The Albion Pleiad

Student-Run News Source Informing Albion Since 1883.

Scan this QR code to read more at albionpleiad.com.

November 22, 2024 / Print Edition / Online Monday, Wednesday and Friday at albionpleiad.com

International Students Reflect on Culture Shocks, Perspective Changes

Jocelyn Kincaid-Beal
Features/Opinions Editor

If you're from Michigan, it might be hard to understand why anyone would cross an ocean to come here and attend a small liberal arts college. Yet, Albion College is home to international students from over 20 countries.

Despite the distance traveled, many international students are here for the same reasons you are: scholarships, small class sizes or a certain sport or institute.

As similar as their reasons may be, their experiences at Albion College are certainly different.

A New Perspective

Abuja, Nigeria senior Daniel Jeremiah chose to come to Albion because it was his most affordable option, and he wanted to attend a small college where he could form connections with his professors.

Jeremiah said international students have visa restrictions about what jobs and internships they can have, and he thinks that because of this, international students tend to be more opportunistic than other students.

"You spend a lot of your time just being on the constant lookout for the next thing that can advance your career," Jeremiah said.

He added that because of this opportunistic attitude, international students have less time to "go out more and be partying." He thinks that sets them apart from other students, and creates close-knit communities between fellow international students.

Jeremiah attributes much of his personal development to Albion. He said there are a lot of conservative beliefs in Nigeria around topics such as gender rights and sexuality. Through coming to Albion, hearing more perspectives and connecting with other Nigerian students on campus, Jeremiah said he's become more open-minded.

"When I was at the airport, it was so hard. It felt like I left all my memories back in Mongolia."

"Coming here has done a lot of good for me," Jeremiah said. "I would hate to be the same person that I was back in Nigeria."

Milan, Italy first-year Emanuele Principi sits in the KC loft. Principi said he came to Albion so he could play soccer and study finance at the same institution (Photo illustration by Gabriela Popa).

Houston first-year Isabella Martin Hernandez was also drawn to Albion for its small community. Additionally, she said she came to Albion to learn about the culture in the Midwest.

"I've always been open to learning new stuff around the world," Martin Hernandez said.

Martin Hernandez said she has spent most of her life outside the country, having lived in Mexico, Spain and the United Kingdom. She said her cultural background allows her to bring a different perspective and a global way of thinking to Albion's community.

"Most of the time I ask my question: 'Yes, this might be happening here, but what about in other parts of the world?'" Martin Hernandez said.

A Big Adjustment

Milan, Italy first-year Emanuele Principi came to Albion to play soccer, an important part of his life and identity.

"In Europe, there was no room for my career and university career overlapping," Principi said. "Being a student-athlete in the U.S. for me was the best choice."

As a first-year, there are many things Principi is still trying to get used to about life in the U.S. and Albion.

"The most painful thing is the food," Principi said.

Additionally, Principi said he's noticed differences in habits, meal times and holiday celebrations.

In Milan, he said, they eat meals much later than in the U.S., and Halloween is not a big holiday.

"I think for you, Halloween is the same for me for Christmas," Principi said. "You care a lot about Halloween."

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia first-year Moon Manlaibataar has also experienced "shocking" differences between Albion and her hometown.

"One of the things that I found really interesting was everyone was smiling at me, like the girls in my hall," Manlaibataar said. "I was kind of shocked at the start, but then, why not smile?"

Manlaibataar said that her Albion experience is different from a non-international student's experience because she's so far from everything and everyone she knows.

"I left my family and my friends thousands of miles away," Manlaibataar said. "When I was at the airport, it was so hard. It felt like I left all my memories back in Mongolia."

The Center for International Education

According to Director of the Center for International Education (CIE) Cristen Casey, the center helps students with their visas and other immigration documents and processes, hosts events centered around belonging and works to "highlight the value of international students on campus."

Additionally, the CIE works to address any concerns they hear.

"International students have particular challenges, struggles and also things that they need in order to be successful and to be really included and happy here at Albion," Casey said.

She added that many international students stay on campus over the Thanksgiving and winter breaks, and the CIE drives them to the grocery store and the bowling alley, so that they have something to eat and something fun to do. The CIE has also worked with the Office of Belonging and Baldwin to ensure there are Ramadan offerings for students and consistent Halal and Kosher options.

