international review
2019-20
This year, the COVID-19 pandemic devastated lives, disrupted normal activity and put many plans and dreams on hold. Yet as we look back on 2019-20, we feel tremendously heartened.

We feel pride in the accomplishments of all UC International’s units. They kept global recruitment and our study abroad program strong despite national trends and expanded on successful pilot programs for student support. They worked with our strategy groups to bring long-term partnership plans to fruition. And they responded to the COVID-19 crisis with tireless compassion, professional expertise and strategic vision.

We feel amazement at our students who boldly start a journey of international education at the University of Cincinnati. They kept their eyes on their goal and they learned more than they expected to in difficult circumstances.

We feel gratitude for faculty and staff across our campuses who do important global work and create worldwide opportunities for our students. They pivoted quickly this spring and found innovative ways to support our community and pursue our educational and research mission.

As we move forward through this challenging period to whatever comes next, it’s easy for all of us in higher education to fear the loss of work and ideals we have poured our hearts and lives into.

But we have always worked toward the future, not the past. We have always focused outward to make an impact in the greater world. We must keep that purposeful focus and breadth of perspective to see the future envisioned in Next Lives Here.

These three essential attributes define the University of Cincinnati’s central value: transformative excellence.

At UC, we bring together talented people of diverse backgrounds around the globe to enrich ideas, experiences and outcomes for all.

We ready our students to thrive in a global culture and a borderless workplace.

Through research and service, we address problems of the broader world and their impact on our city.

All of that work must be global in today’s interconnected world.

This review focuses on just a few stories about UC’s international work and the global experiences of our students, faculty and staff. They offer us so much hope for our future.

“There is nothing I would change about my journey here at UC. Cincinnati feels like a second home now.”

- Sheffi Tiwari

UC student Sheffi Tiwari, Computer Science & Economics, 2021
Around the world in 8 experiences


Though her ninth trip was cancelled, 2020 grad Kalea Lucas broke the known record at UC by studying abroad eight times. She did it while earning a degree in marketing and international business in the Lindner College of Business, as well as a minor in fashion design in the School of Design.

The chance to broaden her horizons was a major reason Lucas chose UC and Lindner. Integrating international education into core curricula is part of UC’s vision of the transformative power of diversity.

“Once I found out that Lindner had its own study abroad office, I was like, it’s over. Period,” Lucas recalls. “This is where I needed to be.”

Lucas went to Toronto her first term with a Lindner cohort program designed to empower historically underrepresented students. Her next three tours were also faculty-led, UC’s most popular option.

A year later, she was ready to go solo. Knowing “nothing changes if nothing changes,” she challenged herself studying in Hong Kong, South Korea and India.

Lucas’s final experience abroad, an internship in Santiago, Chile, was more challenging still. She had to change host families; she had to file a police report over a stolen phone—in Spanish. Then massive street protests erupted after a transport rate hike, making city life tumultuous. A curfew was imposed.

“It was emotional to see people out with their families and their pots and pans all chanting together,” she says of the street protestors. “Even though it wasn’t my country, I was proud of the people for uniting and using their voices.”

Lucas interned with UC International last summer. She featured in a commercial that her multinational team made to market study abroad.

“It was such a great experience. It got me prepared to work with a team of people from different backgrounds and helped me realize how cultural perspective plays a role in how you get your work done.”

Lucas encourages others to take advantage of the world-class global education that UC offers.

“If you’re looking to grow in some way, you will most likely experience that if you study abroad.”

Lucas’s ninth study abroad experience, a trip to Ghana, was cancelled due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. Her plans to return to Korea after graduation on a U.S. Department of State scholarship met the same fate just after she learned she was a semifinalist.

But no one doubts she’s ready to take on the world.
Building bridges

More than a thousand new international students leave home each year and travel across the world to begin their studies at the University of Cincinnati. Last summer, some students from China, India and Uzbekistan got an early welcome to life in the U.S. through an optional pilot “bridge” program. The extended orientation was modeled on programs that help first-generation college students navigate university life and make vital connections.

