

**June 2018**

***International Religious Sisters Studying  
in the United States***



Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate  
Georgetown University  
Washington, DC

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in the United States*



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# Table of Contents

Executive Summary .....	1
Major Findings.....	2
Introduction.....	6
<b>Part I: Institutes of Women Religious with International Sister Students</b>	
Resources Provided by U.S. Religious Institutes.....	8
Pathways to Approaching the U.S. Religious Institutes .....	10
Resources Needed for the International Sisters .....	11
Rationales for Supporting International Sisters .....	12
Impacts of the Presence of International Sisters .....	13
<b>Part II: Catholic Colleges and Universities with International Sister Students</b>	
Resources Provided by Catholic Colleges and Universities .....	15
Impacts of the Presence of International Sisters on Campus .....	15
<b>Part III: Characteristics of Responding International Sister Students</b>	
Age Distribution of International Sister Students.....	18
Length of Residence in the United States .....	19
Age at Entering Religious Life .....	19
Age at Profession of First Vows .....	20
Age at Profession of Perpetual Vows .....	20
Continent of Origin.....	21
Ethnic/Cultural Background .....	23
Legal Status.....	24
Preparation Prior to Entrance in the United States .....	24

Support Resources .....	25
-------------------------	----

#### **Part IV: Experiences on Campus**

English as a Second Language.....	26
Degrees Pursued.....	27
Programs of Study.....	28
Tuition Financing.....	28
Mode of Dress on Campus.....	29
Travelling to Campus.....	30
Participation in Activities on Campus .....	31
Leadership Experiences on Campus .....	32

#### **Part V: Communication with Home Country**

Visiting the Home Country.....	33
Ways of Communication with the Home Country .....	34
Frequency of Communication with the Home Country.....	34

#### **Part VI: Life Experiences in the United States**

Room and Board .....	36
Living Situation .....	36
Housing Arrangement.....	37
Sharing of Culture.....	39
Ministries .....	41
Satisfaction with Aspects of Religious Life in the United States .....	42
Satisfaction with Support Received in the United States.....	43
Future Plans .....	45

## **Part VIII: Challenges**

Challenges for International Sister Students.....	46
Challenges for U.S. Religious Institutes.....	51

## **Part IX: Suggestions from U.S. Major Superiors**

For Superiors Wishing to Send Their Sisters to Study in the United States.....	53
For Sponsoring Religious Institutes.....	54

## **Part X: A Case Study of Religious Institutes in Vietnam**

Perceptions of Study Abroad.....	55
Positive Experiences with Sisters Returning after Studying in the United States.....	56
Negative Experiences with Sisters Returning after Studying in the United States.....	57
Concerns about Sending Sisters to Study in the United States.....	57
Advanced Education Abroad or in Home Country.....	58

<b>Appendix I:</b> Questionnaire with Response Frequencies.....	60
---	----

<b>Appendix II:</b> Responses to Open-ended Comments.....	66
---	----

Q. 116: What has been your most positive experience.....	67
--	----

Q.117: What has been your most negative experience.....	76
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**Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate Georgetown  
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***International Religious Sisters Studying  
in the United States***

**Executive Summary**

This report presents findings from a national survey of international religious sisters studying in the United States. To obtain the names and contact information for these sisters, CARA contacted the major superiors of all religious institutes that belong to either the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) or the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR), the two leadership conferences of women religious in the United States. CARA also contacted the presidents of 237 U.S. Catholic colleges and universities. Each major superior and president was asked to provide contact information for any international sisters who either stay in their religious institutes or study in their colleges/universities and complete a short survey about their assistance for these sisters. Finally, CARA contacted two other organizations that assist the international sisters studying in the United States (Formation Support for Vietnam and the Society of Maryknoll) to request their lists of international sisters.

In addition to the survey of international sisters, CARA conducted focus groups among international sisters and interviews with four major superiors of religious institutes that currently provide room and board for international sisters studying in the United States.

Finally, CARA selected Vietnam as a case study, surveying major superiors who send their sisters to study in the United States, to investigate further the impact and perception of their members studying in the United States and the contributions of the sister students to their religious institutes upon their study completion.



## **Major Findings**

### ***Characteristics of Responding Religious Institutes***

- Fifty-nine of 390 major superiors of U.S. religious institutes of women report having international sister students living with their religious institutes. Nearly nine in ten (88 percent) belong to the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, while more than one in ten (12 percent) belongs to the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious. These responding religious institutes report hosting 214 international sister students.
- More than nine in ten responding religious institutes report that they provide room and board for the international sister students, followed by spiritual support (79 percent), transportation (68 percent) and education (60 percent).
- The religious institutes report that the most common pattern for requesting hospitality is that the major superiors of international sisters contacted their religious institutes to request hospitality for the international sister students.

### ***Catholic Colleges and Universities***

- Among responding Catholic colleges and universities, 55 percent report not having any international sisters studying in their institutions. The other 45 percent of Catholic colleges and universities report a total number of 274 international sisters studying in their institutions.
- Most responding Catholic colleges and universities report granting tuition scholarships for international sisters. Along with tuition scholarships, around one-third provides housing. One-quarter provides health insurance, English as Second Language, and/or a stipend. Nearly one in five reports that they provide full scholarships for international sister students.

### ***Characteristics of Responding International Sister Students***

- The average age of responding international sister students is 38. Half of the respondents are age 36 or younger.
- Nearly two-thirds of respondents (69 percent) were born in one of the Asian countries. A quarter were born in one of African countries. A smaller number were born in Central/South American, Europe, Mexico, or Canada.
- On average, respondents have lived in in the United States for an average of five years. Half of respondents have been in the United States for four years or more.

- The average age of entrance into religious life for respondents is 20. Half were age 19 or younger when they entered. They professed first vows at age 25, on average, and professed or expected profess final vows at age 30, on average.
- Altogether, respondents report 28 countries of birth, primarily from Vietnam, followed by Uganda, Tanzania, and China. About two-thirds of responding international sisters (70 percent) identifies as Asian/Pacific Islander.
- More than four in five respondents (81 percent) hold the F-1 student visa status. One in ten holds legal permanent resident. Seven percent hold non-immigrant religious worker status.
- More than two in five (44 percent) report that they will return to their home countries after completing studies. Another third (35 percent) report that their future plans are determined by their religious superiors. One in five (20 percent) report that they plan to apply for an advanced degree in the United States.

### *Experience on Campus*

- The majority of respondents (85 percent) report studying at a Catholic college/university. Around one in ten report studying at a non-Catholic college/university.
- More than half of respondents (53 percent) currently study English as a Second Language. Three in five respondents have minimum proficiency in English language skills.
- Around half of respondents (46 percent) are currently pursuing or plan to pursue a bachelor's degree. A third currently pursue or plan to pursue a master's degree. One in ten currently pursue or plan to pursue an associate degree. Only a small percentage (6 percent) currently pursue or plan to pursue a doctoral degree. Two in five respondents report that they currently study or plan to study theology, followed by education, religious studies, and psychology.
- Around two-thirds of respondents report receiving tuition assistance from the college/university where they study in the United States. One in five reports receiving tuition assistance from their own religious institute.
- More than three in five report that they wear a full religious habit on campus. One in five (19 percent) report that they do not wear a religious habit on campus.
- Respondents are more likely to live on or near campus, as more than half of respondents report that they walk or take a bicycle to college.