Support From Faculty

Manlaibaatar said that the CIE staff have "been showing really good support," and that she's also experienced kindness and support from her professors.

Specifically, her FYE mentor and Anthropology Professor Allison Harnish showed concern for Manlaibaatar in a way that she appreciated.

"I've never had someone do that for me, like in a school setting," Manlaibaatar said.

Bangalore, India senior Medha Mohan came to Albion for the Wilson Institute and the low student-to-faculty ratio. Mohan said that she's happy about her decision to come to Albion because one of her professors just helped her find a job.

"You have the special connections with professors which you don't get at big colleges," Mohan said. "There's so many opportunities here, which I really like,"

She added that when she's struggling with an assignment due to cultural differences, her professors are "usually really understanding," and try to come up with creative solutions.

A Final Note

Manlaibaatar said coming to Albion was a big change, but she knew she had to do it, both for herself and for her family.

"I'm the first one to go to school abroad in my whole family, so it felt like I was opening a door to my little cousins and my little brother," Manlaibaatar said. "It's an honor, to be honest."

To any future international students, Principi said to understand what you want for your life and your career and to know what you're passionate about.

He also advises looking for "an open-minded country, and just a place where you can be whoever you want to."

"Albion and the U.S.A. is one of the most beautiful places you can choose," Principi said.

Comic: Hey Guess What? 'Disabled' is Not a Bad Word

(See Comic: 'Just Say Disabled' on back.)

Comic: 'Just Say Disabled. It's Not a Bad Word!'

Noah Guevera
Photographer

(Comic: 'Just Say Disabled' continued from front.) A comic representing disabled people being called terminology that some disabled people are uncomfortable with (Illustrations by Noah Guevara).

From Athlete to Advocate: A New Vision for SafeSport

Killian Altayeb
Assistant Managing Editor

At Albion College, more than half of the student population are athletes. With that comes navigating not only academics, but up to 20 hours a week of mandatory commitments to their sport.

Even before diving into the pool as an Albion College swimmer, South Lyon sophomore Sarah Kohler was already advocating for her fellow student-athletes through SafeSport, a nonprofit organization "committed to building a sport community where participants can work and learn together free of emotional, physical and sexual abuse and misconduct."

Kohler, who serves as Albion's director of athlete advocacy for SafeSport, said she began developing the SafeSport program at the start of the semester, guided by a belief that athletics are invaluable for young people.

Honiss and his brother stand in front of the sign for the USA Wrestling Headquarters in Colorado. Wrestlers looking to become USA-certified must pass tests based on athlete treatment (Photo courtesy of Max Honiss).

"(Athletics) gives an environment where you not only learn discipline and consistency but grow your confidence," Kohler said.

Grosse Pointe Park junior, swimmer and diver Cameron Thompson said "SafeSport goes beyond your swimming pool or the field or your sport. It's making sure you prioritize and advocate for yourself."

Thompson added that being in SafeSport means athletes are protected from discrimination and harassment "on the court, off the court, in the pool, out of the pool."

Albion College Women's Soccer Coach Ron Rainey said that SafeSport has brought about awareness for not just coaches, but trainers and athletic staff as well.

"Now students have an avenue if they aren't being treated the right way; they're able to have advocates for them," Rainey said.

South Lyon senior and Albion SafeSport executive board member Max Honiss said that SafeSport is "different for every sport and different for every athlete."

Honiss added that for sports like wrestling, athletes are required to take tests involving topics like weight cuts and sexual assault to become USA-certified.

"If you're also SafeSports certified, you could identify those areas and know what to do in those cases," Honiss said. "If something horrible were to happen, you know what to do and how to handle the situation."

The Integration of SafeSport at Albion

Athletic Director Jennifer Rushton said that other schools view athletics as an extracurricular, but at Albion, it's a cocurricular.

"We really feel that this is a huge part of the learning process and their development," Rushton said.

Grosse Pointe Park junior Cameron Thompson leans against a diving board at the Dow's pool. Thompson said that practicing SafeSport "goes beyond your swimming pool or field. It's making sure you prioritize and advocate for yourself mentally, physically, spiritually," (Photo illustration by Killian Altayeb).

