



SAGINAW VALLEY  
STATE UNIVERSITY

INTERNATIONAL  
PROGRAMS

# *Newsletter*

Winter 2025

*International Cardinal Spotlight-*  
Nimnan Wuyep

*Early Childhood Education*  
Joint Program with Changchun  
Normal University (CCNU)

*Spring Break Abroad:*  
Transformative Experiences  
in Ghana and Lisbon

*Friends Without Borders:  
Celebrating Global Unity at  
Intercultural Night 2025*



# OIP Director's Message

## International Cardinal Spirit in a Challenging Time

I am proud to work at a university in Michigan that favors the red color. Every Friday is Red Pride Day. I am amazed by all kinds of cardinal photos, posters, stickers, stuffed animals, ornaments, and sculptures on campus. Cardinals are bold and spirited. They are full of strength and vitality.

According to the SVSU historical record, in 1970, "At a Kentucky golf tournament, Bob Becker and Gene Hamilton spot a kitchen decoration with a cardinal printed on it. The two decide to make the cardinal the school's mascot". Becker was the school's golf coach and later athletic director. Hamilton was the first basketball coach. Their decision had impact on generations of SVSU students. Cardinals stand out!

SVSU is the proud home to about 300 International Cardinals from 40+ countries. Their presence has enriched the campus climate. They enjoyed the cultural immersion trips to Frankenmuth, Dow Garden, and Detroit this semester. They also presented spectacular performances of traditional dances, songs, and poems at the annual Intercultural Night. Congratulations to Nimnan Wuyep, an international student from Nigeria, who won numerous awards at Michigan and national speech contests!

SVSU has sent about 100-200 students to study abroad around the world this year. In addition to short-term faculty-led programs, we will focus on 30+ signature semester programs to help students choose the appropriate study abroad destination that fits into their academic plan. Our students and faculty are still bold and globally engaged during the challenging time.

In this newsletter, we want to honor Dr. Bob Yien (1940 – 2025), who served as SVSU Vice President for Academic Affairs for 27 years since 1978. He was born in Taiwan but spent most of his life at SVSU in Michigan. The quiet Yien International Garden outside of the Arbury Fine Arts Center tells the stories of international education and partnerships that he helped build in the past. According to his family, Dr. Yien visited China in 1984 when the country just opened its door to the rest of the world. That experience had a great impact on him. He started to build international partnerships with Asian countries and other parts of the world. What an International Cardinal! He had been a cultural bridge and world peace builder. Although Dr. Yien just left us suddenly, his legacy of kindness and boldness lives on.

*Alice Yang, Ph.D.*  
OIP Director

*Dr. Yien giving away red  
envelopes at 2025 SVSU  
Lunar New Year Party*



*Photograph taken by Ryan Stinson*



# International Student Services

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## To Our Graduating Class:

Congratulations to our international students who are completing their degree program and graduating this May, June, or August 2025!

SVSU's International Students have received an invitation from the Office of International Programs to come to a special reception in their honor on Wednesday, May 7, 2025, at 3:00 in the Emeriti Room.

At the reception, the students will receive a certificate from the Alumni Office, a gift from the Office of International Programs, and will deliver a few words to introduce themselves and their memories at Saginaw Valley State University.



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## Peer to Peer Mentorship

The Peer-to-Peer Mentorship Program is an exciting new initiative set to launch in Fall 2025 at Saginaw Valley State University. Developed by the Office of International Programs, this program is specifically designed to support new incoming international students by helping them build meaningful connections with current SVSU students. The goal of the Peer-to-Peer Mentorship Program is to ease the transition process for international students as they adjust to life in a new country, culture, and academic environment.





# International Student Services

## Michigan Representative Amos O'Neal Visits SVSU

On April 1, Michigan State Representative Amos O'Neal was invited by the OIP staff to visit SVSU and discuss the significance of international education and partnerships. Some globally engaged faculty members, international students, as well as SVSU study abroad students were invited to meet with Rep. O'Neal and share their international teaching/learning experiences. Some of the professors led study abroad trips to Asia and other parts of the world while others conducted international research or gave keynote speeches at international conferences. They shared the impact of the international experiences on themselves and emphasized the importance of world peace through mutual understanding among people around the world.

