Global Islanders

Summary of QEP Idea:

Over the last two years TAMU-CC has made notable progress toward internationalizing its campus. We have hired a full-time Study Abroad coordinator and now offer students multiple options for study abroad through faculty-led programs, reciprocal exchanges, and independent providers. We have established a new partnership with Study Group to recruit highly qualified international students, and we have reenergized the International Student Organization and provided more robust enrichment activities for these students. We have expanded our foreign language offerings from two to five, including a new Arabic course taught by a Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant. Many academic disciplines in every college offer courses with a strong international emphasis, with no less than 31 such courses in the College of Liberal Arts. We have an active International Education Committee, and we have put more resources and new energy into International Education Week and the Parade of Nations. As the Office of International Education Task Force concluded in its “State of the OIE” report in November 2017, international education is “thriving” on our campus, though “many support programs and services need more staffing and financial support to continue to grow.”\textsuperscript{1} The purpose of this QEP is to build on this good foundation by fully internationalizing Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

The Global Islanders QEP is grounded in the firm belief that our university must not only equip our students for 21\textsuperscript{st} century careers, but also for 21\textsuperscript{st} century citizenship. Like students elsewhere, ours must have the opportunity to become citizens of the world. Global citizens understand the complex global dimensions of their fields of study and have the confidence and skills to communicate across national and cultural borders. The Global Islanders QEP will promote global learning and intercultural competency by internationalizing the curriculum (Global Learners), democratizing study abroad and integrating it into academic programs (Global Citizens), and increasing the presence of international students, scholars and extracurricular global activities on campus (Global Scholars). These three key, interlocking dimensions – \textbf{Global Learners, Global Citizens, and Global Scholars} – provide the framework for a comprehensive internationalization plan.

In February 2019 the Office of International Education will host global learning consultants from the American Association of State Colleges and Universities to conduct a campus needs

assessment. Based on this assessment, the QEP Steering Committee will develop an internationalization plan, should the Global Islander QEP be approved. This plan might include some or all of the following elements:

- Integrating international perspectives and activities into the core curriculum and first-year learning community program. This could take the form of designated global learning courses in the existing curriculum, a new global studies component area, and/or learning communities with internationalized themes and content.
- Internationalizing one or more degree programs in each college;
- Expanding foreign language course offerings and requirements;
- Creating an **International Studies Certificate** that could be applied to any academic program;
- Expanding study abroad by establishing more institutional partnerships, incentivizing faculty-led programs, requiring study abroad for targeted degree programs/tracks, and subsidizing student participation so that any student who wants to study abroad can do so;
- Creating a **Global Islanders Residential Academic Program** in campus housing that targets international students and/or students pursuing international studies;
- Offering professional development for faculty seeking to improve intercultural competency, design global courses, receive training in faculty-led study abroad, or apply for Fulbright awards;
- Offering professional development for staff who work with a diverse student population;
- Increasing the number of international students;
- Institutionalizing our relationship with Fulbright and other international exchange programs that bring global scholars and speakers to campus;
- Expanding intercultural student activities such as International Education Week;
- Developing community outreach activities and partnerships around global/international issues, themes, and events;
- Creating a global learning minor or Bachelor of Arts degree in International Studies;
- Establishing an interdisciplinary international studies program or center;
- Creating an academic administrative framework, such as a dean of international studies, to consolidate and institutionalize these programs.

**What courses, programs, offices etc. would the proposed QEP involve?**

SACSCOC mandates that the QEP be a broad-based, campus-wide initiative. Because it has curricular, extracurricular, and community dimensions, the Global Islanders QEP easily fulfills this requirement. It will be coordinated by the Division of Academic Affairs through its Office of International Education (which includes Study Abroad) in consultation with the International
Education Committee. Key academic entities will include the First Year Program, Core Curriculum Program, Honors Program, world languages program in the Department of Humanities, and targeted degree programs within each college. The Center for Faculty Excellence will provide professional development for faculty seeking to design or redesign international courses or receive training in intercultural communication or faculty-led study abroad. Islander Housing will play a key role in establishing the Global Islanders Academic Residential Program. The Division of Student Engagement and Success, especially the offices of Career Services and Student Activities, will be involved in our extracurricular and global careers components, many of which will be coordinated with organizations like the International Student Organization, Islander Cultural Alliance, and Inclusive Islander Network. This QEP also provides opportunities for the Office of Community Outreach to coordinate activities like International Education Week with schools, agencies, organizations, and businesses in the community.

