



SAGINAW VALLEY | INTERNATIONAL
STATE UNIVERSITY | PROGRAMS

Newsletter

Fall 2025



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OIP Director's Message

Global Horizons and Outreach

On behalf of the Office of International Programs (OIP), I am delighted to announce the new publication on SVSU Global Horizons and Outreach (November 2025), which is composed of 40+ articles and reflections on SVSU's international engagement history and new initiatives by more than 40 SVSU students, faculty and staff members. The book has 76 pages. It covers international student services, study abroad programs, faculty's global engagement, cultural expansion of the programs of distinctions, and global relationships and partnerships. Together, they embody our shared commitment to a globally minded and interconnected community.

This book is the first SVSU publication that focuses on international education and global engagement. It is now available at the new Internationalization Hub on the OIP webpage. Please feel free to check it out there and read the inspiring stories.

Alice Yang, Ph.D.
OIP Director



*Cover and book design
by Kylie Clark*

Updates on OIP Personnel



International Partnership Coordinator

In July, OIP hired a new International Partnership Coordinator, Collin Glenn. He brings over 17 years of experience in international education,

including building partnerships between Chinese universities and institutions in the U.S. and Europe. He holds a master's in political science from the University of Toledo and is passionate about creating meaningful global experiences for students. Collin is excited to join the SVSU community and support its international engagement efforts.



International Student Advisor

Hannah Turk-Lerash will continue her role as the International Student Advisor at SVSU after one year working experience at OIP. As

an International Student Advisor and proud alumna of SVSU, she is genuinely passionate about helping students from all over the world feel at home here. She is fully committed to creating a welcoming space and guiding international students through everything they need, not just for their studies, but also navigating the complexities of immigration.

Will Pat Ever Retire?

Yes, Pat will retire (the 2nd time) on January 5, 2026. It is true this time. His retirement is a great loss to the OIP team and SVSU. The OIP staff will host a retirement party for Pat at 1-2pm on December 19, Friday, Brown Hall Concourse (second floor).

Dr. Charles "Pat" Shelley came to SVSU nearly 20 years ago after 35 years as an elementary school principal with the Saginaw Public Schools. He graduated with a double major in

German and education from Alma College in 1970 and went on to Michigan State University for his master's and Ph.D. degrees in educational administration and curriculum. He spent his junior year at the Philipps Universitat in Marburg an der Lahn, Germany. His extra-curricular interests are choral singing, community theatre, Scouting, and Rotary Club. Pat was honored by the Michigan Association of International Educators with the Scott Cooper Award for Excellence in International Student Advising in 2022.



Pat at last year's Lunar New Year Celebration

OIP Faculty Fellows

OIP is in the process of selecting two faculty members to join the OIP team and serve as the OIP Faculty Fellows to support the international student services. One will help with immigration services, the other will be engaged in cultural programming for international students and scholars. The OIP staff is looking forward to the collaboration and the expansion of SVSU's global engagement.

Welcome Aboard

Fall 2025 International Student Orientation

The Fall 2025 semester kicked off with a robust two-day International Student Orientation, welcoming a large incoming class of just under 100 students.

The orientation was carefully structured to ensure these newest members of our community were fully prepared for academic success. Beyond administrative tasks, the program allowed students to meet and connect with peers from around the world and provided crucial exposure to the various campus resources available. By taking these necessary steps, the new international students were well-equipped for a successful and engaging semester!



Students pose at orientation

In early October, fifty students took a fantastic day trip to the historic and picturesque Mackinac Island. With the fall colors beginning to pop and the weather remaining wonderfully warm, the group was treated to a perfect autumn escape.

The car-free island provided a unique opportunity for adventure and relaxation. Students utilized the primary mode of transport—bicycles—to explore the full perimeter of the island, taking

in breathtaking views of the Mackinac Bridge and the surrounding Straits. Other activities included walking through the charming Victorian town and visiting historic sites. Ultimately, the trip was a great success, allowing students to enjoy the beautiful Northern Michigan scenery and create fun, lasting memories with their friends.



