

ANNUAL REPORT

2023 - 2024 | International Education



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Note from the Executive Director



It is my pleasure to share this inaugural International Education annual report with our many partners and the Pierce College community. I began my role at Pierce College in May 2023 and feel immense gratitude for the warm welcome I have received.

My approach to international education is guided by cultural humility, a commitment to broadening access to global learning, and building reciprocal partnerships. Thank you to faculty and staff colleagues, students, alumni, and partners for all that you do to facilitate global learning and cross-cultural communication for domestic and international students at Pierce College.

As many of you already know, the International Education Team works hard to create a welcoming environment for international students and global learning opportunities for all Pierce students. Thank you to all of them for their outstanding work.

If we have not met yet, please introduce yourself to me. You can reach me via email, telephone, or on most days, in person on the fifth floor of the Cascade Building on the Pierce College Ft. Steilacoom campus.

- Cindy Schaarschmidt

The Year by the Numbers



195 international students* studied at Pierce.

Of those,

35 students studied in the Intensive English Program.

35 students participated in short-term programs during the summer.

51 international students graduated this year.

47 countries of origin were represented: the leading countries were Kenya, China, the United Arab Emirates, South Korea, Japan and Vietnam.

19 Pierce students studied abroad in Japan.

15 info sessions were organized.

14 alumni elected to complete optional practical training this year.

13 events were held, three of them in collaboration with partner offices.

9 trips were organized by International Education.

* full-time equivalent

International Education Staff



Cindy Schaarschmidt

Executive Director



Brent Leavell

Associate Director,
Int'l Outreach and Partnerships



Mary Meulblok

Manager,
Int'l Student Services



Catherine Rock

Admissions Coordinator



Kate Strittmatter

Int'l Outreach Officer



Susan Taylor

SEVIS Manager



Chris Waraksa

IEP Manager



Lena Gichuki

Student Staff



Daniel Walton

Student Staff

International Student of the Year Awardees



Jawon Im - *New Media & Digital Design/UX/UI*

Meet Jawon, an international student at Pierce College, who is excelling in the fields of Graphic Design and UX/UI Design. Jawon's passion was ignited during the Intro to UX/UI Design course, where she discovered the art of creating seamless user experiences. Since then, she's been juggling multiple internships to sharpen her skills and craft. She looks forward to a fulfilling career in the UX/UI Design field.

Prof. Min Pak (Digital Design) recognized Jawon's exceptional talent and nominated her for this award.

Mihyung "Mia" Lee - *Associate in Business (DTA/MRP)*

Before coming to Pierce in the spring of 2022, Mia had attended cooking school and opened her own successful café in South Korea. Unfortunately, COVID forced her to close the business, and she decided that learning about business would elevate her self-taught techniques to a whole new level.

Once she started, there was no stopping her. Not only has Mia maintained a 3.99 GPA in a second language, but she also works on Pierce College's Student Technology Assistance Team (STAT) and has volunteered in many capacities - especially to support new international students and visitors. She also served on three different student panels, where she shared her culture and personal stories inspiring many students and Pierce staff.

For these reasons and more, International Education selected her as the 2023-24 international student of the year.



International Student of the Year Awardees



Nicholas Ngeno - *Associate of Science Track 2 Degree*

Nicholas Ngeno started his studies at Pierce College in the Winter of 2022 and recently completed his Associate of Science Track 2 degree. During his time at Pierce, Nicholas served as an ambassador for the International Education department and worked for STAT, all while maintaining a GPA of 3.9.

He has been a consistent volunteer during the international new student orientations and active in our student mentorship program. His successful work in the STAT computer labs serves as a precursor for his future career in computer science and software development. In addition, his knowledge of the tech field and the future possibilities of Artificial Intelligence is incredibly impressive, making his career one to watch!

Nicholas was nominated by Susan Taylor in the International Education Department.