Rep. O'Neal was touched by the passionate stories of our faculty and promised that he would continue to advocate for higher education and international education. He used his own life stories to inspire our students, encouraging them to overcome the challenges we are facing in today's world and continue to pursue their dreams. We appreciate that Rep. O'Neal was willing to spend his precious time coming to our campus and listening to the stories of our faculty and students as well as our requests.

Rep. O'Neal was born and raised in Saginaw. He represents the 94th House District in Michigan and serves 90,438 constituents in six townships, including Saginaw. He graduated from the SVSU Leadership Development Institute and is also a member of our Cardinal family.



*Pictured left: Rep. O'Neal standing among students from Saginaw Valley State University*



*Pictured right: Rep. O'Neal standing among faculty and staff from Saginaw Valley State University*



# International Student Services

## International Community Friendship Program

The Office of International Programs has been proudly running the Friendly Family Program for years, fostering cultural exchange between international students and community members. This initiative allows students to experience American traditions while sharing their own unique customs, creating a vibrant cultural dialogue. To celebrate and kick off this year's program, we hosted a Friendly Family Reception. The event featured a light brunch and provided an opportunity for matches to meet, review important program details, and begin building connections. The program's success is evident in the long-lasting relationships formed, with many participants staying in touch for years.



## International Students Attend Saginaw Spirit Hockey Game

International students of Saginaw Valley got to experience a major junior ice hockey game of the local team, the Saginaw Spirit. Many of the students have never seen an ice hockey game before, so it was a new and unique experience for them. According to the students who attended, they were very grateful to the Office of International Programs for giving them an opportunity to attend an event like this, which helps them to experience American culture and customs.

The group met at Saginaw Valley State University and headed to the Dow Event Center as a group. Once there, the students were excited to walk into the hockey stadium, some for the first time. The staff at the event center was super friendly and helped the students whenever they needed it. Once in their seats, the students experienced the sights and sounds of a hockey game and got to cheer for the team. The game was very exciting, as the Spirit won with a score of 7-4. The students were overall very happy with the experience and were glad that they could experience some of the culture of the United States.



*Pictured left: SVSU international student, Kevin Oketch attending a Detroit Tigers baseball game with community friend, Nic Taylor.*



# International Student Services

## International Orientation

At the beginning of every semester, the Office of International Programs (OIP) at Saginaw Valley State University (SVSU) hosts a comprehensive orientation program designed specifically for incoming international students. This orientation serves as a vital introduction to life at SVSU, equipping students with the knowledge, resources, and support they need to thrive both academically and socially.

During the orientation, students receive a detailed overview of the university's academic expectations, campus resources, and student support services. They are introduced to key facilities on campus and learn how to navigate their new environment with confidence—from locating classrooms and offices to understanding how to use university systems for class registration and communication.

To help students settle in comfortably, the OIP also organizes shopping trips, ensuring they can purchase

essential items such as bedding, kitchen supplies, groceries, and other necessities soon after arrival. These orientations not only help students understand things about the university but also give them a chance to connect with fellow students who have just come to make Saginaw Valley State University their home. Overall, the OIP's orientation program plays a crucial role in helping international students transition smoothly into their new academic and cultural environment, laying a strong foundation for a successful experience at SVSU.



## Monthly Birthdays

OIP throws a birthday party on the 3rd Friday each month at the W230 Conference Room for international students born in the same month. It is a fun time to celebrate our International Cardinals' birthday together, taste delicious birthday cake, and create new friendships.



