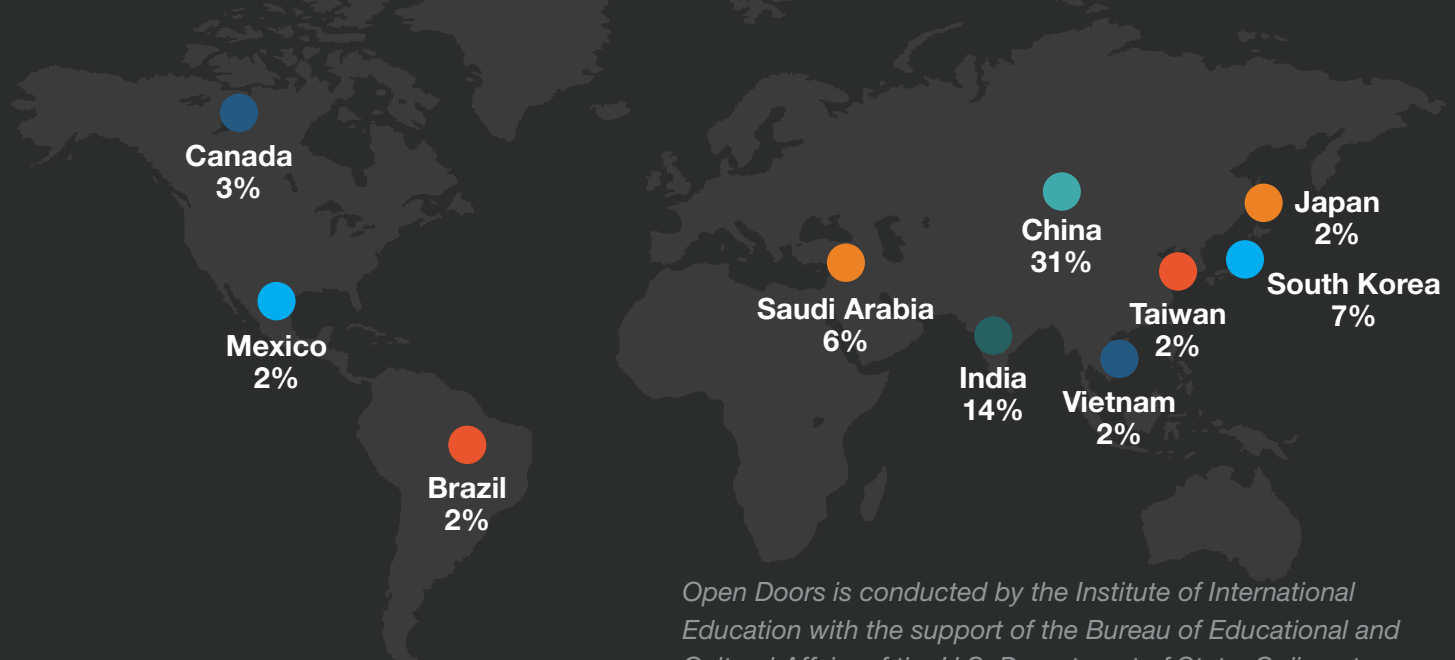
International Students with All Types of Disabilities Study in the United States



National Survey on Student Engagement by first year international/foreign national students in 2014.