Cheryl Simpson - *Information Studies*

The Library staff nominated Cheryl with the following accolades: Since Fall 2022 when we first met Cheryl, she has inspired us all with her quick, inquisitive, imaginative mind and her adventurous spirit.

Cheryl doesn't believe in "good enough;" she constantly pushes herself to do and be her best, whether she's preparing a speech or planning a lesson for kindergarteners. In addition to that drive, Cheryl has demonstrated incredible bravery by leaving Jamaica to come here and chase her dreams. She has navigated adversity, uncertainty, and lots of change with a quiet strength and determination. Cheryl is also very proud of her home and her Jamaican culture and is always willing to share that perspective. It's been a pleasure and a gift to learn from her.



Student and Alumni Spotlights

International Pierce College graduates are off to do great things. Here is just a sampling of three alumni who developed important leadership skills at Pierce and leveraged their education into great careers and educational trajectories.

If you are a Pierce College alum/na, we want to hear from you! Reach out to international@pierce.ctc.edu to let us know what you are up to.

Jungheon Kim: A Remarkable Path

Jungheon, originally from South Korea, began his educational journey in the early 2000s. He followed in his sister's footsteps, who loved Pierce College so much she convinced her brother to attend too. Graduating with an associate degree in business in 2006, he explored further opportunities at WSU Vancouver. Jungheon then returned to South Korea, where he worked as a cryptology language analyst for the U.S. military.

His journey continued as he pursued a bachelor's degree at the University of Texas at Austin. Today, he serves as the Director of Cyber Security at "Fireflyspace" in Cedar Park, TX, safeguarding aerospace engineering endeavors. The photo captures him in the Mission Control room, supporting a rocket launch—a testament to his stellar trajectory!



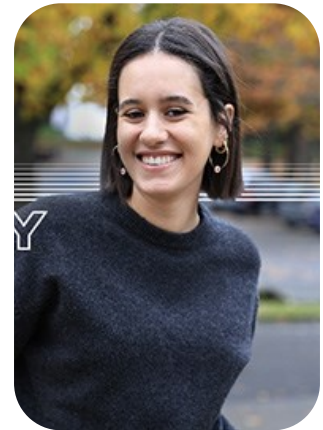
Student and Alumni Spotlights

Yael Hensen Anaya

In 2021, Yael, hailing from Mallorca, Spain, arrived at Pierce College to pursue her education. Her curiosity led her to explore International Relations, and she made many great connections while at Pierce.

As a resident and later an RA in the Center for Global Scholars Residence Hall, Yael lived with and learned from roommates from Japan, Ukraine, the United States, and South Korea. Demonstrating great empathy and cultural sensitivity, she was a great source of support for residents at CGS. In her second year, Yael's leadership blossomed. She served as President for the Associated Students of Pierce College Fort Steilacoom—working hard to propel positive change.

And now, with a generous scholarship in hand, Yael embarks on her next chapter at Whitman College. For her full story, please visit the [Pierce College website](#).



Tony Nguyen



In 2006, Tony Nguyen arrived at Pierce College from Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. His path began with the Intensive English Program and culminated in a high school diploma.

An associate degree in Business followed, but after transferring to Central Washington University, he realized that he was much more passionate about exercise and physical therapy. He returned to Pierce to earn a second associate degree in kinesiology, progressed through multiple degrees, and is now a Doctor of Physical Therapy.

In a Suburban Times article, he recalls how much of an impact Pierce College teachers, most importantly Prof. Lisa Murray, made on his trajectory: You can read his full story in [The Suburban Times](#).

Student and Alumni Spotlights

Rino “Lily” Yokoda

Lily is a student from Okinawa City, Lakewood's sister city in Japan, who is pursuing an associate degree in Business with support from a City of Okinawa scholarship and the Fuchs Foundation Scholarship. In return, she helps to strengthen relationships between Lakewood and her hometown by volunteering with both the Okinawa City and Lakewood Sister City Associations.