### ***Participation in Activities on Campus***

- Three in four respondents (76 percent) regularly attend Mass on campus and talk about faith and religious with others on campus (75 percent).
- Two-thirds of respondents report that they at least “regularly” attend workshops/events hosted by the college/university and talk about religious vocations with others on campus.
- Around three in four report that they at least “plan to” participate in community service/volunteer activities. Half report they at least “plan to” participate in an internship or afield experience, while a quarter has actually done this or are in progress to do it.

### ***Communication with the Home Country***

- Nearly nine in ten respondents report that they know of other sisters in their religious institute who study or minister in the United States. Around half of respondents report that their religious institute has a province or community based in the United States.
- Two in five report they have visited their family in their home country since they began their study in the United States. Two-thirds report that they communicate with the people in their home country via social media and phone.
- Two in five report contacting their family members at least once a week. Nearly half report contacting their family at least once a month. More than half report contacting their religious superiors at least once a month, while nearly two in five report contacting their religious superior at least a few times a year.

### ***Life Experiences in the United States***

- Half report that a religious institute in the United States provides them with room and board. More than two in five report living with other sisters from their religious institute as well as those from another religious institute.
- Half (51 percent) report living in a house owned by another religious institute. Two-thirds (63 percent) report living in a religious life community setting, while more than a third (37 percent) report living on campus or other setting.
- One in five responding sisters report living with 50 sisters or fewer. Another one in five report living with 51 sisters or more. Only 3 percent report living alone.
- The sisters share their culture frequently with the community where they live, especially on annual occasions, such as New Year (46 percent), Christmas (39 percent), or their national holiday (35 percent). A third share their culture during Eucharistic liturgy (35 percent).

- Besides their studies, more than a quarter (27 percent) engage in parish/diocesan ministries. More than one in five (22 percent) volunteer in campus ministry on campus. More than one in ten are involved in soup kitchen ministry, religious vocation ministries, and other ministries.

### *Satisfaction with Aspects of Religious Life and Support Received*

- Nearly all respondents are “somewhat” or “very” satisfied with the availability of daily Eucharist (99 percent), with their life as a woman religious in the United States (95 percent), and with the prayer life in their local house (95 percent). More than nine in ten (93 percent) report being “very” satisfied with the availability of daily Eucharist. More than seven in ten are “very” satisfied with their life as a woman religious and the prayer life in their local house.
- More than nine in ten respondents report being at least “somewhat” satisfied with their support from their family members (92 percent) and from the sisters of the religious community with whom they currently live.
- More than four in five respondents report being at least “somewhat” satisfied with the support they receive from their religious superior and from their religious sisters in their home country as well as from those in the United States.

## Introduction

In 2017, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to study the experiences of international sisters studying in the United States, the impact of their studies in the United States on their ministries when they return to their home country, and the perceptions and experiences of the major superiors who send their sisters to study abroad.

The population of interest for this study are women religious who were born outside the United States, come to the United States for study, and will return to their home country upon completion of their studies. To obtain the names and contact information for these international sisters, CARA contacted the major superiors of all religious institutes that belong to either the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) or the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR), the two leadership conferences of women religious in the United States. CARA also contacted the presidents of all 237 U.S. Catholic colleges and universities. Each major superior and president was asked to complete a short survey about their institute's assistance for international sisters and to provide contact information for any international sisters who either stay in their religious institutes or who study in their institutions. Finally, CARA contacted two other organizations that assist the international sisters studying in the United States (Formation Support for Vietnam and Society of Maryknoll) to request their lists of international sisters studying in the United States.

After repeated follow-ups, CARA received a response from 295 of 390 major superiors, for an overall response rate of 76 percent among religious institutes and a response from 110 of 232 college presidents for an overall response rate of 47 percent among U.S. Catholic colleges and universities. In all, CARA received the names and contact information for 170 international sister students from CMSWR and LCWR, 219 from Catholic colleges and universities, 90 from Formation Support for Vietnam, and 12 from the Society of Maryknoll. After removing duplicates, CARA had a combined list of 359 international sister students. Of these 359 sisters, a total of 285 responded to the survey by August 2017. This represents a response rate of 79 percent among international sister students.

In addition to the survey of international sisters, CARA conducted several focus groups among international sister students and interviews with four major superiors of religious institutes that currently provide room and board for international sisters.

Finally, CARA selected Vietnam as a case study, surveying major superiors who send their sisters to study in the United States, to investigate further the impact and perception of their members studying in the United States and the contributions of the sister students to their religious institutes upon their study completion.

## **Interpreting this Report**

Many of the questions on the survey use four-point response scales (for example, “not at all,” “a little,” “somewhat,” and “very much” or “not at all,” “seldom,” “periodically,” “frequently”). These scales allow half of the responses to be interpreted as relatively more “negative” (“not at all” and “a little,” for example) and half as relatively more “positive” (“somewhat” and “very much,” for example). In parts of the analysis in this report, these responses are combined to allow for clearer comparisons. Tables summarizing responses to questions that use these scales usually report the percentage of those who responded to the two most positive categories combined (e.g., “somewhat” and “very much”), followed by a column of the percentage of those who responded in the most positive category (e.g., “very much”), since the most positive response sometimes distinguishes important contrasts in level of support. This is especially useful for this survey since many respondents tended to give “positive” responses but not always the most positive responses.

Readers may also wish to compare the difference between the two extreme responses, say “not at all” and “frequently,” to compare the level of intensity with which opposing opinions are held. These comparisons and others may be drawn by referring to the actual percentage responses given in Appendix I. That appendix shows the percentage responses for each item, calculated out of 100 percent, as well as the percentage of all respondents that did not respond to each question, separately calculated out of 100 percent for clarity of comparison.