Group picture on Mackinac Island

Celebrating Mid-Autumn

Mid-Autumn Festival is like Thanksgiving in the American culture. It is most widely celebrated in Asian countries and regions with significant Chinese cultural influence. It is the time for family reunion, tasting mooncakes, and enjoying banquets. This year, more than 80 students and faculty/staff members attended the Mid-Autumn Festival hosted by the Office of International Programs, International Student Club, and Cardinal Mandarin Club at the Ming Chuan Friendship Room (GN 107) in Gilbertson Hall. The event featured Guzheng (traditional instrument), Tai Qi, songs, a presentation on the traditional festival, and sharing of a few students who attended the Global Heritage Forum 2025 in Beijing. The attendants enjoyed two kinds of mooncakes: lotus seed paste and mixed nuts. The egg yolk in the center of the mooncake represents the full moon, symbolizing reunion and unity.



Tai Qi demonstration

Building Bridges

Launching the International Peers Program

This year, our campus is proud to launch the International Peers Program (IPP), a vital new initiative designed to actively foster cross-cultural communication, support social integration, and deepen global competence for all students.

Personalized Peer Pairing - At the core of the IPP is the peer-to-peer pairing system. The program intentionally matches a newly arrived international student with a returning American student. This pairing provides essential support and friendship, helping the international student navigate campus life and academic culture. For American students, it offers a unique opportunity to build a personal, lasting friendship with someone from a different background, broadening their global perspectives right here on campus.

Engaging Cross-Cultural Events - To encourage interaction beyond the one-on-one matches, the IPP hosts a variety of events open to all students. These activities are designed to create relaxed environments for genuine cultural exchange:

- **Formal Workshops:** Structured events focus on building skills, like cross-cultural communication.
- **Informal Socials:** Fun, low-pressure activities are held regularly, including popular events like board game nights and seasonal outings such as ice skating, proving that building global understanding can be fun and easy.

The International Peers Program is an investment in our students' personal and professional development, ensuring that our campus is a truly welcoming and globally connected community.

Interested in joining the IPP? Contact the Office of International Programs.

ISS Work Group Underway

As part of the new strategic plan implementation (2025-2030), the Office of International Programs (OIP) created a campus-wide ISS Work Group to strengthen International Student Services and support International Cardinal Success.

The participating offices include the Academic Advisement Center, Academic Affairs, Athletic Department, Campus Financial Services Center, Career Services, Center for Academic Achievement, Controller's Office, International Admissions, Mental Health and Wellness Center, Office of International Programs, Registrar's Office, Residential Life, Student Affairs, Student Life, University Police, and Writing Center, etc.

The ISS Work Group met in August for the first time and then again in November this semester to celebrate international students' achievements and address challenges together, which increased transparency and efficiency. The participants also shared best practices to help international students feel belonging to the SVSU community and thrive in their academic career.

International Education Week

Celebrating Global Diversity

International Education Week (IEW) celebrates how global learning and cultural exchange enrich our campus and community. Launched in 2000 by the U.S. Departments of State and Education, IEW is now observed in over 100 countries. The week promotes international education, study abroad, recognizes the contributions of international students, and highlights how global learning strengthens cultural understanding and connections.

Keynote Speech and Global Engagement Panel

This year, the Office of International Programs invited International Student Advisor Dr. Pat Shelley to serve as the IEW keynote speaker. In his talk, "Let There Be Peace," he reflected on his lifelong journey of global engagement, from early experiences in Saginaw schools and Youth for Understanding to study abroad programs and involvement with international clubs, festivals, and community initiatives. He closed by inviting attendees to sing "Let There Be Peace on Earth," a song that embodies his personal mission and values.