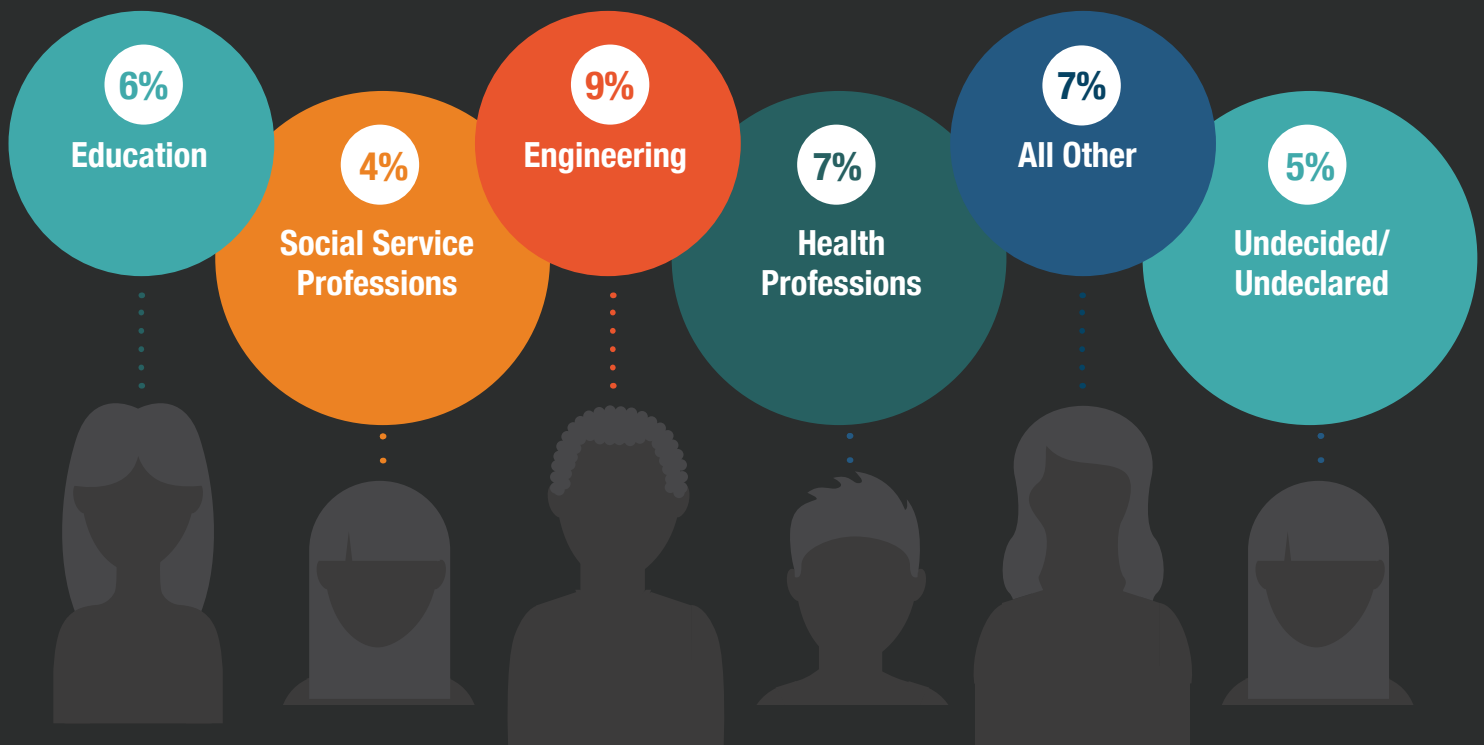
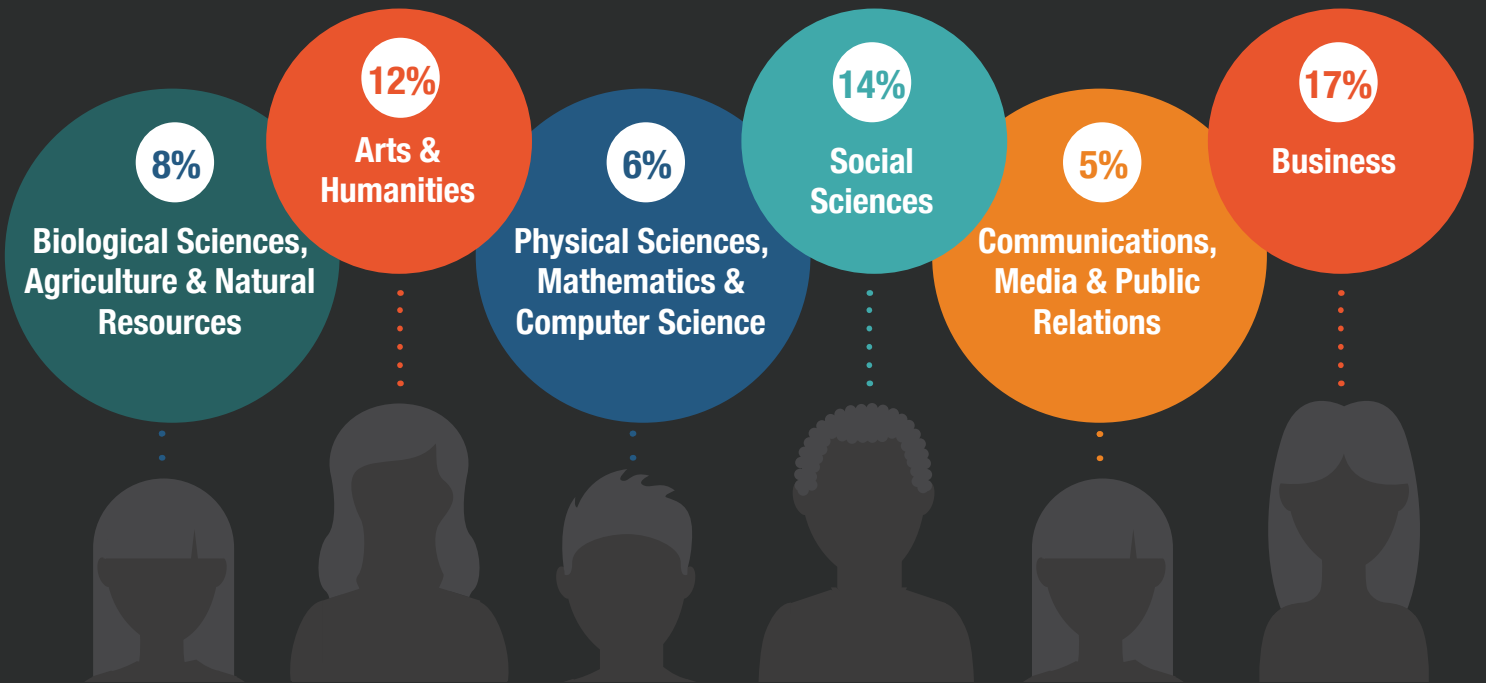
Top Ten Places of Origin of International Students in the United States

58% of International Students come from China, India, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia.



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No Limitations: What International Students with Disabilities Are Studying in the United States



National Survey on Student Engagement 2014 first year and senior international/foreign national students in the U.S. fields of study.



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