

Int'l programs rebound

Foreign students, abroad learning hit by pandemic

ONLY IN NEWSDAY

BY CAROL POLSKY

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When Madina Tuktina, 19, arrived at Adelphi University in Garden City in January of last year to study marketing, she was one of three students from Kazakhstan. This fall, 10 more arrived.

"This semester it's a good number," said Tuktina, who works in the university's International Services, which assists the 492 international students from 71 countries now on campus. But, she added, "not what it was before COVID."

The pandemic caused dramatic reductions in numbers of Long Island students studying abroad, and foreign students studying in the region. In 2020, during the first year of COVID-19, students were whisked home, and visa delays and travel restrictions nearly halved the number of new foreign students nationwide. But numbers nationally began to rebound by last fall — and by this fall, some Long Island schools were back on track, while others are still recovering.

Faculty-led trips, semesters at foreign universities, and spring break and summer programs have resumed.

"We have kids streaming through our office really enthusiastic for the trips we're offering for spring break 2023 and in December," said Kimberly Langenmayr, director of international education at Molloy University in Rockville Centre.

Molloy students were back in Italy and Spain this summer, with trips coming up to Vietnam in December, and Italy, Austria, Switzerland, India and Belgium in the spring.

"Parents are enthusiastic, the

students are eager. . . They're eager and open and it's just the right time in their development" to travel, Langenmayr said, noting how COVID took "so many of their benchmark opportunities."

Before COVID, she said, trips were offered to the entire student body and had no specific academic focus. Post-COVID, she said, travel groups will center on experiential education: nursing and public health in India, social work in Belgium, and in Rome, a focus on religious new media communication. And groups will be a more manageable size, up to 25 rather than up to 50 participants.

"COVID is no longer gripping us in fear, but we still have to be on our toes," Langenmayr said.

Fewer students from China

The trips are also back on at Hofstra, St. Joseph's and SUNY schools, from semesters abroad at foreign universities to weekslong faculty-led trips during winter, spring and summer breaks.

At Adelphi, one student studied abroad last fall after signing a COVID waiver, and four more in the spring, also with a signed waiver. In January, faculty-led programs will resume, and so far, said Shannon Harrison, director of Adelphi's Center for International Education, 66 students have applied for winter and spring trips.

Harrison said she'd observed that many study-abroad program providers have narrowed their options since the pandemic, however, and some countries still have restrictions in place.

Stony Brook University lists study-abroad opportunities in 25 countries, from semesters at

foreign universities to explorations of Red Sea coral reefs, Tanzanian safaris, and public health options in Peru.

But the pandemic is still reshaping international enrollment at Stony Brook, where the number of foreign students on campus has dropped each year since 2019, from 4,599 to 3,603 this fall. In particular, the number of students from China, the top country of origin, fell most, from 2,497 to 1,583.

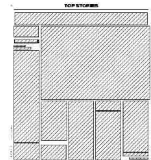
Stony Brook officials said Chinese graduate student enrollment peaked in 2015, even before the pandemic, citing an expansion of China's own higher education capacity. Officials said they were working to diversify foreign recruitment.

Meanwhile, more U.S. residents were admitted as freshmen to partially compensate for the drop in international students, data shows. The drop in international students, who pay higher tuition than New York residents, contributed to pandemic-caused budget losses at Stony Brook, officials said at the time.

Other schools also have seen declines in Chinese enrollment. At Adelphi, which saw a 24.4% drop in international students from 2019 to 2020 and a 4% increase the following year, the number of Chinese students fell by 76.8% between fall 2019 and this fall.

"We have seen a significant increase in students from Pakistan, and the number of Indian students has stayed close to pre-pandemic levels," said spokeswoman Taylor Damian, noting that India remained a top feeder country.

Some schools have reversed declines in international enrollment.



Long Island University, with campuses in Brookville and

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WHAT TO KNOW

- **The number of new international students is rebounding** after sharp drops during the COVID pandemic, but many universities and colleges remain below pre-pandemic levels.
- **Enrollment of Chinese students began to decline even before the pandemic**, while numbers rise from Pakistan, India and dozens of other countries.
- **Study-abroad programs for U.S. students are resuming in earnest** for winter, spring and summer breaks.

Brooklyn, has seen an increase in international students — from 540 in 2019 to 705 now — despite a decline in Chinese students.

Michael Berthel, vice president of student affairs and enrollment, said, “The number of visa students from China has trended steadily downward over the last decade even before visa changes took place a few years ago, but LIU has seen an increase in recent years in international students coming from India, Pakistan, Spain and Canada.”

‘Students couldn’t get here’

At the New York Institute of Technology, with campuses in Old Westbury and Manhattan, before the pandemic about 440 international students would typically enroll each fall. That

fell to 200 in the fall of 2020.

“That was the worst of it for us. The students couldn’t get here,” said Joseph Posillico, vice present for enrollment management. “Now we’re back up to 540 just in new students that came in this year, which we are very happy about.”

Overall international students number 1,000 — 125 in Old Westbury, the rest in New York City — with many seeking engineering and computer science degrees, he said.

Karen Vahey, dean of admissions, said foreign students are offered similar academic scholarships as U.S. residents. “We do not look at them simply as revenue generators,” she said. “I think many institutions look at international students as cash cows. We do not. We’re a global institution and students play an important role in the learning and living environment.”

Abdulhadi Badran, 24, from Saudi Arabia, is now studying biotechnology at NYIT, focusing on 3D bioprinting of kidneys. He arrived in Texas before the pandemic to study English for two years before transferring.

“Here you get the experience and knowledge much better than in Saudi Arabia,” he said. “Plus the language: You need English everywhere, and the best way to learn it is to go here, or to Great Britain.”

Tuktina also is happy with her choice to study at Adelphi, and her parents have overcome their initial nervousness as they see her flourish, she said. She spent her first semester on-

line, studying from Kazakhstan.

What she has noticed most about U.S. culture since arriving here, she said, is its diversity and its polite and open friendliness: It surprises her when people say hello and ask how her day was, “even when they don’t really know me,” she said. “In Kazakhstan, we do that only with friends and family.”

And, she said, “I would say the freedom here is also very noticeable compared to my country. In my country you can’t say certain things, especially in political things. Here you don’t have to filter or think about what the president or anyone else in the government thinks about it.”

Foreign students are also a presence at Nassau and Suffolk community colleges, with 43 at Suffolk — down from 100 in fall 2019, with Colombia replacing China as the top country of origin — and 70 at Nassau, compared to 150 pre-COVID.

Eunsil Kim of Nassau Community College’s international education office said many come from Jamaica, Haiti, Brazil, Korea and Guyana. “We have a lot of immigrants on Long Island,” she said, and most of the students “have relatives or friends here; that’s how they find out about our college, and they come.”

She added that most do well, and many pursue career-related and English language training. “They are coming here not to have fun; they have to have a purpose in coming here to study,” Kim said.



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When Madina Tuktina arrived at Adelphi last year, she was one of three students from Kazakhstan. ■ Video: [newsday.com/education](https://www.newsday.com/education)

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