They took up-close and personal tours of the campus and city, got help with first steps like supermarket shopping and banking, learned tips on American classroom culture and made that first scary trip to the dining hall in the company of new friends.

“It was designed to help them prepare for classes, develop relationships with others, and manage cross-cultural relationships at their new home,” says UC International Program Manager Lorri Blanton.

This summer, however, new international students were unable to come to Cincinnati: Travel was restricted, campus shut down and language schools closed. UC’s International Pathway program filled those gaps with its own summer bridge.

Begun in 2018, Pathway offers qualified students with lower English skills a way to complete their degrees without added time or expense. They take language and cultural classes plus two to three electives or introductory courses in the first year until they meet language requirements to transition into their degree programs.

Pathway manager Sarah Shepherd scrambled to make the fall classes available online this summer.

“With the headstart they got this summer, some students will be able to segue straight to their degree programs this fall,” she reports. Pathway will remain online for the fall semester.

These programs are examples of the support that UC International offers international students year-round. In fall 2019, our retention rate for first-year international undergraduates was 96.4%.

EARLY ORIENTATION PROGRAM

Plans are underway to expand last summer’s bridge pilot to a full-fledged orientation for next fall.

All new international undergrads arriving for the fall 2021 semester will receive the in-depth, hands-on introduction to life at UC.

A smaller-scale version of the program will welcome any new international students who are able to come to Cincinnati this January.

INTERNATIONAL PATHWAY PROGRAM

Pathway students gain skills (and a collective 3.45 GPA) that sent 100% into degree programs by year two.

They also gain close friends.

“Moving to the online platform this summer was a struggle for some, emotionally. They missed their classmates and the interactions they had with their professors. Faculty understood and took great care to work with them,” says Shepherd.

REAL AND VIRTUAL COMMUNITY

The staff of UC International creates a sense of community here for our international students.

That warm welcome continued even under pandemic rules.

During the campus shutdown this spring and summer, it included virtual English conversation groups, convivial online “dinners with six strangers” hosted by the vice provost and a (real) temporary home for a stranded international student.
Years of work by many people culminated in three new international strategic partnerships for the University of Cincinnati in 2019-20.

The new partnerships formalize different collaborations, from program development and affiliation to student/faculty mobility and research.

- Université Internationale Casablanca: UC’s affiliation agreement with the Moroccan university supports UIC’s plans to develop English-language programs for students across Sub-Saharan Africa and extends UC’s brand of real-world education in a vital part of the world.

- Christ (Deemed to Be) University: Our strategic partnership with this private university in Bangalore is our first in India, the country of origin of almost half of UC’s international students. We share a vision of community service and real-world impact.

- University Alliance Ruhr: Our first strategic agreement with a regional consortium is a new template for global partnership for UC. Our city’s cultural ties to Germany and similarities between the Ruhr and the postindustrial US Midwest connect our programs and research interests.

“It’s rewarding to see them come together,” says Ana Vamadeva, director of strategic partnerships for UC International. “Our colleges and strategy groups are excited to move forward with our new ventures.”

More than a hundred faculty, staff and community members from diverse backgrounds serve in seven groups that advise UC International on developing strategic partnerships. Their focus is on creating a small number of comprehensive partnerships in strategic parts of the world. The partnerships engage multiple colleges and programs across both universities and encourage mutual investment in the educational and research missions we share.

Collaborating across borders connects our scholars in a culture of diverse disciplines, viewpoints and experience that ignites creativity.

“Our institutions will be able to field the innovative, transdisciplinary teams we need to solve problems of complex global systems,” says Vice Provost Raj Mehta about the importance of such partnerships.

UC’s 13 strategic partnerships around the world offer another essential benefit.

“Robust, lasting partnerships give UC the means not only to mitigate risk in the present crisis but also to take risks, to innovate so that we will emerge stronger than ever.”

