



GRADUATE STUDENT COUNCIL

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Home for the Holidays

OVERVIEW

Problem

23.2% of all graduate students are international students. Many of these students are from developing countries and receive some funding for their education at Vanderbilt. Unlike local students, family and home for international students is across the ocean. During long holidays, such as winter and summer break, local students go home and see their loved ones. However, travelling throughout the holiday period, especially abroad, can be expensive. Saving up to travel home is rather daunting considering the rising cost of living in Nashville and the high rent costs graduate students must pay to be as close as possible to campus.

Many international students cannot afford to go home for at least one of the long holidays.

Solution

Establish a fund that fully or partially funds the cost of airfare travel home for international students.

IMPACT

For international students, it can get very lonely during the holidays. They already have to deal with homesickness, culture shock, adjusting to a new life and cultural norms and trying to belong. While ISSS hosts a few events during the holidays, they only cover a few days. Some spend a few days with an American family through the First Friends program but most international students feel stranded.

Giving international students the chance to go home for the holidays will contribute greatly to their emotional and psychological wellbeing. This impact can potentially spillover to their academic performance. For the graduate students who are parents and/spouses, the impact is more profound.

International students will feel more confident that the university cares about their wellbeing and happiness as students. After all, Vanderbilt is known for having the happiest undergraduate students in the country, why not the happiest graduate students as well?

GOALS

List specific goals of this proposal

1. Goal 1: Subsidize the cost of travelling home for international graduate students
2. Goal 2: Provide at least 25% of international graduate students the chance to travel home

IMPLEMENTATION

This fund shall be needs based. Students must prove that they earn (income or stipend) less than a specified amount or that they cannot afford to fully pay for a plane ticket home. The portion of the cost covered by the fund shall be at the discretion of a council that is made up of students from the Graduate Student Council and/program student representatives and appointed faculty/administration. The decision shall be based on the cost of airfare and how much the student can afford. The selection process shall be through a lottery to ensure unbiased selection. The number of students who will be funded shall be determined by the council. Guidelines shall be set up to guide the council in their decision making, Graduate students should be involved in the creation of these guidelines.

The council will fund several students several times a year. The application and approval period shall begin and be complete at least 2 months before intended travel. This will ensure students can book the most affordable tickets and fulfil the necessary requirements for travelling such as, obtaining travel signatures from ISSS or their sponsors.

ESTIMATED COST

The cost will depend on the number of students the council is willing to fund every year and the places that the students are travelling to.

Currently there are about 492 international graduate students at Vanderbilt. Assuming 100 students are funded and the overall average is \$500 per student, the cost will be \$50 000 per year.

Below is a breakdown of the average airfare for several cities on all the continents that represent international students at Vanderbilt.

Africa	
City	Average Airfare in \$
Lagos	900
Accra	1050
Addis Ababa	1200
Nairobi	1100
Johannesburg	1200

Asia	
City	Average Airfare in \$
Beijing	800
Tokyo	900
New Delhi	1000
Dubai	950
Moscow	750

Australia	
City	Average Airfare
Sydney	1500
Melbourne	1900
Adelaide	1930
Perth	1600
Brisbane	1800

Europe	
City	Average Airfare in \$
London	800
Paris	900
Berlin	1000
Rome	1000
Zurich	850

South America	
City	Average Airfare in \$
Sao Paula	1500
Rio de Janeiro	1530
Buenos Aires	1500
Santiago	1600
Lima	900