## Part I: Institutes of Women Religious with International Sister Students

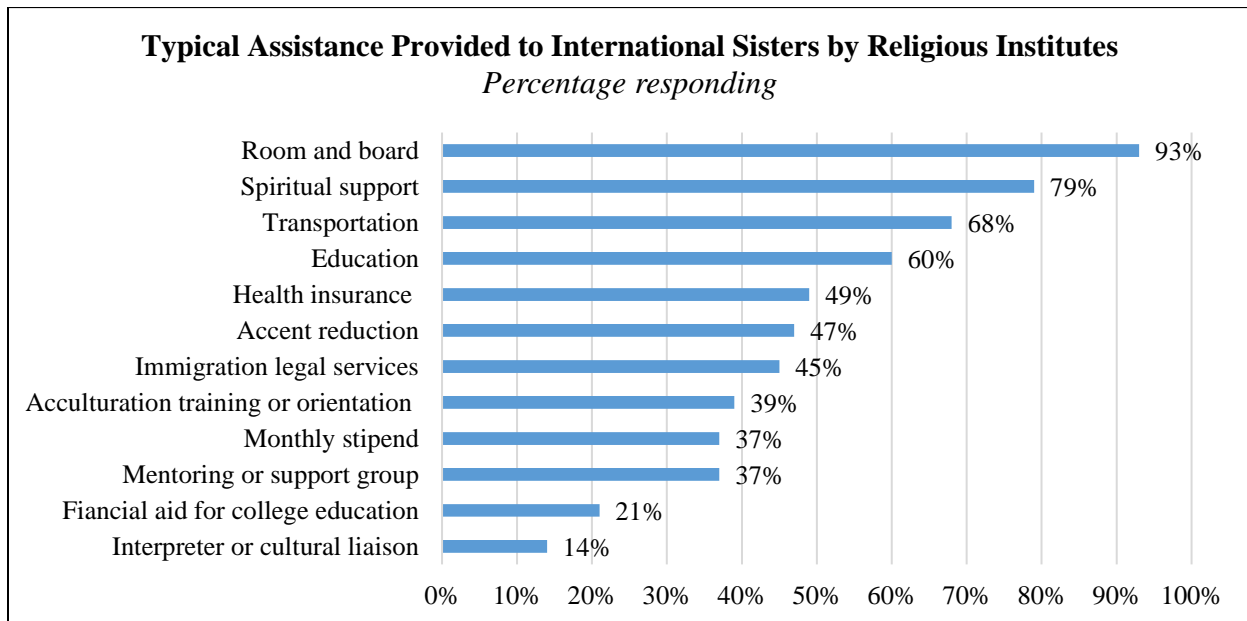
This part of the report describes the characteristics of institutes of women religious that have international sisters living with them or receiving scholarship to study in their sponsoring colleges/universities. The data are from a survey of major superiors of religious institutes of women with international sisters and from interviews with the major superior of selected institutes that provide hospitality and/or scholarship for international sister students.

CARA received a response to the survey from 295 of 390 major superiors, for an overall response rate of 76 percent among religious institutes. One in five of these institutes (19 percent) have international sister students living with them. Among the 57 U.S. religious institutes that report having international sisters living with them, nearly nine in ten (88 percent) belong to the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, while just over one in ten (12 percent) belongs to the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious. More than six in ten (64 percent) responding religious institutes are international. Nearly four in ten (37 percent) are missionary institutes.

The responding religious institutes report that among the 214 international sisters they host, 78 percent (167 sisters) do not belong to their religious institutes, while 22 percent (47 international sisters) are members of other provinces of their religious institutes outside the United States. The religious institutes also report that 50 percent of the international sisters living with them (102) currently study at a college/university sponsored by their religious institutes.

### Resources Provided by U.S. Religious Institutes

More than nine in ten responding religious institutes report that they provide room and board for the international sister students, followed by spiritual support (79 percent), transportation (68 percent) and education (60 percent).



One major superior shared in an interview that her religious institute provides room and board for the international sisters while they attend the college nearby. This religious institute welcomes both international sisters studying in their sponsored college as well as those studying in a college nearby. That sister continues in the interview to share information about the resources that her religious institute provides for the international sisters who stay with her community:

*The province pays room and board for the sisters. So we feed them; we use supplies and utilities in the convent. Tuition depends on different things at different schools. The books and health care are by the Sisters. We have 42 sisters all over places. The past year we told the sisters that we could not afford to pay for the books. So those sisters who were with us, who we have already done so, we still continue to pay their book bills. Any new sisters who come to our communities have to figure out how to pay their book bills.*

Some religious institutes provide housing for international sisters who either go to college nearby or those who learn English with the U.S. sisters in their convent. One superior belonging to this kind of religious institute encapsulates well their support resources in these words:

*I think we've helped at least fifteen, eighteen sisters based on the numbers that come and sometimes come in the summertime. We have helped them and you know also being religious, it wasn't just that we had to teach them basic English, we had to go into the spirituality part of it, which took us a little bit to realize even like how to do confession in English. With the Mass even, like what it was all about? Even though they knew it in Vietnamese, they didn't know certain things.*

One superior shares how her religious institute works with the sponsoring college to provide resources for the international sisters:

*The college is waiving the tuition fee for them. We help them the best we can with books. That can be an expense there, but we try to get second-hand books, or we get books off the Internet. Many of the books are e-files and the issue with the students and the books is no different from the other students.*



## Pathways to Approaching the U.S. Religious Institutes

The international sister students first contacted the religious institutes in various ways. The religious institutes report that for about two-fifths of the cases, it was the international sisters' major superior who contacted the U.S. religious institutes to request hospitality for the international sisters.

<b><i>Which of these describes the international women religious who contact your unit for hospitality?</i></b>	
Percentage responding	%
The international sister's superior contacted your unit to request hospitality for her.	39
A priest or sister contacted your unit for the international sister's hospitality	37
The college/university where the international sister studies contacted your unit.	14
A sister belonging to your unit contacted your unit for the international sister's hospitality.	9
The religious vicar in the diocese contacted your unit for the international sister's hospitality.	4

In fact, some religious institutes require that the major superior of the international sister write a letter to the major superior of the U.S. religious institute to request room and board. One provincial council member shares this in her interview:

*The international sister's major superior has to write a request letter to Sister Superior, and Sister Superior gives it to me. I work through it in contact with the international sister. And we have a lady working in our finance office here in the provincial house. She will send the form, a kind of agreement, like while she is there, she will come to live the common life with us, attend the prayer with us. She will join the community living. The letter from the major superior also says this is the sister that she is sending, so that we know that the person is a qualified sister in the religious institute. Also the agreement says that we take care of room and board, but the community needs to take care of health care expenses, anything like that. And the understanding is that at the end of the schooling period, the sister will go back to her community. Those are the documents, something like the contract.*

Another common pattern, reported by two in five major superiors, is for a priest or sister to contact the religious institute to request hospitality for the international sister. One major superior, who has been hosting around a dozen international sisters in her institute, shares this:

*It was through Father [Name], who contacted us to assist the two sisters with room and board. Those two really didn't require anything from us but the room and board because*

*they were already at a level where they were just going to college. The only thing that we assisted with them also is that they would make sure that some of the sisters would check their papers to make sure their English was correct.*

In a smaller number of cases, it was the colleges/universities where the international sisters studied who contacted the religious institutes about hospitality. One superior in one interview shares that her religious institute received requests both from the college and from a representative of one international sisters' assisting organization:

*One of the college presidents was contacted about the Vietnamese sisters and he said their college was willing to offer them education, would we be willing to offer them a place to stay? So we agreed and welcomed. Then at that time it was Sister [Name] and Sister [Name] and they stayed. One of our provincial counselors lives in [City]. She welcomed them into the convent where she lives. And then from those two then the request came from Fr. [Name]. He recognized an open door when he finds one and so he asked us if we would accept two more. And so we did, and those two needed to study at our motherhouse. The college that we have here at [City] is particularly focused on the student who is maybe not quite ready for the larger college or university. So we have a lot of remedial classes in math and writing in particular. And so we felt that with that background for our college it would be a good fit for international students for whom English was a second language. That's when we welcomed the four that we currently have. And it's been really very fine.*

### **Resources Needed for the International Sisters**

When asked what is most needed to improve the life of international religious sisters studying in the United States, the major superiors of U.S. religious institutes primarily mentioned the language and acculturation supports needed for the international sisters. Acculturation refers to better understanding between cultures of one another. Some of these comments are as follows:

- Acculturation training and language acquisition
- Appreciate culture diversity, acceptance of their gifts and talents.
- Be patient. Take time to know their culture and experiences. It is also important for us to share on our experience as religious women in the USA
- Cultural awareness (mutual), language skills.
- Cultural integration program (i.e. how the basics work).
- Cultural sensitivity. We need to respect and learn their culture (food, prayer, recreation); encouragement of leisure. The sisters study so hard. More orientation to our ways and to their ways.
- More support in language acquisition and enculturation.
- Outside help to become more comfortable with the language and culture and help them with their studies.
- Sisters help the students with English grammar, correct papers, Christmas activities and areas of support of religious. The (religious) environment is helpful to our community life and support.

Major superiors of religious institutes also report the need for the international sister students to have group support from other international sisters and the connection with family and their religious communities back home:

- A supportive community, regular contact with family and community members back home.
- A warm and welcoming community to live with and receive support. Help with transportation (from local community) or bus line that can be used. Integration into unit celebrations and events as appropriate.
- Companionship of other international women, preferably from same ethnic and/or religious congregational background; creating a home environment, e.g. pictures of culture, cell phones; opportunities to mix with a variety of sisters to hear and speak English; mingling with sisters help them to feel at home.
- Connect with more international sisters, educational support.
- Contact/exchange with their religious congregational leadership on a routine basis. Necessary paperwork for health provision (health form, dental, vision, immunization). Support group in the states with peers.
- Opportunities for community, experiences with other sisters and peers.

### **Rationales for Supporting International Sisters**

When asked why they assist the international sister students, the U.S. major superiors believe that helping the international sister students and providing them with resources is a way to collaborate with the Church in its mission of evangelization to the developing countries. Some examples are as follows:

*I think we do it for the universal Church. We do have a responsibility for the Church and for the future of the church in Vietnam or wherever the women might be in ministry. So we do that as a gift that we can give to the church and to those areas where they will be ministering.*

*I feel like we are helping the universal Church. When I got that request, we had the room here, I said to other sisters, “we have the room, we have people that can help. I felt like if we didn’t do that we would be closing in on ourselves.”*

*We have still had that invitation, the challenge from the Holy Father to send or have 10 percent of our community in foreign ministry. We could not send sisters there because we didn’t have sisters to send. So this was our way of educating sisters, and then those sisters going back to their own countries to use their education to build up the sisters and the people in their country.*

*We do it because we are committed to the church in the developing countries. We can no longer send sisters to Vietnam. We never send sisters to Vietnam. We have sisters in Kenya. Africa is a big continent and needs a lot of missionaries. But we don’t have sisters to send there. We were missionaries one time in South Africa. We are no longer there. So we cannot actually go out and do missionary works any longer. So our contribution is to*

*help educate the sisters from the third world countries so that they can go back and take care of their people. That is our mindset.*

The U.S. major superiors also believe that when the international sisters return to their home countries, they will bring their professional expertise and experiences that they receive in the United States into their ministry and religious life:

*My hopes are for when they go back to Vietnam that they can re-enter their lifestyle. But it's also my hope that they can take the good things from this country and even the things that helped them broaden their minds which they would maybe not have gotten in their home countries. Not everything we have in America is the greatest either. But they can think and can be broadened and bring that back to their communities. If they can't help the older sisters at that point they can start helping the younger generation that religious life can move on in a different and more progressive way in their home countries. That is my hope that they go back and they want to help their own sisters and their own people. That would be my dream for them.*

### **Impacts of the Presence of International Sisters**

The U.S. major superiors share how much joy and assistance that the international sister students bring to their communities. The international sisters bring joy to the U.S. religious institutes through their youth and energy. The fact that the average age of the international sisters is 38, which is much lower than the average age of the U.S. sisters nationally, bring youth to the U.S. communities. It becomes a mutual benefit as the U.S. sisters help the international sisters with English and culture while the international sister students bring youth and cultural sharing as well. The U.S. sisters share these experiences:

*Now I think we realize that it's far more mutual. We get so much just out of the youth and the energy of the sisters that we've gotten to know. We have not had anyone enter our community for many years and having the Vietnamese sisters with us has taught us that we still can relate to the younger generation. And the younger sisters have, they've introduced our sisters to some of their college friends. They bring out life in us that we wouldn't have if it were just us grandmothers living together. So I think we have mutually benefited from what they have shared with us. It's been just a really good experience for us.*

*I think though being a retired house these sisters, all of them, whatever groups of [ethnic/cultural background] we have, have been a blessing to us, more than what we have done for them, in my mind. As much as we have done, they have been a blessing to us. Because they fit in and because they bring a lot of joy to the house and it has helped the retired sisters, they are not just sitting there and sitting and doing nothing. They feel too, that they have become more productive because they are still working in mission. They feel that they are helping the universal Church. It gives the sisters a purpose for getting up because they are helping.*

*I think there are huge benefits. To me it is wonderful. In our convent, most of these women are younger. So it is really hopeful for the sisters, who are older. We do not have so many young sisters. We have some but we don't have many. It is good for the older sisters to see that. And it is also good to these sisters in the most parts, I think, once in a while we get one who is not as outgoing as this expression, but most of them are such a joy to live with. They are such nice people and so caring.*

*I would say that the sisters coming have been a blessing for all our religious institute because it's a multicultural learning experience for all of us, and to interact with sisters from other countries, so it's not only the sisters coming to us that are learning and well even in their own religious life, but we learn from them also, their culture.*

The U.S. major superiors also mentioned the international sisters are very helpful when they are with the U.S. sisters. The international sisters are willing to volunteer with talks in the community. The U.S. sisters mentioned these experiences:

*They are very happy. They are very generous. There were different times, especially when several of our sisters were on break or in retreat. There were some of the common ordinary everyday tasks that there were not enough sisters to cover. For example, I had signed up for several dishwashing slots and other things and the international sisters came and said "Oh, we will do the dishes." They are very alert and helpful and our sisters really love them also.*