“They help support us to weather uncertain times,” says Jenni Kim Sutmoller, Vamadeva’s fellow director. “Robust, lasting partnerships give UC the means not only to mitigate risk in the present crisis but also to take risks, to innovate so that we will emerge stronger than ever.”
UC International’s strategy groups of faculty and community advisors continue to expand UC’s strategic partnerships worldwide.

A committee formed by UC and several Cincinnati organizations continues to expand UC’s strategic partnerships worldwide. The strategy groups are also exploring partnership with Bahir Dar University, ITESM Queretaro, the University of Johannesburg, and the University of Trento.

UC has been accepted into the Institute of International Education’s 2020 International Academic Partnership Program. The global education nonprofit institute is working this year with the government and universities in Greece with the goal of helping selected U.S. universities to build lasting partnerships in the country. UC is highly respected in Greece for its history-changing archaeological research at Pylos.

The UAR is a consortium of Ruhr University Bochum, TU Dortmund University, and the University of Duisburg-Essen. Our partnership with the UAR grew from a longstanding collaboration between the German and media studies graduate programs at UC and Duisburg-Essen.

Some projected collaborations with the consortium include activities with the 1819 Hub and joint research in areas like public health, engineering and water.

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We have developed new activity agreements in Australia and India. Our strategy groups have focused on partnership in both of these countries for the past two years.

UC has developed an institutional agreement with South Korea’s Chung-Ang University, beginning with a business and economics 2+2.

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UC faculty and staff work globally to realize UC’s Next Lives Here vision of real-world impact. Some serve in UC International’s regional strategy groups that plan our global partnerships. Others conduct international research. Still others create international experiential learning opportunities to prepare students for a global workforce. Karla Washington does all those things. The College of Allied Health Sciences associate professor and director of the Pediatric Language, Literacy & Speech Outcomes Lab serves in UC International’s Middle East & North Africa strategy group to help develop partnerships in that region. Washington’s international research focuses on speech development in children who speak Jamaican Creole and English. “The long-term goal of this research is to understand how speech production development differs in bilingual and multilingual versus monolingual learners,” she says. She won a National Institute of Health grant for work validating theories and tools to assess speech development in multilingual children. Washington leads study abroad programs to Jamaica that engage undergraduates, graduate students and alumni in her multicultural data collection. “Karla’s work is a very clear example of translational science, translating things from principle to practice.” says Sarah Dugan, a Speech Language Pathology alum who went on the research trip in 2014. Dugan found the experience invaluable when she began work on her doctoral research and on other NIH-funded projects. Throughout UC’s colleges and offices, faculty and staff are doing global work of all kinds with impact for our wider community. Even after they retire: UC Emeriti Association representatives joined the strategy groups in 2019, bringing years of global experience to the table. The group is working with UC International to send emeriti on extended teaching and consulting visits to our developing partner universities and will choose the pilot location when travel restrictions lift.
Investing in excellence

UC International awards funds for student and faculty mobility and for collaborations with partners worldwide to support the University of Cincinnati’s global educational and research missions.

Scholarships for new international undergraduates allow UC to recruit remarkable students from around the world. The ideas and viewpoints they bring from diverse backgrounds enrich the culture of inclusive excellence on our campuses.

The most prestigious of our international scholarships are the full-ride Global Opportunity Scholarships. These are awarded every four years to two stellar international students who face severe financial hardship. Pranita Dhungana and Sudarshan Pandey, the 2016 winners from Nepal, earned their degrees this year.

UC International administers scholarships for study abroad as well. International study, co-op and internship opportunities are part of the UC brand of experiential learning, and scholarships help make those experiences accessible for all our students.

Our office awards grants to faculty and staff who create those opportunities for international study. Mentoring and development grants fund the creation of high-quality study abroad programs, with a focus on those that are sustainable and replicable.

We also award grants for research or programmatic collaborations with our strategic and developing partners. The visiting scholar and incentive grants fund travel for those purposes. This year, we prioritized collaborations in new disciplines and regions, as well as replicable projects using innovative platforms. Our goal is to engage faculty and administrators at both institutions, strengthening important partnerships for the long term to increase the global impact of our work.