Pat leading the attendees in song

Three faculty members who contributed to *Global Horizons and Outreach* served on the Global Engagement Panel, sharing experiences highlighted in the book. Dr. Joseph Ofori-Dankwa discussed leading a VITITO Global Leadership Institute trip to Ghana, Dr. Jennifer Ward shared her Fulbright Specialist experience in Morocco, and Professor Michael Crawford reflected on the Peace Button Project, which invites students to design peace-themed buttons sent annually to children in Japan.

International Food Festival

The centerpiece of IEW was the International Food Festival, held in the main Campus Dining Hall and attended by over 300 visitors from campus and the community. The festival showcased cuisine from eleven countries, prepared and served entirely by students, each dedicating three to eight hours to share their authentic, diverse dishes. Proceeds from the festival support the International Student Club and help fund the free Intercultural Night showcase held every March, highlighting students' ongoing commitment to sharing culture year-round.



International students serving food at the festival

International Cultural Showcase

This year introduced the debut International Cultural Showcase, featuring student representatives from eight countries. Attendees received a free canvas bag stamped with unique country designs and were encouraged to interact with representatives, fostering valuable cross-cultural conversations. The showcase offered rich, hands-on activities, including trying on traditional cultural dress, receiving intricate henna designs, playing fun Korean games, and learning to make Vietnamese music. Students also had the opportunity to ask questions and learn about the cultural traditions, festivals, and daily life of each represented country. This interactive format allowed attendees to engage directly with the international community and experience cultures in a personal and memorable way.



Students pose with members of NSA

Be sure to read further in the newsletter for coverage of the Study Abroad Show and Tell, another exciting highlight of the week.

Celebrating Dashain & Tihar

Presented by the Nepalese Student Association

This year's Dashain & Tihar Fest at SVSU was a beautiful reflection of that spirit. The event brought together over 180 guests, including students, professors, alumni, partners, and members of the wider Nepali community in Saginaw. It was one of our largest celebrations yet, filled with warmth, color, and a shared sense of belonging.

Guests were welcomed with "tika and jamara"—a customary Dashain tradition symbolizing blessings, prosperity, and the strengthening of familial and community bonds. This small gesture set the tone for an evening rooted in culture, gratitude, and togetherness.



Performers dance to traditional Nepali music

moments. It was the perfect ending to a night that reminded us of home, family, and the importance of community.

Events like this are the very reason the Nepali Student Association (NSA) was founded—to create a space where culture can be celebrated, shared, and remembered, especially for students far from home. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Student Association and the Office of International Programs for their support in bringing this celebration to life. Their help made it possible for us to honor our traditions and share them with the broader SVSU community in such a meaningful way.

- Ankit Sanjel
NSA President



Guest receiving tika

Throughout the night, the audience enjoyed nine vibrant performances, featuring singing, dancing, and traditional Nepali music. Each act celebrated not just our heritage, but also the unity within our international community. It was heartwarming to see so many people—Nepali and non-Nepali—celebrating side by side, clapping along, and embracing the cultural richness of the festival.

The festivities concluded with a delicious spread of authentic Nepali food, followed by a packed dance floor where everyone came together to enjoy familiar songs and joyful



Nepalese Student Association E-Board Members

Finding Home Away from Home

Reflections from an International Graduate

My name is Nafees, and I am an international student from Bangladesh majoring in Supply Chain Management with a minor in Economics. When I look back, it feels unreal that I started this journey in 2022. Even though the calendar says almost four years have passed, in my heart it feels more like four months. Maybe that's what happens when your experience is far better than you ever imagined, the theory of relativity, right?

As a student, I was lucky to meet some truly amazing professors. Many of them were incredibly kind and patient. Before coming here, I was scared. A new country, a new language, a new accent, I wondered if I would understand anything in class. These thoughts worried me constantly. But from the very first semester, the kindness of people around me made all those fears disappear. I never once felt like I was 10,000 miles away from home. And it wasn't just on campus; the people of Saginaw as a whole have been wonderful. I always tell new students that Saginaw might feel quiet at first, but it grows on you in the best possible way.



Posing with the OIP team



And then there are my friends. Back home, friends were people I hung out with at movies or restaurants. But here, friends became family. We did life together, groceries, banks, taxes, rides, everything. That bond is something I will always carry with me.