**What courses, offices, etc. would TAMU-CC need to implement for this QEP?**

This depends upon available resources and the specific elements that the QEP Steering Committee adopts for this initiative. It is important to note, however, that the university has already created an administrative infrastructure for international programs; this QEP can be implemented by building on this existing foundation. The number of new courses will be minimal, although programs will have to be modified and courses redesigned. The Global Learning dimension will require integrating international perspectives and activities into the core curriculum, either by developing new or internationalizing existing courses or adding a new component area. It will also include expanding world language offerings and requiring two years of a second language for the Bachelor of Arts degree. The Global Citizens dimension will require enhancing the international emphasis of select programs in each college (Global Programs). This can be accomplished by designing international tracks within degree plans, creating an international studies certificate, and/or integrating a required study abroad experience. The same general principle will apply to needed offices. Ideally, the university would appoint a dean of global learning to consolidate our international programs/activities and provide optimum institutional support. Short of this, new positions could be added -- an in-house recruiter for international students, a Fulbright Coordinator, an Assistant Director of International Education, new faculty lines to meet the demands of expanded world languages requirements -- and folded into our existing offices and departments.

To give the Steering Committee a clear idea of what curricular and administrative changes will be needed to implement this QEP, the Office of International Education will work with the Global Initiatives staff from the American Association of State Colleges and Universities to conduct a needs assessment. The AASCU provides professional development, program development, and international partnerships to “support member institutions in their efforts to
prepare students for work, life and citizenship in an increasingly globalized world.” AASCU staff are familiar with the challenges to internationalization faced by regional state university’s like TAMUCC, and they can help us design a plan that balances our regional focus with our international aspirations. The site visit has already been scheduled for February 2019, regardless of the outcome of this proposal.

What are the intended benefits of this QEP to the institution and its students?

One clear benefit is an increase in international student enrollments. More broadly if less tangibly are the benefits of global learning to inclusive excellence. Global learning fosters an atmosphere of mutual respect that values and engages diverse people, ideas, views, and practices. It also diversifies and enriches our undergraduate curricula and the learning environment in general. Together these outcomes -- intercultural awareness and international learning -- equip our students for global citizenship. By understanding the complex global dimensions of their fields of study and gaining the confidence and skills to communicate across national and cultural borders, our students are better prepared for the world context of their 21st century careers.

Private as well as public sector employers understand the value of international education. One recent study by the Institute of International Education found that 60 percent of senior management recognized the importance of study abroad in their hiring and promotion strategies because of the concrete linguistic and cultural skills students gained from the experience. “The significance of international education often resides in the opportunity to partake in an intensive language program coupled with the prospect of developing skills that result from complete immersion in a foreign culture.” Global learning teaches marketable skills that give a competitive edge and enhanced options to our students.

How does this QEP support the mission of the institution?

The Global Islander QEP supports multiple elements of the Momentum 2020 Strategic Plan. It aligns with the value of Inclusion, which seeks to “foster an environment of mutual respect that values and engages diverse people, ideas, views and practices.” Its emphasis on increasing international student enrollments supports the plan’s goal of recruiting “highly qualified undergraduate students from different areas of the world to enable multicultural experiences for all students.” Its curricular objectives align with Momentum 2020’s learning goals of “creating a rich, challenging, and supportive educational environment” by implementing high-impact practices related to global learning and diversity. Finally, its global exchange and scholarship objectives implement the plan’s commitment to “define and act on programmatic, 

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2 AASCU International Programs, http://www.aascu.org/Programs/InternationalPrograms/
curricular and research implications of being on the “cultural border” of the United States with Latin America.”

This QEP also aligns with the TAMUS EmpowerU Globalization and Diversity Learning Outcome: Upon completion of their degree program, students will be able to analyze the impact of multiple factors on the interconnectedness of diverse peoples in the global environment. It should be noted that in the 2015 assessment of this outcome the Office of Academic Affairs found that “Globalization and Cultural Diversity have not been either identified as outcomes for programs or are not being reported. We believe this is due to a lack of awareness of the A&M System outcomes or a lack of alignment in language. Education of our administrators and faculty will help the reporting of this outcome.” The Global Islanders QEP will remedy this problem and provide more than enough assessment data to measure student learning in this area.

How is this QEP supported by institutional data (survey data, assessment data, etc)?