Many of the grants awarded this year went unused due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. Some of the projects will be revisited at a later date; some may be reimagined. Despite global shutdowns, we continue working to open up the world for our students and help them discover what’s next.

FACULTY & STAFF MOBILITY

Two grants support UC’s research, programmatic and institutional collaborations around the world.

MENTORING & DEVELOPMENT

Two grants support the creation of new faculty-led programs for study abroad.

Mentoring grants allow UC faculty who want to create new courses that incorporate study abroad to join a program created by an experienced leader.

Development grants fund the recipient’s travel to the site of a proposed new faculty-led program to finalize logistics.

INTERNATIONAL STUDY

Nearly all students studying abroad receive individual or block scholarships from UC International.

UC International manages many other college, external and special scholarships for study abroad.

Beyond scholarships for enrolled students, UC International sponsors internships and summer classes for students from our partners. We had to cancel offers to a talented group of intern candidates this spring.

Pranita Dhungana and Sudarshan Pandey, the 2016 winners from Nepal, earned their degrees this year.

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Students at the 2020 international prom, Surfin’ USA, at the Newport Aquarium

Global students

Trends & highlights

In 2019-20, international students made up 7.2% of the University of Cincinnati’s student population.

- Despite national trends of the last 4 years, our total enrollment remained strong, edging out last year’s figure of 4,460.
- India accounts for almost half (46.5%) of our international population. Our population from Vietnam continues to rise, with an increase of 13% from the previous year.
- Computer and information science-related programs show the largest upward trend (up 14% to 1,059 from 920 in 2018-19).

4,469 global students from 109 countries

Their top 5 countries: India, China, South Korea, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia.

Among them are
- 1,134 undergraduates
- 2,129 grad students
- 1,206 OPT

1,096 new international students

Our 2019-20 intake was just shy of 2018-19’s record 1,107.

96.4% retention of 1st-year students

Nearly all first-year international students return to UC to study.

Enrollment of new first-year global undergraduates was up 9% in 2019-20.

For fall 2019, their retention rate was 96.4%, one of the highest for any UC student demographic group.
1,763 students went to 60 countries
While participation was steady, destinations are diversifying.

The Lindner College of Business led, with 681 students participating, almost 40% of all those studying or working abroad in 2018-19.

73.4% of students go on faculty-led programs
These group programs integrate study abroad into full courses.

They are our most popular study abroad option. External programs, international co-ops and internships, and semester exchanges follow in popularity.

Trends & highlights
Study abroad numbers, almost constant for 5 years through fall 2019, will drop significantly in our next count due to COVID-19 cancellations.

- Participation in long-term study abroad (exchange, external programs, co-op & internships) increased 4.5% for 2018-19.
- Europe remained the most popular destination, led by the UK, France, Germany, Spain and Italy.
- Our social media ambassador program more than doubled as we opened it up for all students on long-term study abroad to submit photos in competition for 3 scholarships.

#37 in the U.S. for study abroad participation
This ranking is among all U.S. doctoral-granting universities.

It comes from the 2019 Open Doors report on U.S./international education, the major national scorecard.
“Working on the other side of the world really opened things up. It will help me be ready wherever I go in life.”

- Beau Becker

Our students expect and need a global education to flourish in our multicultural world and its international workplace.

We hear from them how the experience changes their lives and enlarges their perspective. Many call it the most valuable part of their education.

As a tier-1 public research university, the University of Cincinnati works to change lives in our wider community as well. Through translational research and public service we realize our strategic vision of innovation and impact.

We must continue to think and act globally to move forward as higher education changes direction.

The year’s challenges and disruptions have shown us that it is unwise—and impossible—to step back.
UC International supports the University of Cincinnati’s global vision of innovation, inclusion and real-world impact. We connect with partners around the world, we give scholars opportunities for international collaboration, and we nurture students to become educated about the world they live in.

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