As an employee, I believe I worked at the best place possible on campus: the Office of International Programs. If SVSU became my second home, then OIP was the home within the home. Everyone there felt like family from day one. Because of my job, I stayed close to international students and helping them felt like helping the 2022 version of myself. It wasn't just a job; it gave me peace. Supporting someone who is scared, lost, or trying to adjust gave me a sense of purpose.



Time spent with family and friends

I have always believed that if you do good, good will come back to you. Helping people has always been my motivation. And I truly feel SVSU was my big reward. As someone who once dropped out of engineering back home, this was my second chance. SVSU gave me both academic strength and mental peace. Today, as I graduate with a 3.84 CGPA and the highest honor, summa cum laude, I am grateful beyond words.

- Abdullah Nafees Shabab

Bachelor's of Business Administration

New Partnership with Vidyalankar Dinapith Trust (Mumbai, India)

Partnerships often begin quietly. But occasionally, one begins with a journey—half a world away—to signal that something important is at stake. When representatives from the Vidyalankar Dinapith Trust in Mumbai traveled to SVSU this fall, it was more than a ceremonial visit. It was a declaration that



both institutions saw in each other the possibility of collaboration that could reshape student pathways for years to come.

In the world of international education, India is not merely another market. It is a landscape of enormous intellectual energy, ambition, and outward mobility. Establishing one of SVSU's first major partnerships in India felt less like checking a box and more like opening a door that had long awaited the right turn of the handle.



The signing of the MOU signaled the start of a relationship built on mutual curiosity and shared goals. The hope is clear: that students in Mumbai and students in Michigan will eventually walk routes shaped by this agreement, bringing with them new ideas, new friendships, and new possibilities. The partnership is an early chapter, but already, it reads like the beginning of something meaningful.

Images from the signing ceremony

Community Engagement at the Saginaw Japanese Festival

Global engagement is often imagined as a faraway endeavor, the kind that requires visas and jet lag. But sometimes, it happens closer to home—under the white tents of the Saginaw Japanese Festival, where music, food, and cultural traditions fold together into a kind of temporary village.

This fall, the Office of International Programs spent the day listening, learning, and participating in a festival that felt both distinctly local and profoundly global. Festivals like this are subtle social technologies. They create a structured space in which strangers can approach each other with curiosity rather than caution. They remind us that culture travels not only across borders but across neighborhoods.

For SVSU, engaging with the festival wasn't just outreach. It was an act of recognition—that the Great Lakes Bay Region is itself a tapestry of stories, and that our international efforts must extend into the community as deliberately as they reach outward into the world. In the span of a single afternoon, students and residents connected over traditions both familiar and new. And in those conversations, the world felt just a little smaller.



Students pose at the festival

SVSU in China

Strengthening International Partnerships

In mid-September, an SVSU delegation visited partner institutions in China, including Changchun Normal University (CHCNU), Prepare Group, and Shanghai Normal University. The delegation included Dr. Lisa Boehm, Dr. Dawn Hinton, Dr. James Tarr, Dr. Jayati Ghosh, and Dr. Alice Yang. While in China, members attended the CHCNU International Collaboration Program committee meeting and the opening ceremony of the Early Childhood Education Class of 2025, met with CHCNU students, faculty, and staff, and discussed study abroad opportunities. They also met with Prepare Group staff in Beijing and visited Shanghai Normal University to review current partnerships and explore future collaborations.



Members of the delegation

SVSU Renews Partnership

University of the Sunshine Coast, Australia

The University of Sunshine Coast (UniSC) in Australia is one of SVSU's direct enrollment study abroad destinations and the only partner in Australia. SVSU just renewed its study abroad agreement with this university. UniSC has 18,700 students and 12% of the total student population are international students from 73 countries. UniSC offers more than 200 courses in 17 study areas, including Arts and International Studies, Nursing, Business and Commerce, Psychology, Communication, Social Work, Creative Industries, Science, Design, Sport and Exercise Science, Education, Technology, Engineering, Pathway and Bridging Programs, Environmental Studies, Law and Criminology, Medical and Health Science, etc. Students may choose to study abroad at UniSC for a semester during February to June or from July to November. More information is available at the SVSU Study Abroad Webpage.