*February Birthday Celebration (February 21)*



*December and January Birthday Celebration (January 17)*



*March Birthday Celebration (March 21)*



# International Cardinal Spotlight- Nimnan Wuyep



Saginaw Valley State University became more than a place to earn a degree for Nimnan Wuyep; rather it has been a catalyst for personal, academic, and professional growth. As an International Studies and Communications major from Nigeria, Wuyep's impressive involvements, leadership, and achievements have a lasting impact on the university.

The competitive spirit is strong within Nimnan Wuyep, whether he is on the pitch at Intramurals or

## **Nimnan Wuyep chose Saginaw Valley State University for its unique environment:**

*"I chose SVSU because it offered me a space to grow personally, academically, and professionally while still feeling like a tight knit community. As an international student I was looking for a university that not only had academic excellence but also real opportunities to engage with others, build leadership skills, and be seen. SVSU gave me that and more."*

competing nationally with the Competitive Speech and Debate team, his passion is evident in all his involvements. Moreover, Wuyep's commitment extends beyond personal interests, encompassing contributions to the African Student Association, Men of Distinction, Active Minds, and the International Students Club, showcasing a dedication to both individual pursuits and broader community engagement.

Nimnan Wuyep's dedication has been recognized through numerous accolades, including the 2025 Student Leader of the Year award and earning a spot on the Dean's List three times. Wuyep's largest legacy has been left with Saginaw Valley State University's Competitive Speech and Debate team, holding the title of Michigan State Champion three times, two-time 2nd Individual Michigan Sweepstakes, nationally ranked, and a two-time Division 3 National Champion.

## Wuyep's highlights from his time at Saginaw Valley State University:

### *Winning SVSU's 2025 Student Leader of the Year-*

"It validated my efforts of being heavily involved in the campus community and uplifting others even while navigating my own challenges."

### *Competing at the National Forensics Tournament-*

"Representing SVSU on a national stage and placing in multiple events was a dream. It wasn't just about winning but about using my voice to speak my truth and empower others."

### *Serving as President of the African Student Association (ASA)-*

"Leading ASA helped me create a home for international and multicultural students. We celebrated culture, built friendships, and had impactful conversations."

### *Intramural Soccer Champions, Four Consecutive Seasons-*

"Winning four seasons in a row created unforgettable bonds with my teammates and gave me a great outlet from academic and leadership responsibilities."

### *Intercultural Nights-*

"From the rehearsals to the fashion shows, Intercultural Nights are pure joy. Each year it's a night of dancing, laughter, pride and unity where international students get to celebrate our cultures and embrace campus diversity."



As a campus leader, one of the most shaping experiences for Wuyep was serving as a chaperone for high school students on a short-term program from Tokushima, Japan. He learned to bridge cultural gaps and promote cross-cultural understanding, emphasizing the importance of empathy and proactive communication in leadership.

After graduation Nimnan Wuyep plans to continue his education, seeking higher degrees in Communications with dreams of attending law school to become a lawyer and diplomat. His motivation stems from his desire to use his voice to advocate for underserved communities locally and globally to positively shape policies with these communities in mind.

Wuyep credits his confidence for life after graduation to applying what is taught in the classroom, outside of it, such as in extra-curricular activities or through interacting with peers. To all current and prospective international students, Nimnan Wuyep's advice is "Say yes, especially when it feels scary. Join that club, try-out for a team, or apply for that leadership role. SVSU is full of opportunities, but you must take the first step."

Don't wait until you feel ready, growth happens in the doing. Surround yourself with people who challenge and uplift you, remember that the skills you build outside the classroom are just as valuable as what you learn inside it."



# International Student Services

## Frankenmuth Trip

In March, the international students at SVSU had the chance to travel to Frankenmuth, Michigan, to experience a popular tourist destination in the Midwest. The students shopped at Bronner's Christmas Wonderland, the world's largest Christmas store. They got to explore, take pictures, and check the international section of the store. The next location in Frankenmuth that the students visited was the Riverside Shops. There was lots of scenic spots for pictures, with the stores resembling German-style buildings. At the shops, the students navigated a mirror maze and tried the famous Zac & Mac fudge. They also explored the main street and picked up souvenirs and delicious snacks and treats for their friends to try. To finish off the excursion, the students had a peaceful walk across the old Frankenmuth bridge, as they headed back to the van to travel home.



