

Education has the power to push people across the world in search of new avenues to learn and explore endless possibilities. Students from various corners of the world have chosen to leave their homes and everything familiar to pursue advanced degrees at Texas A&M University.

The influence of diverse cultures, experiences and agricultural practices helps enrich Texas A&M University's graduate programs.

Xinzhou Fan, an international student from China, is pursuing a doctorate in hospitality, hotel management and tourism at Texas A&M University.

"For my Ph.D., my motivation started when I went to the U.K. for my master's, where I learned about different concepts and material, and I decided I wanted to dive into it as a scholar," Fan said.

With the world and country to explore, Fan chose Texas A&M University to continue his education due to the educational system and the program's length, allowing him to immerse himself in Texan culture and develop his dissertation.

"In the U.K., their program is mainly three years, so once you begin, you immediately have to start your dissertation," Fan said. "In the U.S., you have four to five years, which I think is very helpful."

Academia **ACROSS** *Country Borders*

by KATE DARSEY '24

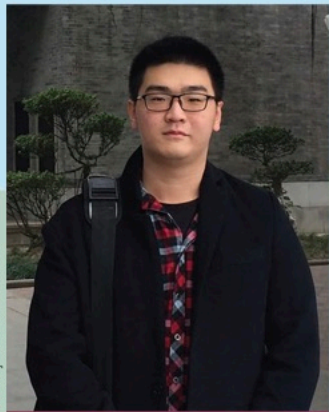


photo courtesy of Xinzhou Fan

Xinzhou Fan, from China, pursues his doctorate at Texas A&M University.

Texas has a vibrant culture stemming from its remarkable history and Western way of life. This culture has given rise to certain stereotypes that some Texans identify with, while others do not. Although these stereotypes have spread globally and set specific expectations, there is much more to the Lone Star State than what meets the eye.

"I know Yellowstone is not in Texas, but many people in China watch the TV series, and we think it is like Texas," Fan said. "I think it is quite interesting that Texas is not just about ranching and cowboys, but also high technology."

While international students may be engrossed with traditional Texas culture, they are also immersed in the rich Texas A&M lifestyle. Full of traditions and incomparable pride found no where else, the culture is revered by Aggies, but can be overwhelming to understand from the outside.

"My first impression of Texas A&M is the spirit, because I have been to Princeton and Harvard, and I never experienced this kind of spirit there," Fan said. "I find it quite impressive."

Moving to a new country can be challenging as internationals have to navigate a different culture, transportation systems and language barrier. The lack of accessible resources, such as international language programs, can add even more complications for students.

“The biggest challenge has been the language because I thought the university might provide some international language program for students, but they don’t,” Clara Sim, a master’s student from South Korea in agribusiness, said. “There are some free courses, but those classes do not fit my schedule to attend.”

The master’s programs offered by the College allow international students to bridge the gap with Americans, which would not be done as efficiently as if they were only state residents.

“From an international student perspective, if I stay with my Chinese friends, we don’t know a lot about Texas or College Station,” Fan said. “When I can connect with my College Station friends, they will give me a lot of native information.”

Although Fan is grateful for this opportunity and the experience he is gaining, a 13-hour flight stands between him and his family. This makes it challenging for Fan to decide to travel for his education and career.

“I would like to work in academics for my future career,” Fan said. “I love both places but worry about my family because my grandparents are older, and I would like to visit them. Also, political issues in the future raise some risks, but I am open to options.”

One important aspect, often overlooked, is the lack of resources when moving to another country. Without a car, many international travelers are forced to pay for public transportation and other facilities that would be accessible to residents.

“Texas A&M has a lot of facilities for students, like the sports recreation center, which is a beneficial part for international students,” Sim said. “Also, they provide a free bus, and I love that part because you don’t have to pay anything.”

Texan undergraduates often choose to stay in Texas or the U.S. to continue their studies in a graduate program. Students from other countries, however, are encouraged to obtain their graduate degrees abroad to gain exposure to varied experiences, ideas and cultures.

“In Korea, it is becoming more popular to get your master’s abroad because getting your education higher and higher is more in demand,” Sim said. “We have a sentence in Korea, ‘Everyone gets a master’s,’ so a master’s is not really different. Even a Ph.D. is becoming more common.”

Differences between Texas A&M University and other universities worldwide extend beyond just academics. These cultural differences also influence social norms and expectations between professors, students and peers.

“One difference is the relationship between you and your supervisor,” Fan said. “Especially in East Asian culture, your supervisor is your boss, and you show high respect and obey any instructions. In the United States, it is a more cooperative relationship.”

After completing their studies at Texas A&M University, these students aspire to secure a job in the United States and eventually use the knowledge and experience gained back in their native country. Thanks to educational programs, the world is within reach for students like Fan and Sim who have successfully seized this opportunity. 📖



photo courtesy of Clara Sim

Clara Sim, originally from Korea, pursues her master’s in agribusiness.