The Global Islander QEP meets multiple demonstrated needs, as documented in the November 2017 report of the Office of International Education Task Force. Generally speaking, the Task Force found that international programs at TAMU-CC are “healthy” but need “continued and ample support” from the university in order to consolidate our programs and build on our strong foundation. In particular the report noted the weakness of our world languages course offerings. The Global Islander QEP could provide a remedy by funding expansion in this area. The Task Force further noted the low student participation rates in Study Abroad (under one percent at TAMU-CC, compared to a national average and goal of three percent). We now have the professional staff to administer an excellent Study Abroad program, but we need the resources, concentrated attention, and administrative support that a QEP provides to “prime the pump” of Study Abroad and create a culture where international experiences are the norm -- and where every student who wants to study abroad is able to do so. In addition, the Task Force report played up the benefits of Fulbright faculty exchange programs but lamented that “few engage in these opportunities.” The Global Islander QEP could significantly strengthen our relationship with Fulbright, which is eager to work with minority serving institutions. This would provide a rich exchange of international faculty, students, and guest speakers. Finally, the report identified a wide range of strategies for recruiting and retaining international students. An internationalization QEP would boost the implementation of these plans and put us on a

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4 TAMU-CC Momentum 2020 Strategic Plan, pp. 1, 2, 3, 5
path to increase our international student population from five to ten percent of our student population.  

Data from the 2016 Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE) show that incoming freshmen expect a diverse educational experience at TAMU-CC, and that a significant proportion have had minimal exposure to diversity in their high school classrooms. Nearly half of students reported that their high school classes never or only occasionally included diverse racial, ethnic, gender, or religious perspectives in discussions or assignments. In contrast, 88 percent of students reported that it is somewhat important to very important that TAMU-CC provide opportunities to interact with students from different backgrounds, and 81-85 percent said that they expected to interact often or very often with people from different racial, economic, political, and religious backgrounds. Our incoming students value diversity, and they expect it to play an important role in their education. By internationalizing the curriculum, significantly increasing the proportion of international students, providing wider access to study abroad experiences, and enriching international exchange programs and activities on campus, this Global Learning QEP addresses this expectation and promotes a culture of diversity.

What would be the timeline for implementation of this QEP?

The Global Islander QEP has a six-year timeline, which includes one year of planning, four years of implementation, and one year of assessment. The following is a sample timeline. It may vary depending on the elements of the QEP adopted by the university.

- January-December 2019
  - American Association of State Colleges and Universities site visit to evaluate our international programs
  - Campus-wide planning, draft QEP proposal, submit to SACSCOC by December 2019
- January-May 2020
  - SACSCOC site visit, final approval of QEP
  - Submit first round of curriculum revisions (core, world languages) for 2021 catalog
- September 2020-May 2022
  - Submit second round of curriculum revisions (degree program changes, new degree programs) for 2022 catalog
  - Implement new curricula in core and CLA/world languages

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- First phase of other program elements (Study Abroad, international recruiting, professional development, Fulbright/cultural exchange initiatives, etc.)
  - September 2022-May 2024
    - Full implementation of all program elements
  - September 2024-May 2025
    - Assessment

**How would this QEP affect campus culture?**

Imagine our campus as home to more than 1,200 students from around the world. They diversify and enrich our campus culture with their languages, dress, foodways, faith traditions, and unique international perspectives. At the same time, each year some 300 of our undergraduates travel abroad for extended study in other countries. Most have never been abroad and know little of the world beyond south Texas. This experience is transformative; it changes their perspectives, broadens their intellectual and cultural horizons, makes them hunger for more knowledge and exposure to other peoples, and sharpens their language and intercultural communication skills. In the classroom, thousands of first-year Islanders gain understanding and appreciation of other nations and cultures through specially designated Global Learning courses in the core curriculum program. Many of these students embrace the opportunity to become Global Citizens by pursuing international studies tracks or certificates in their chosen degree programs. Some live in dormitories where they only speak their chosen world language. They gain advanced language proficiency and explore in-depth the international dimensions of learning in their own disciplines, all capped off with a high-impact study abroad experience. They also take advantage of opportunities each semester to attend global cultural and educational activities, from food festivals and the Parade of Nations to lectures, performances, and exhibitions from international scholars and artists visiting campus as part of our Global Scholars initiative. In the meantime TAMU-CC faculty are immersed in transcultural communities of practice organized by the Center for Faculty Excellence. They spend a semester focusing on conversational Spanish and Mexican art, food, and customs, culminating in a Maymester trip to San Miguel, Mexico. Other faculty take groups of students on faculty-led study abroad trips to Europe, Latin America, and Asia, while still others apply for Fulbright awards to teach abroad and collaborate with international researchers, extending the reach and impact of TAMU-CC across the world.