UniSC Campus

Harmony in Diversity

2025 China Summer Program

In July 2025, seven SVSU students participated in the "Harmony in Diversity" Chinese Bridge Program at China West Normal University (CWNU) in Sichuan, China. Led by Dr. Alice Yang and Dr. Byungil Ahn, the program offered lectures on Chinese language, traditional culture, art, music, dance, martial arts, and local history. Students experienced CWNU's warm hospitality and connected with local students, while also sampling regional cuisine. The program included visits to the Dujiangyan irrigation system, Sanxingdui ruins, Giant Panda Breeding Research Base, Jianchuan Museum, Chengdu Universiade venue, Wuhou Shrine, Langzhong ancient city, Nanchong Museum, and a night cruise of the Jialing River. Exploring urban Chengdu and Chongqing further enriched their understanding of China's culture and history. Overall, the trip was a life-changing and unforgettable international learning experience.



SVSU students abroad

Exchange Students Explore Michigan

Discovering Campus & the Great Lakes Bay Region

If you want to understand how a place feels, ask someone who has just arrived. This fall, four exchange students—three from South Korea and one from Germany—offered SVSU exactly that gift. Through their eyes, Michigan's landscapes, cities, and traditions felt newly vivid. To help them experience the region, the Office of International Programs led trips to Mackinac Island, Detroit, Ann Arbor, Frankenmuth, and the parks and waterways of Midland and Bay City. Each destination offered a different perspective on life in this part of the world.

The students, in turn, reflected something meaningful back to the community. They shared that their semester at SVSU was one of the most remarkable experiences of their lives and expressed gratitude to the faculty, staff, and students who welcomed them. They promised to return home and share the story of a Midwestern university where they felt seen, supported, and inspired.

In the end, their presence served as a reminder that international exchange is not only about sending students abroad, but about reshaping how we see home.



Students exploring Michigan

World Heritage Forum in Beijing

Students Explore History and Culture

Every so often, a moment arrives that quietly rearranges a student's sense of what is possible. For the SVSU students who traveled to the World Heritage Forum in Beijing, that moment unfolded not in a single lecture hall or official session, but across a series of encounters that blended history, culture, and the unexpected weight of representing their university on a global stage.

The Forum gathered students from China, the United Kingdom, and the United States—three groups who, under normal circumstances, might never cross paths. Yet Beijing, with its centuries-old architecture and vast public spaces, has a way of making strangers feel like participants in the same unfolding story.

Our students walked through the Temple of Heaven, where emperors once prayed for good harvests; stood inside the enormous courtyards of the Forbidden City; traced the serpentine spine of the Great Wall; explored the 798 Art District with its renegade creativity; visited Tsinghua University; and drifted through the lakes and pathways of the Summer Palace. These stops weren't simply site visits. They were moments of context—an introduction to the idea that heritage is not just something preserved but something performed across generations.



Students pose at the Global Heritage Forum

And again and again, observers remarked on the way SVSU students carried themselves—with curiosity, humility, and a kind of grounded pride. They were, knowingly or not, ambassadors. And in Beijing, they discovered that being an ambassador is less about giving answers and more about showing the world who you are through the questions you ask.

Spotlight on Visiting Scholars

From East Lake to Lake Huron

Dr. Jing Chang at SVSU

On October 23, Dr. Jing Chang, an international visiting scholar from Hubei University of Education (HUE) in China, gave a lecture to the SVSU community entitled “From East Lake to Lake Huron: A Chinese Economist’s Observations Between Two Shores.”