*I think they are so grateful. They just have a sense of gratitude. They help out in more ways than they are asked. We might assign them a room to clean, something like that. They always help the sisters. When Sister G got very sick, the two international sisters primarily took over the sacristy for her, because they always help her. We might provide them food and water, but they give back in terms of spirit and energy and help to our sisters. It is just wonderful.*

*We've really gotten to know the Vietnamese culture through them and experience the culture as very caring, generous, a culture that notices small things and just very quietly slips in to do what can be done in a very gracious and helpful way. I think it's been good for us.*

*[International Sisters] are also part of our community. They participate in all of our prayer activities. And then it is our custom that we read our rule and constitutions every week, and this local house has chosen to do that on Monday evenings before our evening prayer and the sisters participate and come for that also. So they do integrate themselves with everything that we do and they also take responsibility for their charges and help with upkeep of the house, washing dishes, working on laundry, helping with the yard work or snow shoveling.*

## Part II: Catholic Colleges and Universities with International Sister Students

This part of the report describes the assistance that U.S. Catholic colleges and universities provide to international sisters as well as the benefits that the presence of international sisters bring to these campuses. The data are from a survey of 110 Catholic college presidents and from interviews with the presidents and senior administrators of four selected Catholic colleges and universities.

### Resources Provided by Catholic Colleges and Universities

CARA received a response to the survey from 110 of 232 college presidents, for an overall response of 47 percent among Catholic colleges and universities in the United States. Among the respondents, 55 percent report not having any international sisters studying in their institutions. The other 45 percent of Catholic colleges and universities report a total number of 274 international sisters studying in their institutions.

<i>What types of assistance does your institution provide to the international women religious studying in your institution?</i>	
Percentage responding	
	%
Tuition scholarship	96
Housing	38
Health insurance	24
English as a Second Language	22
Monthly/yearly stipend	20
Full scholarship, including tuition, room and board, health insurance, and stipends	16
Legal services	2

Most responding Catholic colleges and universities report granting tuition scholarships for the international sisters. Along with tuition scholarships, almost two-fifths provide housing. Between a fifth and a quarter also provide health insurance, English as Second Language, and a stipend. One in six report that they provide a full scholarship to international sisters.

### Impacts of the Presence of International Sisters on Campus

CARA interviewed presidents and several senior administrators at four institutions that currently provide scholarships for the international sisters. Interviewees from the four institutions share a sense that the two primary benefits of international sister students are the impact of their presence on campus as a witness for religious vocations and the impact that these sisters make after they return to their home countries.

## **Witness for Religious Vocations**

The presence of the sisters on campus impacts other students at one Catholic college that is also a seminary training seminarians in the priesthood. The international sister students become witnesses of religious vocation by their life commitment. All sisters coming to study in the United States have already made religious vows. They are seen as mature and disciplined in their religious life. Through daily communication during meals, classes, and work-study, the sisters help the seminarians experience the life commitment of vowed women religious. A senior administrator captures this impact in these words:

*I appreciate very well the presence of the sisters. They are very serious about their studies and their prayer life. At least in the United States, some seminarians who come here often come to see what it is like – to decide if they want to stay. They are nowhere near that point in their life of making a commitment. And so the sisters provide a good example that we wouldn't have otherwise.*

Likewise, the senior administrators at other universities speak of the witness value of the international sisters on campus in promoting awareness of religious vocations. They see that the international sisters are youthful and eager to make friends with students in their classrooms and on campus. Several senior administrators share this:

*Many of our students have never met sisters. So [to see them] is a good thing. I think the witness value of seeing the men and women coming from international locations who have a desire to study at [University] so that they can return and serve even more is powerful. So I think it is the witness that widens the horizon.*

*On campus, I think they are wonderful because they are young and in the classroom with other young students. And they make friends with the students, and they talk with students. I think they are very well received by lay students. Again there is a witness value because among our Sisters, only one is teaching now. So it is good that they get interaction with these international sisters.*

A few administrators consider the presence of international sisters wearing habits on campus as a positive influence promoting the university's religious identity. As one states in his own words, "It is very nice for us to see sisters in religious clothing among us. It helps us confirm our religious identity. So that is good."

## **Impact of Sisters Returning To Their Home Country**

Another impact that all institutions hope for is in the ministries that the international sisters will develop after they graduate and return to their home countries. It is too early to determine the future contributions of the international sisters, but this is a primary reason that all administrators give for implementing their scholarship initiative for the international sisters. The data from the survey of college administrators express their hope that as the international sisters return home, they will use the skills and knowledge they have gained during their time in the United States in carrying out their ministries.

When asked about their hopes for the international sisters they sponsored, the senior administrators related that the international sisters will return to their home countries, using the knowledge and experiences in the United States and apply them to their ministries back home. Several comments are these:

*[My hope is] that they can successfully import that knowledge to other people. They have been at Assumption College for Sisters in the United States. They could bring that back home, so that they could impart some of this knowledge to children and other people that they work with. The students go back and do wonderful things. For example, they begin schools, they serve in leadership, and they work in formation. So they get very good grounding in leadership and learn much self-confidence. It is my hope that they continue to grow.*

*That they are living up to their call from God. I am hopeful that they will continue doing that. Through them, the lives of others will be improved. I think of all impacts, schools in our world are helping to educate individuals not only in basic subjects, but also in the moral values of Catholicism. There is a way in which we evangelize through school, and we rely upon the generosity and talents of the individuals involved to keep this spirit alive in terms of our own physical help, spiritual help, and zeal. And in my experience, these international sisters have been blessings.*

At a missionary-oriented college, the scholarship for international sisters is designed to train them to become future missionaries wherever their mission takes them. Given this purpose, senior administrators hope that after the international sisters finish their studies and graduate, their studies will help them to have even greater impact on their ministries. As a senior administrator points out:

*Our hope is that, in the long term, by extending the scholarships to religious sisters we can help the Church to continue to grow in missionary spirit in terms of our [institute] understanding of mission. Our understanding of mission is not geographical. It's not like you have to go somewhere else to do mission. It is the situational understanding of mission you can do. You are a missionary where you are. Our hope is that in the long term this will bear fruit and we may see the effects of these scholarship programs immediately.*