This is what internationalizing the campus means. It diversifies the student population and transforms us from a regional to a global institution. It promotes greater understanding of other nations, languages, and cultures and fosters empathy, toleration, and appreciation of national and cultural differences. It provides opportunities for unforgettable, transformative educational experiences. More concretely, it integrates global and intercultural learning in academic, co-curricular, and professional development – for students, faculty, and staff – thus
creating an educational community that promotes and supports the understanding and skills needed to thrive in a diverse world.

What goals would be associated with this QEP, and how might the institution assess those goals?

- **Global Learners**
  - Increase all students’ exposure to other nations and cultures by adding required global components to the core curriculum. Assessment: pre- and post-tests using one or more instruments that measure global or intercultural competency.
  - Increase foreign language proficiency of students in B.A. programs. Assessment: pre- and post-tests using placement or proficiency exams.

- **Global Citizens**
  - Increase global competency of students by enhancing international curricula in targeted programs within each college. Assessment: pre- and post-tests using one or more instruments that measure global competency.
  - Increase proportion of international students from 5 to 10% of total student population. Assessment: international student enrollment figures.
  - Increase proportion of students in Study Abroad from less than 1% to 3% of student population. Assessment: enrollment figures.

- **Global Scholars**
  - Bring more foreign scholars (faculty and students) to campus through exchange programs and Fulbright. Assessment: data tracking.
  - Increase student and faculty participation in international activities on campus and in the community. Assessment: data tracking.
  - Provide more professional development for faculty to support global teaching, study abroad, and intercultural communication. Assessment: data tracking; pre- and post-tests using one or more instruments that measure global competency.

What is the estimated budget required for implementation of this proposed QEP?

The budget will depend on what elements the university decides to include in the plan. A fully-funded plan including the following items represents the maximum budget or “Platinum Plan” for this QEP. This is admittedly a very crude estimate.

- **Multiple new hires:**
  - Part-time QEP coordinator $12,000/year 72,000 total (6 yrs)
  - In-house internatl student recruiter 60,000 300,000 (5 yrs)
  - Fulbright coordinator 60,000 300,000 (5 yrs)
  - World languages faculty 125,000 500,000 (4 yrs)

- **Course releases for internationalizing** 30,000 60,000 (2 yrs)
degree programs in each college

- **Professional development (includes release Time)** 30,000 60,000 (2 years)
- **Study Abroad scholarships** 100,000 400,000 (4 yrs)
- **Guest speakers/internat’l activities** 10,000 50,000 (5 yrs)
- **Assessment instruments** 20,000 40,000 (2 years)
- **TOTAL** 1,782,000 (6 yrs)

**How would success of this QEP be evaluated?**

Through assessment of student learning outcomes (see “goals” question above), increase in enrollments of international students and study abroad participants (see “goals” question above), increase in foreign scholars, global learning experiences, and international activities on campus, and increased levels of intercultural competency among students and faculty as a whole, as measured by one or more instruments.
Appendix: TAMUC-CC Students Talk About the Value of International Education

In preparing this proposal, several students were asked to write about their international experiences, and their accounts are printed with only minor editing here. The impact of international education is evident in their experiences as they describe changed perspectives, struggling through adversity, personal growth, and the new doors opened by their experiences studying internationally.

Rachael Derrenbacher, a Spanish major, recently completed an internship with the US State Department in Mexico
My love for Spanish all started on a high school missions’ trip to San Juan, Costa Rica. This trip completely introduced me to a whole new passion inside me that was begging to come out. When I was in Costa Rica, I felt frustrated that I had such a strong connection with the people I was helping, but I could not understand a word they were saying. This inspired me to attempt to speak in the little Spanish I knew from my high school classes. My peers would laugh and make jokes that I was trying to speak Spanish even though I did not know how to speak it. By the time the mission’s trip was over, I came home with a determination to be fluent in Spanish one day. Knowing that this will take a long period of dedication, I was up for the challenge. When I graduated high school, I felt as if I wanted to take some time off from the books to better myself. Therefore, I took a gap year between my senior year of high school and my freshman year of college. Within my gap year, I traveled to Quito, Ecuador and Merida, Mexico as a volunteer through the International Volunteer Headquarters program. In Merida, I lived with an old woman and her granddaughter, both of whom did not speak any English. My host Mom, Rosa, treated me like her own daughter so it was crucial for me to be able to communicate effectively with her. Also, all of my friends in Merida were Mexican college students whom did not have a tight grasp on English neither. Therefore, there was not one instance when I was in Mexico that I would be speaking English. This forced me to completely devote myself to the communication of the Spanish language. [Thanks to this experience] I interned with the United States State Department at the Embassy in Mexico City. I worked in the Non-Immigrant Visa section in the consulate. I processed biometric data for over 2,000 visa applicants daily, ensuring consular officials had accurate and up to date data in order to properly adjudicate visa applications, Ensured the timely and accurate documentation of lost and stolen visas to mitigate their improper usage, enhancing U.S. national security and performed public outreach to local Mexican audiences on the student visa process.