## Dow Butterfly Garden

In March, the Office of International Programs (OIP) hosted a small trip for the international students of Saginaw Valley State University to explore the Dow Gardens in Midland, Michigan, which is known for its beautiful flora and gardens. This excursion offered students a chance to unwind and relax amongst nature and experience the beauty of Michigan in early spring. As they strolled through the expansive botanical gardens, students were immersed in vibrant landscapes filled with blooming flowers, towering trees, and artfully designed walking paths that provided a perfect backdrop for both relaxation and connection.

One of the highlights of the visit was the renowned Butterflies in Bloom exhibit. This captivating, interactive experience takes place in the tropical conservatory of Dow Gardens and features thousands of brilliantly colored butterflies from across the globe. Students were able to witness these delicate creatures emerging gracefully from their chrysalises, flutter among the lush tropical plants, and feed on nectar right before their eyes. The atmosphere was one that felt peaceful and interesting, with butterflies occasionally landing on visitors, offering a rare and joyful encounter with nature. The trip not only allowed students to explore one of Michigan's hidden gems but also provided an opportunity to bond with fellow students and create lasting memories.



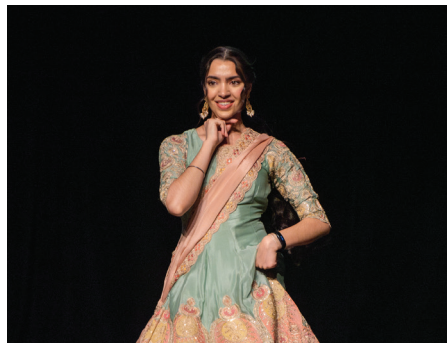


# Friends Without Borders: Celebrating Global Unity at Intercultural Night 2025

On March 15, the International Student Club hosted its annual Intercultural Night, a celebration of diversity, culture, and global connections. This year's theme, "Friends Without Borders," perfectly captured the spirit of the event, as international students took the stage to showcase their traditions through dance, music, and other performances. More than just entertainment, Intercultural Night is a platform for students from around the world to share their heritage and educate others, creating a space for cultural appreciation and unity.

This year's event was a vibrant showcase featuring performances from China, Tanzania, Nepal, Ghana, India, Argentina, and many more. The energy, talent, and passion of the performers captivated a packed audience, making it one of the most anticipated events on campus. As always, Intercultural Night reminded us that while we may come from different backgrounds, we are all connected through the universal language of friendship and culture.

The evening's program was rich and diverse, beginning with a lively Parade of Flags that honored each represented nation. The event was skillfully hosted by Nimnan Wuyep and Riweida Braimah, who guided the audience through a wide variety of performances. Highlights included cultural showcases by the Japanese Culture Club, the Chinese karaoke-style song, and heartfelt presentations from Pakistan and Palestine. Nepal brought both music and dance, while the Chai family enchanted the crowd with a Chinese Dizi and piano duet. The fashion show during intermission was a colorful display of traditional attire from countries like Bangladesh, Vietnam, Korea, Tanzania, and many more. Performances ranged from K-pop and hip-hop dances to instrumental solos and spirited group routines, including contributions from the African Student Association, the French Club, and artists from the Philippines, Argentina, and Mongolia. The night closed with a joyful curtain call that brought all participants together in celebration, leaving the audience inspired and united by a shared appreciation of global culture.





# International Student Services

## Lunar New Year

On January 30, 2025, the Office of International Programs hosted a Lunar New Year Celebration. The celebration brought together students and staff for a truly remarkable experience. The event was captivating with a vibrant atmosphere, cultural richness, and festive energy. The room was filled with people wearing Cheongsam and Tang suits, which are traditional Chinese clothing that can be worn at celebrations such as the Lunar New Year. Seeing the traditional clothing allows for reflection of the unique heritage of the various countries that celebrate the Lunar New Year. Each piece of clothing was distinctly unique, providing an array of colors, patterns, and designs that elevated the atmosphere of the event.