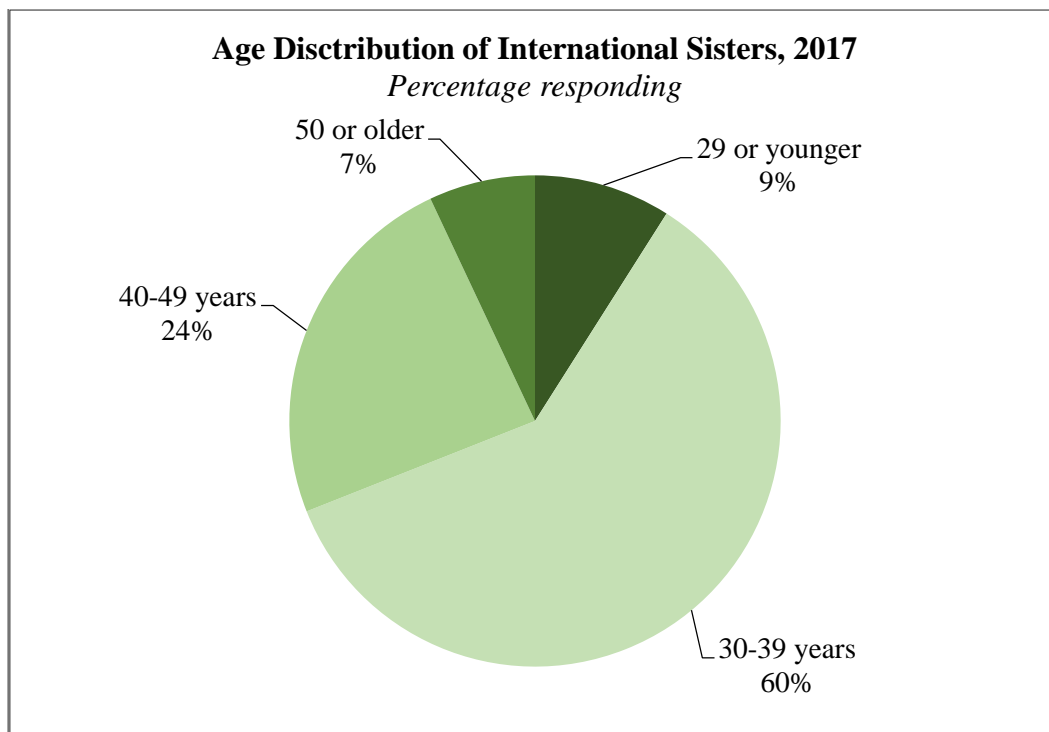


### Part III: Characteristics of Responding International Sister Students

This part of the report describes the characteristics of responding international sister students. The data are from a survey of 285 international student sisters who responded the survey by August 2017, out of 359 who were surveyed, for a response rate of 79 percent. Some selected quotes are taken from interviews with the major superiors of selected institutes that provide hospitality for international sister students and other quotes are from focus groups with selected international sister students.

#### Age Distribution of International Sister Students

The average age of responding international sister students is 38. Half of the respondents are age 36 or younger.



The youngest responding sister is 26, and the oldest is 67 years of age. A quarter are age 40 to 49. Only 7 percent are 50 or older.

## Length of Residence in the United States

Responding international sister students have lived in the United States for an average of four years.

<b>Length of Residence in the United States</b>	
<i>Percentage responding</i>	
	%
5 years or less	78
6-10 years	16
11-15 years	4
16-20 years	2
21 years or longer	<1
Average years in United States	4
Median year	4
Range in years	0-27

More than three-fourth of respondents have been in the United States for five years or less. Less than 3 percent has been living in the United States for 16 years or more. One international sister student has been living in the United States for 27 years.

<b>Age at Entrance to the United States</b>		
	<b>Year</b>	<b>Age at Entry</b>
Mean	2013	34
Median	2014	32
Range	1990-2017	20-64

Half of them came to live in the United States in 2011 or earlier. They came to the United States at an average age of 34. Half of them arrived in the United States at age 32 or younger.

## Age at Entering Religious Life

The average age at entering religious life among responding international sister students is 20. Half of them were age 19 or younger when they entered religious life. This is lower than among men and women entering religious life in the United States, for whom the average is 30; half of them are age 27 or younger.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> CARA, Entrance Class of 2017

<b>Age of International Sisters Entering Religious Life</b>	
<i>Percentage responding</i>	
	%
25 or younger	92
Age 26-30	7
Age 41 or older	1
Age 31-40	<1
Average age	20
Median age	19
Range in years	10-47

The great majority of the respondents entered religious life at the age of 25 or younger. The youngest respondent reported entering religious life at age ten and the oldest was 47 years of age when she entered. Two women report entering at the age of 47.

**Age at Profession of First Vows**

On average, the respondents professed first vows at age 25. Half of the respondents professed their first vows at the age of 25 or younger.

<b>Age at Profession of First Vows</b>	
<i>Percentage responding</i>	
	%
25 or younger	60
Age 26-30	33
Age 31-40	6
Age 41-50	1
Average age at professing first vows	25
Median age at professing first vows	25
Range in age at professing first vows	18-49

Almost all of the respondents (93 percent) took first vows at the age of 30 or younger. Only 7 percent of the respondents took first vows at the age 31 or older.

**Age at Profession of Perpetual Vows**

On average, respondents report professing or expecting to profess perpetual vows at age 32. Half of the respondents professed their perpetual vows at the age of 31 or younger.

<b>Age at Profession of Perpetual Vows</b>	
<i>Percentage responding</i>	
	<b>%</b>
29 or younger	24
Age 30-39	74
Age 40-49	1
Age 50 or older	1
Average age at professing perpetual vows	32
Median age at professing perpetual vows	31
Range in age at professing perpetual vows	21-52

- A quarter of respondents report professing or expecting to profess their perpetual vows at the age of 29 or younger.
- Three-quarters of respondents professed perpetual vows at age 30-39. Only a small number (2 percent) professed perpetual vows at the age of 40 or older.

### **Continent of Origin**

International sisters studying in the United States were asked to name their country of origin. CARA grouped these countries into continents as follows:

- Africa: Zimbabwe, Zambia, Uganda, Tanzania, Sudan, Nigeria, Madagascar, Kenya, Ghana, Cameroon, Burundi, Congo, Egypt, Ghana
- Asia: Vietnam, Turkey, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, South Korea, Singapore, Philippines, Myanmar, Malaysia, Lebanon, Laos, South Korea, Japan, Indonesia, India, Hong Kong, China, Bangladesh
- Europe: United Kingdom, Ukraine, Switzerland, Sweden, Spain, Slovakia, Scotland, Romania, Portugal, Poland, Netherlands, Malta, Luxemburg, Italy, Ireland, Hungary, Germany, France, England, Czech Republic, Croatia, Bosnia, Belgium, Austria
- Central/South America: West Indies, Venezuela, Trinidad and Tobago, Puerto Rico, Peru, Paraguay, Panama, Nicaragua, Jamaica, Honduras, Haiti, Guyana, Guatemala, El Salvador, Dominican Republic, Cuba, Costa Rica, Colombia, Chile, Brazil, Bolivia, Belize, Argentina
- North America: Mexico, Canada
- Oceania: Samoa, Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, Micronesia, Borneo, Australia

Altogether, respondents report 29 countries of birth. The majority was born in Vietnam, followed by Uganda, Tanzania, and China.

<b>Continent of Origin</b>	
<i>Percentage calculated from country of origin</i>	
	%
Asia	69
Africa	23
Central/South America	6
Europe	2
North America	<1

- More than two-thirds of respondents (69 percent) were born in one of the Asian countries. Among them, Vietnam accounts for 86 percent, China 6 percent, India 4 percent, and South Korea 3 percent.
- One in four respondents (23 percent) was born in one of the African countries. Among them, nearly a quarter (23 percent) come from Tanzania and Uganda. One in seven (14 percent) is from Kenya and Nigeria.
- A few international sister students are from Central/South America, North America (including one sister from Canada), and Europe.