Kelsey Beilstein, a Criminal Justice major, travelled to Mexico in 2018 as part of Honors Study Abroad
This experience has granted me more knowledge than I could have ever imagined. I grew up in an environment where Mexico was considered to be a horrid place, full of drugs and crime. I have always been open minded and tried to do my own research on controversial topics to avoid biased opinions from the people I grew up around. When I heard about the opportunity to travel abroad to Mexico I wanted to maintain that same mentality and experience it for myself, regardless of the terrible reputation Mexico had acquired from the people around me. I
am so happy I did. Upon arrival to Mexico I was automatically intrigued by the beauty and landscapes the State of Guanajuato had to offer. I have never stayed at a place as nice as the Hacienda Santa Clara Study Abroad Center. They provided us with fascinating lectures, a cooking class, a sweat ritual, and so much more. I honestly think that if we never left the Hacienda I still would've learned a great amount just from the fascinating art work, buildings, and conversations I had with the wonderful people there .... The most life changing discussion I had during the trip, took place in a small conference room located at COFOCE, an import/export organization that focuses on trade and marketing. I was not aware of how vulnerable trade was to politics. Our lecturers began by presenting us with a power point that broke down the current presidential election that was taking place at the time, they wanted us to be aware that the leading candidate holds very leftist and nationalistic views. ... After reviewing the current election, the lecturer began to explain to us the effects on trade NAFTA is currently having. NAFTA was a foreign trade agreement between the United States of America, Mexico, and Canada implemented years ago. Recently, when the new Trump administration came into power our president wanted to renegotiate this agreement. President Trump ended up altering a different trade document and inserted Tariffs on steel and aluminum to countries including Mexico, Canada, and parts of Europe. These changes created were not discussed with these countries, leaving them to become frustrated. All three countries filed a complaint with the World Trade Organization, who unfortunately has very little power in the situation, and the dispute could take years before it is resolved. I realize that the information I received only came from one side of the argument. However, this lecture was so entirely fascinating to me that I want to research both sides and try to better understand the issues occurring between Mexico and the United States, with the hopes of advocating my findings so we can improve our foreign relations.

Stephanie Lozano, another Honors student who took the summer trip to Mexico.

The media continuously portrays images, video recordings or permits talk-show hosts to essentially degrade Mexico, thus a sense of fear toward Mexico in general is established. I was just as afraid of going to Mexico by myself, as my mother was in letting me go, but I wasn't going to show her my fear, otherwise that would have worried her more. Referring to the news in the U.S. regarding Mexico, it is nothing but violence, killing sprees, "the war on drugs", etc., which led to the development of prejudice toward people of Mexico. I had assumed as we entered the various cities in the state of Guanajuato, Mexico, we would witness the same type of prejudice directed to us or a sense of tension since we were from the U.S.. Oh my was I absolutely wrong. EVERYONE and their mothers (a bit of an exaggeration) greeted us with nothing short of respect, enthusiasm, friendliness, and above all acceptance. They used terms such as "amiga" (friend) to grab our attention rather than Mrs. or ma'am which made me feel accepted, in a way. I did not witness any form of discrimination, as a matter of fact not everyone of us knew proper Spanish, I knew Tex-Mex kind of Spanish, so there was a language barrier present but that didn't stop either one of us from trying. The natives would do their best to communicate with us with the little Spanish that we knew, it worked out pretty well in the end we understood them and they understood us. ... I learned that it may be difficult to rid of a set judgement, especially toward a country that is often correlated with high levels of violence, but as we immersed ourselves in the culture and the way of life in the many cities, it became
clear to me that I was no longer afraid in fact I was at ease and entirely relaxed as I explored the beauty Mexico had to offer. I enjoyed my experience in Mexico and I encourage many students to take advantage of study abroad opportunities as they not only allow you to immerse yourself in a culture that may not be similar to your own, but they allow you to explore more than what you thought you already knew. It is one thing to read about it in text books, or hear stories about the exploration of a new setting, but once you actually and physically and mentally present in a new setting you can't help but feel at awe. Most people want to travel when they are older, but what I tell many students is "Why wait until you are older when you have the time, and energy to explore now. Plus, it will be much cheaper now than if you were to go by yourself."