"It can't cross the line to where an athlete has certain feelings of responsibility towards behaving for that coach," Kohler said.

Being successful as a student-athlete depends on the level of care provided by the athletic department, Kohler added.

"Being an athlete is a big commitment in regards to time and balancing that kind of schedule," Kohler said. "Being able to connect students with different resources is something that's been really beneficial for student-athletes."

Support Beyond the Field

As a coach, Rainey said he tries to keep out of his athletes' personal lives. However, he also said one of his jobs is to "help the athletes, not just in their sport," but academically.

Even during the off-season, coaches and training staff stay in touch with athletes, Rushton said.

"It's 'how are your classes, how's your family?'" Rushton said. "(Coaches) try to make sure that overall, athletes are doing well."

As a Division III school, Albion's coaches are allowed 16 to 24 practices in the off-season, which Kohler said are supplemented with lifts.

Kohler sits on a windowsill in the KC loft. Kohler said that SafeSport makes sure athletes have "a right to a safe athletic environment, one that they can thrive and feel safe in," (Photo illustration by Killian Altayeb).

Rainey said that in addition to lifts, he holds individual meetings with his players to ask about their campus experiences and share his thoughts or past experiences.

Rushton said that coaches themselves also strive to continuously coach and critique their athletes, but "do care about them as a whole person too."

"You know, wins and championships, that's a lot of fun and things that students remember," Rushton said. "But what they'll always remember is how their coaches made them feel and how they treated them."

When coaches aren't available, Honniss said that camaraderie between athletes on the team is what ensures athletes' voices are heard.

"It's 'who's going to be a leader, who's going to decide to do the right thing and actually help maintain team culture when people aren't looking,'" Honniss said.

The Future of Athlete Advocacy

As SafeSport and advocacy for the well-being of athletes on campus continue to evolve, Rainey said the future of the program lies in ongoing advocacy for student-athletes.

"In the end, if there's something that can help the students balance their sport and school and help with mental health challenges, I think it'll be awesome," Rainey said.

Thompson said he hopes that SafeSport "becomes a very prevalent part of the culture, both the athletic and the academic."

Along with hoping athletes feel supported during difficult times, Kohler said she'd like team captains to be able to strive for the SafeSport goal of maintaining a safe athletic space and aim to "provide good team culture and good team environment from the top down."

To reply to one of these stories or anything else the Pleiad publishes: Submit a letter to the editor at www.albionpleiad.com/about/letter-to-the-editor/.

"But what they'll always remember is how their coaches made them feel and how they treated them."

Kohler added that the cocurricular mentality is "being able to connect students with different resources, not only academically, but also counseling services and nutrition services."

Within Rushton's first days as director, she said Kohler approached her to discuss adapting SafeSport for Albion's campus.

"I thought 'this is really cool that a current student-athlete brought this to me with the desire to help close to 700 students,'" Rushton said.

Rushton added that Kohler later presented at a SAAC meeting and met with Albion Athletics staff to further advocate for SafeSport's integration.

Kohler said that while staff and coaches have a unique responsibility to be involved in an athlete's life to understand their performance, maintaining boundaries is important.

THE ALBION COLLEGE PLEIAD
Online at albionpleaid.com
Contact us at pleiad@albion.edu

FALL 2024 STAFF

Editor-in-Chief: Bella Bakeman
Managing Editor: Bonnie Lord
Asst. Managing Editor: Killian Altayeb
Asst. News Editor: Heidi Faramelli
Features/Opinions Editor: Jocelyn Kincaid-Beal
Co-Marketing Coordinator/Staff Writer: Rhiannon Slotnick

Staff Writers: Kyla Lawrence, Seiji McSwain, Aidan Shapiro, Sophia Valchine

Photographers: Noah Guevara, Lizzy Kelley, Gabriellla Popa

Volunteer Staff Writers: Shay Athayde, Nick Briscoe, Solongo Tamir

Volunteer Photographer: Oghenefejiro Nakireru

The Albion Pleiad staff strives to correct all errors of fact. If you've seen an error in our pages, let us know at pleiad@albion.edu. General comments should be posted in the comments section at the bottom of articles appearing online at albionpleiad.com. Story ideas?

Email the editors at pleiad@albion.edu.