There were a variety of activities being held at the event. There was an assortment of presentations and performances, as well as games and a lovely dinner that was provided. Each presentation and performance provided an opportunity to learn more about the customs and traditions of Lunar New Year Celebrations and allowed people to appreciate and engage in an educational experience. The food that was prepared was particularly exceptional, as it was not only delicious but also a wonderful way to explore different flavors and cuisine popular in Asian countries.

The Office of International Programs staff worked and coordinated effortlessly on the organization of the event. The teamwork and dedication of everyone involved made the celebration both efficient and enjoyable for everyone. The Lunar New Year Celebration was an excellent way to cherish the culture of many of SVSU's students and allowed people to learn and get involved in a new tradition.





# International Student Services

## Cultural Immersion Trip to Detroit

In April, OIP host its signature event of the semester – a full-day trip to Detroit, offering international students a rich blend of culture, sports, and urban exploration in one of Michigan's most iconic cities. This experience aimed to give students a taste of American art, sports culture, and city life, all in one unforgettable outing.

The day began with transportation arranged from the university to the heart of Detroit. The first stop was the renowned Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA), known for its impressive and diverse collection, including masterpieces from Van Gogh, Rembrandt, Rivera, and more. Students had the chance to freely explore the museum's various exhibits, immersing themselves in both classic and contemporary pieces, and gaining insight into different cultures and artistic movements through the lens of visual storytelling.

Following the cultural immersion, the group headed to Comerica Park, the iconic home stadium of the Detroit Tigers, for an exciting Major League Baseball game against the Chicago White Sox. For many students, this was their first live American baseball game, making it an especially memorable part of the trip. They got to experience the energy of the crowd, a slice

of American tradition.

After the game, students had some free time to explore downtown Detroit at their own pace. Whether it was shopping for souvenirs, trying local cuisine, or simply waking through the vibrant streets filled with art, music, and history, this portion of the trip allowed them to soak in the local atmosphere and connect more personally with the city.

All in all, this trip was an enriching and enjoyable day filled with new experiences, cultural discoveries, and fun memories. It was a perfect opportunity for international students to bond with one another while gaining a deeper appreciation of Michigan's cultural and urban landscape.





# Study Abroad

## Passport Event Series

The Study Abroad Office recently hosted two successful Passport series events highlighting our programs in Argentina and South Korea. At our South Korea event, attendees gained valuable insights into Korean academic and cultural experiences through a compelling presentation by Study Abroad alumna Riley Romer, who shared her transformative journey at Kyung Hee University. The event continued with an energetic performance by K-pop duo Irene and Seulgi, bringing authentic Korean entertainment to campus. Our Argentina Passport event invited students to engage with South American culture through creative activities while Study Abroad Coordinator Kal Spencer presented information about our exchange partnership with Universidad Argentina de la Empresa (UADE). Kal highlighted the unique academic opportunities, cultural immersion, and personal growth that students can experience while studying in Buenos Aires. Both events successfully introduced students to these exciting international destinations, inspiring many to explore the life-changing possibilities that await through our Study Abroad programs in these diverse countries.



## Spring Break Faculty-Led Trips to Ghana and Lisbon

The Spring Break study abroad trips to Ghana and Lisbon provided students with unforgettable cultural experiences and valuable life lessons. In Lisbon, participants gained confidence in navigating public transportation and deepened their understanding of food security, while also becoming aware of cultural differences, such as the prevalence of smoking in public. Students embraced the opportunity to step out of their comfort zones, making new friends and developing a more global perspective. In Ghana, students were inspired by the vibrant sense of community and joy, where locals'

hospitality and unity left a lasting impact. Despite challenges like navigating Ghana's transportation system and experiencing basic accommodations, students found the experience eye-opening and transformative. Through the Vitito Global Leadership Institute Conference, students enhanced their leadership skills and learned effective communication from Ghanaian peers. Studying abroad, they noted, is not just about traveling, it's about personal growth, cultural awareness, and unforgettable memories.