Lily also honed her leadership skills by serving as Pierce College Ft. Steilacoom student body president this year. In that role, she attended the Association of Community College Trustees National Legislative Summit in Washington D.C. where she met with Rep. Derek Kilmer, Senator Patty Murray, and Rep. Mari Leavitt along with Pierce College leadership and other student representatives. She's also won the Cultural Discovery and Student Ambassador awards here at Pierce.



Rita Musiimenta



Rita, an international student from Uganda, studies contemporary and classical acting at Pierce. In the spring, she performed in Pierce College's Theatre workshop Mission Ready, which highlighted stories of veterans and active-duty service members and the military mental health crisis. The play was directed by Pierce College Alumna Hannah Shepard.

Rita also put her skills to use as a tutor for the Pierce Writing Center. She will be finishing her undergraduate education at State University of New York Oneonta where she will pursue Theater studies.

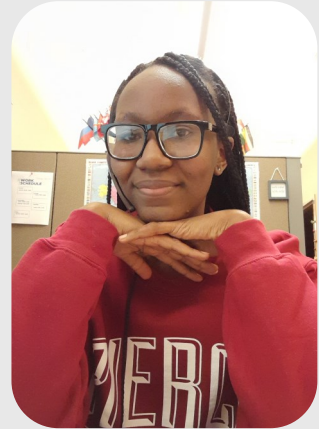
Student and Alumni Spotlights

Lena Gichuki

Lena Gichuki is an international student from Mombasa, Kenya. Lena came to Pierce College in fall of 2023 as a pre-nursing major with aspirations of attending law school to specialize in medical malpractice. Her dedication and hard work have been evident in her involvement on campus.

She works as a student employee in the International Education Office, where her exceptional contributions earned her the 2024 Student Employee Extra Mile award. Lena's leadership skills shine as the founder of the Student Orientation Development Association (SODA) and as President of the Pierce College Podcast Club. Academically distinguished, she is a proud member of Phi Theta Kappa and has consistently excelled, earning spots on both the Chancellor's List and Dean's List.

Lena's dynamic involvement and achievements reflect her commitment to making a significant impact both within and beyond the Pierce College community.



International Visitors

We welcomed two Humphrey Fellows for a one-week Community College Residency Program (CCRP) in winter quarter.

The Humphrey Fellows Program is a Fulbright exchange program for mid-career professionals from all over the world. Humphrey Fellows take graduate level courses at partner U.S. universities and participate in professional and leadership development opportunities throughout the year, one of which is the one-week residency at a community college.

Our two visiting Fellows were Elyin Loaisiga from Nicaragua and Habib Alnedari from Yemen, both studying the effects of climate change. While at Pierce, they each gave a public lecture, conducted class visits, met with several faculty, and gave a presentation at a local high school.

We loved having the opportunity to bring their global perspectives to Pierce and hope to welcome other visiting scholars in the future.



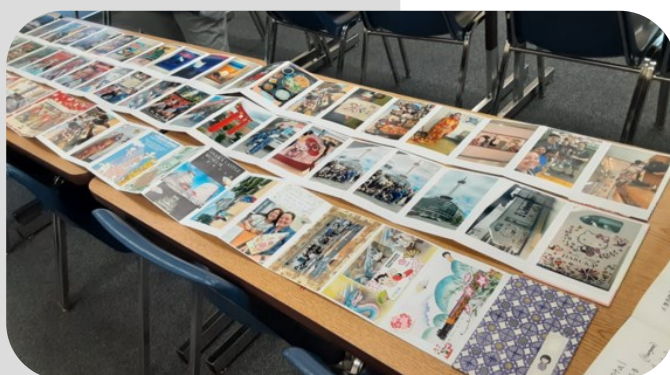
Outreach Travels

After a long pause due to COVID-19, we are pleased to resume our strategic travel campaigns to key markets and engage with potential applicants and partners in person. These face-to-face meetings are essential for establishing trust and provide us with the opportunity to understand the cultures and educational backgrounds of international students at Pierce.