Dr. Chang, Deputy Dean of the School of Economics and Management at HUE, holds a Ph.D. in Economics, a Master of Laws, and a bachelor’s degree in economics. Her research focuses on economic transformation, China’s reform and opening-up, and higher education. She has published influential papers on urban agglomeration, free trade zones, RCEP, and CPTPP, and her monograph *The Practical Process and Path Choice of China’s Green Foreign Trade* is forthcoming in 2025.

During her three-month visit, Dr. Chang fully immersed herself in campus life. She visited courses, engaged discussions with faculty, attended department meetings, and participated in campus events, connecting with students and colleagues alike. These experiences allowed her to share her expertise while also gaining a deeper understanding of SVSU, Michigan, and American culture, leaving a lasting impression on the community she joined.



Dr. Chang poses (center) after her lecture



Molly at the International Food Festival

Bridging Oceans

Lirong “Molly” Mo at SVSU

Some partnerships deepen not through documents or ceremonies, but through people—individuals who cross oceans and reveal the emotional and intellectual substance of international collaboration. Lirong “Molly” Mo, a visiting scholar from Jinan University, was one such person.

Jinan University is one of SVSU’s longest-standing partners, and over time the institutions have shared students, conversations, and projects. This fall, through Molly, that relationship took on new immediacy. What she found was a campus eager to include her, listen to her, and learn from her.

She contributed to academic dialogue, exchanged research ideas with faculty, and joined in on campus life. Yet what made her visit remarkable was not only what she studied or taught, but the relationships she formed—connections that were genuine, lasting, and transformative. Before returning to China, Molly shared that her time at SVSU would stay with her forever. She learned from our community, and she gave back in ways that cannot be quantified, strengthening partnerships and reminding us that international education is ultimately a story of human connection.

UNPACK: A Club for Returnees

Once a month, Study Abroad Coordinator Kal Spencer, meets with study abroad returnees for UNPACK. Returnees come together to share a meal, swap stories, and discuss life after study abroad. Experiencing a life-changing event alone or with a small group of students can feel isolating. UNPACK provides a space for returnees to process their memories and travel lessons in community and encourages them to integrate their experiences in their daily lives, studies, and future plans. If you're interested in joining UNPACK next semester, reach out to Kal.

2025 Study Abroad Expo

More than 200 students attended the Study Abroad Expo on Thursday, September 26, 2025. The first 100 students received a free study abroad tote bag to gather information from our exhibitors. We welcomed 8 study abroad providers to campus including our partner John Cabot University from Rome, Italy. SVSU's first Gilman International Scholarship recipient, Jake Dicksen, shared his experience studying Japanese in Osaka and Hikone earlier this year. Study abroad returnees volunteered their time talking with students about their experiences and offering guidance, and faculty leaders for the 2026 faculty-led trips shared trip and class details with interested students. OIP would like to thank our faculty

leaders, returnee volunteers, and the Conference Center for their support of our largest study abroad event of the year.



Table at the Study Abroad Expo

Study Abroad

Show and Tell

The first ever Study Abroad Show and Tell provided returnees and other Cardinal community members a chance to share their souvenirs, photos, and stories from abroad.

Nola Boyle, who studied at Maynooth University in Ireland in 2024, shared photos from her Irish adventures along with a flag and sweatshirt from MU. Kylie Sizemore, who spent a semester on a ship for Semester at Sea, shared jewelry, photos, stickers, and her yearbook map (Semester at Sea participants are given a map for friends to sign at the end of their voyage). Dr. Pat Shelley,



One of Dr. Pat Shelley's Slides



Nola Boyle's
Show & Tell Display

International Student Advisor, shared books, maps, and slides from his two study abroad experiences in Germany in the 1960's.

Study Abroad Application Fee Removed

The Study Abroad Application Fee was removed starting in the fall 2025 semester. Since then, 138 students have applied for study abroad, saving SVSU students a total of \$1,380.

Social Media



YouTube

svsuinternationalprograms9675



Instagram

svsu.international
svsustudyaborad



Facebook

SVSU International
SVSU Study Abroad

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