# Exchange and Partnerships

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## Early Childhood Education Joint Program with Changchun Normal University (CCNU)

The collaboration with Changchun Normal University (CCNU) in China is progressing successfully. This program provides students at Saginaw Valley State University (SVSU) with a cross-cultural perspective on early childhood education when meeting international students from CCNU. Additionally, it prepares CCNU students with a rich American early childhood education learning. This program benefits both SVSU students and CCNU students for careers in a globally interconnected world. Currently, there are six students from CCNU on SVSU campus pursuing their undergraduate degree in Early Childhood Education.

Professor Amy Wenya Hu and Professor Xia Liu, early childhood education faculty members from CCNU visited SVSU for three weeks during April as visiting scholars. During their stay, they met with SVSU administrators to strengthen the ongoing Early Childhood Education Joint Program, visit local early childhood facilities, organizations and schools, and conduct research on related projects.

SVSU currently has one faculty member, Prof. Gabbie Marguery, teaching early childhood education courses for the joint program at CCNU. During the months of April to June of 2025, Dr. Debbie Lively and three adjunct faculty members, Prof. Dawn Edwards, Prof. Chenyi Zhang, and Prof. Sara Tour, will teach the Spring and Summer sections at CCNU

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## Exchange Program Updates

### Faculty Teach Abroad

Dr. David Berry, a kinesiology professor is now teaching at Shikoku University in Tokushima, Japan, as part of the faculty exchange program. He will promote SVSU, increase international cultural awareness, and teach English through cultural exchanges.

### Inbound Visiting Scholars Program

The Office of International Programs at Saginaw Valley State University continues to host two Jinan University scholars, who are conducting hospital, homecare, and nursing classroom visits.





# Exchange and Partnerships

## Site Visit to Germany to Strengthen International Partnerships

In February 2025, Dr. Alice Yang, Dr. Pat Shelley, and Kal Spencer visited SVSU's international partner institutions in Germany, including the University of Wuerzburg (JMU) and Ansbach University of Applied Sciences (AUAS). The purpose of the trip was to maintain and strengthen our partnerships with the two institutions. They had meaningful meetings and conversations with their counterpart colleagues and students at the host institutions, had campus tours, and visited some labs and various facilities. SVSU signed a student exchange agreement with AUAS in 2000 and a new exchange agreement with JMU in the fall of 2024.

These two exchange programs offer students study abroad opportunities in Germany. SVSU students are only charged \$3,500 tuition to attend a semester study abroad program, which can be much cheaper than what they have to pay for studying on campus. SVSU Vice President for Governmental and Community Affairs, John Kaczynski and his wife, Martha Zehnder Kaczynski, are generously establishing a fellowship in memory of Martha's mother, Judy Zehnder Keller, which will support research and study abroad in Germany. We hope more students will be able to take advantage of the opportunities and resources SVSU offers to explore the world and expand their global perspective.

The delegation also paid a short visit to Gunzenhausen and was received by the Gunzenhausen Sister City Committee members, including the city major. They learned more about the history of the city and its sister city relation with Frankenmuth in Michigan. Our exchange programs are also part of the sister city relationships between the local communities with Germany. Ansbach is the sister city of Bay City. SVSU will receive a 7-member delegation from Ansbach University in May 2025 to strengthen our international partnerships.



*SVSU Delegation Visiting the Bay City Bridge in Ansbach, Germany.*



*SVSU Delegation Visiting College of Business at U of Wuerzburg in Germany.*



*SVSU Delegation Meeting with Gunzenhausen Sister City Committee Members.*

# Social Media

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**YouTube**

svsuinternationalprograms9675



**Instagram**

svsu.international  
svsustudyabroad



**Facebook**

SVSU International  
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