In this past academic year, we attended educational fairs, met with existing partners, and delivered presentations in South Korea, Vietnam, Mongolia, Japan, Taiwan, Germany, and Canada. Although it takes time to see the full impact of our efforts, we are observing improvements in partnerships and are forging new opportunities.



2023 Japan Study Tour



In late summer 2023, 18 students participated in a study tour to Japan led by Profs. Min Pak and Dave Roholt. The program highlighted arts and culture in Osaka & Kyoto with a focus on experiential learning. The students participated in a fabric dyeing workshop, tried out wood cut printing, and met with students at the Osaka College of Foreign Languages. The students' artwork, recorded in beautiful accordion books, was shared at a Board of Trustees meeting earlier this year.

Lunar New Year Celebration

The start of the 2024 year once again saw the rise of the beloved Lunar New Year celebration held at Pierce College, which aimed to showcase the many unique and varied aspects of Asian cultures that make the Lunar New Year special.

Through contributions and collaboration between the International Education Office and Office of Student Life, the Lunar New Year event turned out to be a tremendous success, surpassing expectations and resulting in a day full of energy and unity.

Here's what our two student workers, Lena and Daniel, had to say after the event.

Lena - “ I loved attending the Pierce College Lunar New Year event. It was a great learning experience with different cuisines, clothing, music, and games. There was a bright and festive atmosphere, and we got to enjoy performances by the Wadaiko Club, indulge in different snacks, play Mah Jong and discover our Lunar zodiac signs. ”

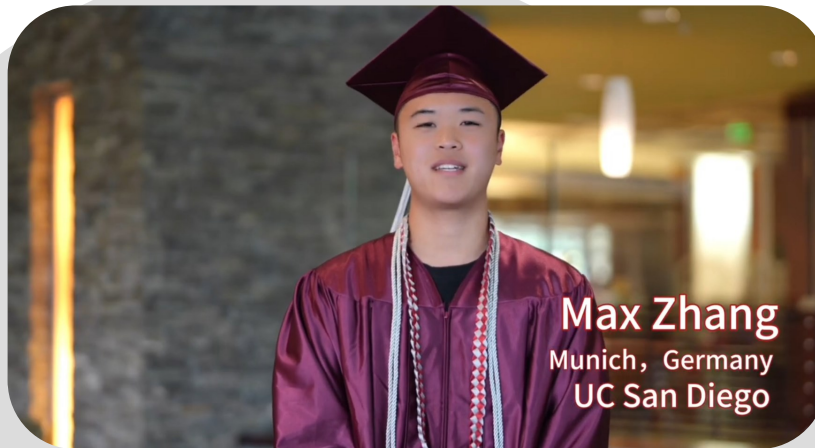
Daniel - “ Having not had the opportunity to participate in the ‘behind the scenes’ of large-scale school events before this one, I was surprised at how much teamwork and effective communication was needed for planning and producing the event. It gave me a greater appreciation for the people behind events like these and allowed me to take away valuable leadership skills that I can apply to all aspects of my life. ”



Transfer News

International Pierce College graduates transfer to many fantastic four-year universities. Learn where some of them are headed in this brief video by Huanjing International LLC, an agency partner that recruits students from China:

<https://youtu.be/XfwSN9JtM30?si=pJ6TJJGCipGf33bB>



These are some of the four-year universities our graduates are headed to:

Arizona State University

Barnard College, Columbia University

Berklee School of Music

Central Washington University

Northwest University

State University of New York (SUNY)

Oneonta

Saint Martin's University

Seattle University

University of California Los Angeles

University of California San Diego

University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

University of Michigan Ann Arbor

University of Missouri

University of Puget Sound

University of Washington Seattle

University of Washington Tacoma

Utah Tech University

Whitman College