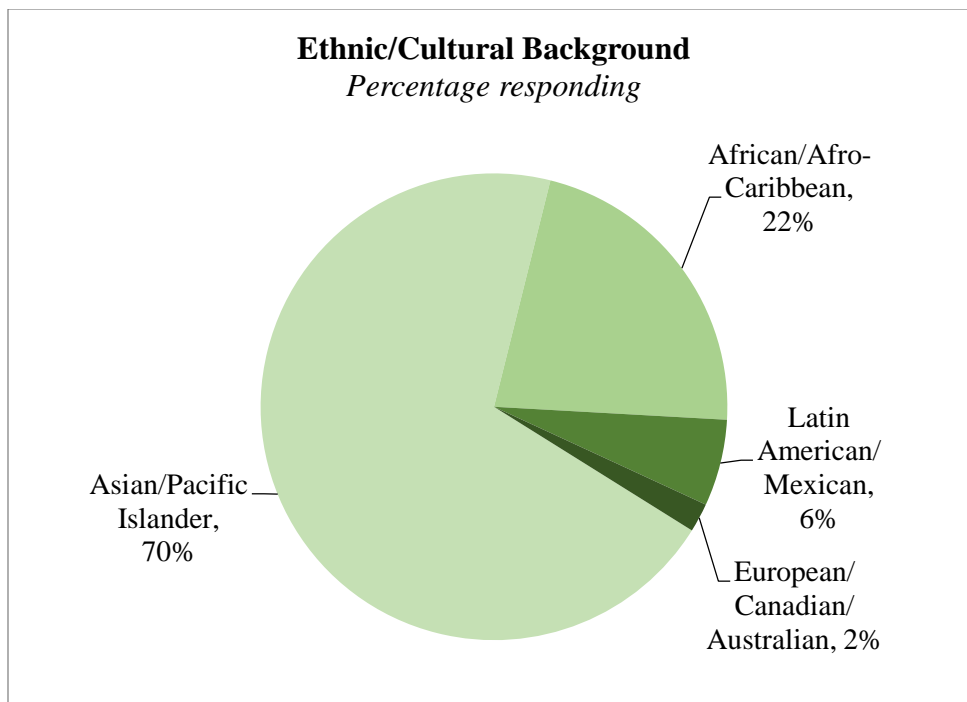
Vietnam represents 52 percent of the respondents in this study. This proportion is consistent with the population of Vietnamese sisters participating in the national study of international sisters conducted by Trinity Washington University/CARA, in which 40 percent of the international sisters who reported being a student at a U.S. college/university are from Vietnam.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Trinity Washington University/CARA, 2015

## Ethnic/Cultural Background

About two-thirds of responding international sisters (70 percent) identify as Asian/Pacific Islander.



About a fifth (22 percent) identify as African/Afro-Caribbean. Six percent identify as Latin American or Mexican. And only 2 percent identify as European/Canadian/Australian.

The distribution of ethnic/cultural backgrounds reflects the overall ethnic/cultural background of international sisters present in the United States. The data collected by Trinity Washington University/CARA show a similar pattern of ethnic/cultural background of international sisters studying in the United States. Though the number of the international sisters who report being European/Canadian/Australian in the Trinity Washington University/CARA study is higher than that in this study, the sisters in the Trinity Washington University/CARA study are more likely to stay in the United States permanently after study. This study examines only the subset of international sisters who are studying here in the United States and plan to return to their home countries after their studies, therefore few European sisters participated in this study.

## Legal Status

More than four in five respondents (81 percent) are non-immigrant students who are studying in the United States under the F-1 visa. One in ten holds legal permanent resident status. Seven percent hold non-immigrant religious worker status.

<i>Which of these best describes your current status?</i>	
Percentage responding	
	%
Non-immigrant student (F-1 visa)	82
Legal permanent resident (green card)	9
Non-immigrant religious worker (R-1 visa)	7
U.S. Citizen	2

## Preparation Prior to Entrance in the United States

Respondents were asked to share how much they knew about each of several different aspects of U.S. culture before they arrived in the United States.

<i>How much did you know about the followings before you entered the United States?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much”</b>	<b>“Very Much” only</b>
	%	%
English language	44	14
Religious life in the United States	25	4
Catholic Church in the United States	25	4
American culture	21	2

- Two in five respondents report that they learned English at least “somewhat” before entering the United States. A quarter report they knew at least “somewhat” about religious life and the Catholic Church in the United States.
- Around one in five respondents report “somewhat” or “very much” knowing about American culture before they came to the United States.

## Support Resources

When asked who provided the following services to them since they arrived, half of the respondents report that their religious institute provided them with finances for their personal expenses.

<b>Resources/ Needs</b>	<b>Not provided</b>	<b>My religious institute</b>	<b>Other religious institute</b>	<b>Parish/ diocese</b>	<b>College/ university</b>	<b>Someone else</b>	<b>Did not need</b>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Academic resources	1	26	17	2	59	11	1
Acculturation training	7	12	28	2	37	14	10
Finance for personal expenses	6	49	15	0	12	23	1
Health insurance	15	23	14	1	31	7	1
Housing	1	15	42	2	31	3	1
Language acquisition	3	11	23	1	52	11	10
Legal services	6	13	17	2	42	6	10
Mentoring support	5	29	20	1	33	13	7
Spiritual support	3	40	28	5	30	16	1

More than two in five report that other religious institutes provided them with housing. One in five report that other religious institutes provided them with mentoring support and almost three in ten report that other religious institutes provided them with spiritual support and acculturation training.



## Part IV: Experiences on Campus

When asked about where they currently study, the majority of respondents (85 percent) report studying at a Catholic college/university.

<i>Where are you currently studying?</i>	
Percentage responding	%
A Catholic college/university	85
A non-Catholic college/university	9
Other	6

Around one in ten report studying at a non-Catholic college/university. Only 6 percent reports studying at another place.

### English as a Second Language

More than half of respondents (53 percent) currently study English as a second language. Three in five responding sister students have minimum proficiency in English language skills.

<i>Please indicate your current level of proficiency in English</i>			
	Percentage responding		
	<b>None or Limited</b>	<b>“Minimum Proficiency”</b>	<b>“Fluent or Native”</b>
	%	%	%
Comprehension	17	59	24
Speaking	19	59	22
Writing	20	59	21

Nearly a quarter report that they are fluent in English. About one in five has no or only limited English proficiency.

<b>ESL Students by Length of Time in the United States</b>	
<i>Percentage responding</i>	
	%
5 years or less	97
6-10 years	2
11-15 years	1
16-20 years	0
21 years or longer	0

Among those who report currently studying English as a Second Language, almost all (97 percent) have been in the United States for five years or less. Only 3 percent of those have been in the United States for six years or longer are currently studying English as a Second Language.