Honors student Selena Mendoza also took the summer trip to San Miguel de Allende. She has Mexican roots, so this was a homecoming of sorts for her. Here is a snippet from her reflection that underscores the importance of language learning and the impact of study abroad.

I can’t disclose what I witnessed inside the Volkswagen plant in Silao, Guanajuato. I can just say that it was pretty awesome! The guide did a great job explaining each part of the facility. What discomforted me was that she apologized so many times for not speaking English. I thought it was unnecessary but I also sensed she felt the need to apologize. Pablo even told her “It is us who should be apologizing for not speaking Spanish”. In the United States, we don’t make an effort to learn foreign languages to accommodate those who visit unless they’re very important people. I think that quite sad that we basically force tourists to speak English. But in Mexico, most people tried speaking English to us. They did their best to be accommodating at every place we went to. It really warmed my heart to have come across such kind community, especially at COFOCE. The United States was causing problems for their exports and it might have been expected that they would be a little hostile towards us but that was not the case! Everyone we encountered welcomed us to Guanajuato. COFOCE was very informative and I was grateful to have been sitting in the conference when I did. ... The whole experience in Mexico was amazing and I would do it again in a heartbeat. It was a once in a lifetime experience because of the people who I shared this with. I genuinely made life-long friends. I learned a lot about the culture I thought I was a part of. That is when I realized that my culture has become so Americanized because the United States is so diverse. I thought I knew Mexico but I was so wrong! There was and is so much that I am not aware of. This trip has made me want to visit other parts of Mexico and explore; to create my own perceptions without influence.

Helen Gonzales also writes about her Honors program trip to Mexico:

While the experience in Mexico was amazing, it was also eye opening. Our trip to Mexico has made me greatly appreciate all that I have even more so than before. The amount of money I make, my personal belongings, the opportunities I have, everything in my life is really such a privilege. Having the ability to get into my car and drive five minutes to Wal-Mart is something that many people in Mexico do not have. All the easily accessible chain restaurants and stores that I see on a daily basis are really all privileges. Mexico is not a ghost town, there are some chains and growth, however, it is really a fraction of what I have always had at home. I am grateful
that I was able to go to Mexico not only because it taught me more about a culture, but because it has made me even more appreciative of what I have here at home. My trip to Mexico was incredibly enlightening, and was truly a once in a lifetime experience. I learned a lot not only about Mexico, and the culture there, but about myself and my culture. After spending almost two weeks in Mexico I am genuinely able to say that I have grown as a person in multiple ways. I have met amazing girls that I feel I can call friends, not acquaintances. I have a completely different outlook on my life at home in America, and politics that are currently a firestorm. With all this being said, I would go back to Mexico in a heartbeat, and I would go back with the same girls in the blink of an eye.

Zeina Nader, an international student from Lebanon majoring in Biomedical Science

As an international student, traveling 14 jet hours away from home to be in my dream college was one of a series of obstacles in pursuing my educational goal. Finishing high school back home, getting all documentation and diplomas translated and certified, passing the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and Test Of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), approving travel documents and acquiring a student visa were among these obstacles. Moving away from my family to pursue my goals was hard especially since I am the youngest. I believe the experiences and challenges I have been through have given me the strength to face many obstacles. Challenges make me stronger if I learn along the way and never give up on my goals. Studying at TAMU-CC as a biomedical major has helped me grow up academically and personally. I have made a lot of friends. Being part of the honors program has been the best so far, as I got to volunteer on a research and work with blood which is the best experience I ever had. I’m also studying abroad in the summer with the honors program and I’m so excited. It has been hard studying away from my family and not being able to visit them as it’s very expensive, but TAMU-CC has made me feel like I’m at home. I have made my family so proud and I’m dedicated to doing the best I can so I can maintain my 4.0 GPA. I know as an international student I have to work twice as hard to get to achieve my goals.