### **Degrees Pursued**

Close to half of respondents (46 percent) are currently enrolled or plan to pursue a Bachelor’s degree.

<b><i>Which degree are you currently or planning to enroll?</i></b>	
<i>Percentage responding</i>	
	%
Bachelor’s degree	46
Master’s degree	33
Associate degree	10
Doctoral degree	6
Other	5

- A third are enrolled in or plan to pursue a Master’s degree. One in ten are currently pursuing or plan to pursue an Associate degree.
- One in twenty (6 percent) currently pursues or plans to pursue a doctoral degree. About the same percentage (5 percent) report some “other” education, which mainly includes those studying English as a Second Language.

## Programs of Study

When asked about the programs they currently pursue or plan to pursue, two in five report that they currently study or plan to study theology.

<i>Which program are you currently or planning to enroll?</i>	
Percentage responding	
	%
Theology	38
Other	16
Education	15
Religious Studies	12
Psychology	10
Nursing	5
Social Work	2
Spirituality	2

- Nearly one in six report studying education. One in ten report studying religious studies or psychology.
- One in six report studying some “other” program, including accounting, communication, computer science, English, human services, intercultural studies, philosophy, and spiritual direction.

## Tuition Financing

Around two-thirds of respondents report that the U.S. college/university where they study pays for their tuition.

<i>Who currently provides you with tuition while you study in the United States?</i>	
Percentage responding	
	%
The college/university where I am studying	68
My own religious institute	22
A religious institute in the United States	15
Other	7

- One in five receives tuition funds from their own religious institute. More than one in seven receive financial aid for tuition from a religious institute in the United States.
- Among those who report receiving funds for tuition from other sources, responding sister students cite the federal government, benefactors, and several other sources of scholarships for tuition.

<b>Percentage responding “Yes” or “No”</b>		
	Yes	No
	%	%
Did you study at another Catholic college in the United States before you began the current one?	26	74
If yes, did the college(s) provide scholarship for you?	85	15

More than a quarter of responding sister students studied at another Catholic college in the United States before they began the current one. Among those who have been studying at another Catholic college before this one, close to nine in ten respondents (85 percent) received a scholarship from those Catholic colleges/universities.

### **Mode of Dress on Campus**

Sister students often wear a religious habit on campus. When asked about their usual mode of dress on campus, more than three in five report that they wear the full habit of their religious institute.

<b><i>What is your usual mode of dress when you are on campus?</i></b>	
	Percentage responding
	%
Full habit (your religious institute’s habit)	63
No habit	19
Modified habit	9
Religious symbol	8
Other	1

One in five (19 percent) report that they do not wear a religious habit on campus. Around one in ten reports wearing a modified habit or some other religious symbol.

More than four in five (84 percent) responding sister students report that the members of their religious institute typically wear a religious habit. Among these respondents, nearly three in

four (73 percent) report wearing a full habit and one in ten (10 percent) reports wearing a modified habit while on campus.

### **Travelling to Campus**

The respondents are more likely to live on or near campus, as more than half report that they walk or ride a bicycle to college.

<i>How do you travel to campus?</i>	
Percentage responding*	%
I walk or bicycle	51
I take public transport	19
I drive	18
The sisters in my community give me a ride to college	11
Other	4

\* Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.

- Around one in five report taking public transport to get to campus. Another one in five report driving to campus.
- One in ten reports that the sisters in their community give them a ride to college.

## Participation in Activities on Campus

The international sisters were asked if they participate in various activities on campus. Nearly four in five respondents (76 percent) attend Mass on campus and talk about faith and religious with others on campus (75 percent).

<i>Since you begin your college studies in the United States, how often do you do the following on campus?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	<b>“Regularly” or “Always”</b>	<b>“Always” only</b>
	%	%
Attend Mass on campus	76	57
Talk about faith and religion with others on campus	75	32
Attend workshops/events hosted by the college/university	67	34
Talk about religious vocation with others on campus	63	24
Attend prayer services on campus	62	42
Have conversations with people whose religious beliefs are other than my own	60	22
Participate in campus ministry activities	58	30
Participate in cultural events	52	23
Participate in student organizations	50	27
Participate in informal social activities with students (e.g. picnic, a meal, birthday)	46	17
Invite others to visit the community with whom I am staying (if applicable)	46	9
Invite others to spiritual activities with me	44	10
Invite others to have a meal with me	36	6

- Two-thirds of respondents report that they “regularly” or “always” attend workshops/ events hosted by the college/university.
- Around three in five report at least “regularly” talking about religious vocation with others on campus, attending prayer services on campus, having conversations with people whose religious beliefs are other than my own, and participating in campus ministry activities.
- Half report at least “regularly” participating in cultural events and in student

organizations.

### Leadership Experiences on Campus

Respondents were asked if they have done or plan to do several different activities on campus before they graduate. Around four in five report that they at least plan to participate in community service/volunteer activities.

<i>Which of the following have you done or do you plan to do before you graduate?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	<b>“Plan to do” or “Done/in progress” %</b>	<b>“Done or in progress” only %</b>
Participate in community service/volunteer activities	73	42
Participate in an internship or field experience	51	23
Work with a faculty member on a research project	37	12
Co-ordinate faith-related activities (e.g., faith sharing group, prayer service, CLC group)	36	16
Co-ordinate ethnic/cultural programs (e.g., international students group, festivals, international week)	33	13
Hold a formal leadership role in a student organization or group	20	11

- Half of responding international sister students report that they at least “plan to” participate in an internship or field experience, while a quarter has actually done or are in progress to do this.
- Nearly four in five respondents at least “plan to” work with a faculty member on a research project (37 percent) and co-ordinate faith-related activities.
- A third of respondents at least “plan to” co-ordinate ethnic/cultural programs.
- One in five report at least “planning to” hold a formal leadership role in a student organization or group.

## Part V: Communication with Home Country

Nearly nine in ten responding sister students report that they know of other sisters in their religious institute who study or minister in the United States.

<b>Connection with Home</b>	<i>Percentage responding</i>	%
Do other sisters in your religious institute study or minister in the United States?		89
Does your religious institute have a province or community based in the United States?		50
Have you ever visited your family in your home country since you began your study in the United States?		43
Do you have family members or relatives in the United States?		42

- Half of respondents report that their religious institute has a province or community based in the United States.
- Two in five report that they have visited their family in their home country since they began their study in the United States.
- Another two in five report that they have family members or relatives in the United States.

### Visiting the Home Country

<i>When did you first visit your family after you arrived in the United States?</i>	
<i>Percentage responding</i>	
	%
After 3 or 4 years	38
After 2 years	24
After 1 year or earlier	22
After 5 years	12
After 6 years or more	8

Among respondents who have ever visited their home country since they came to study in the United States, almost two in five visited their home country after three or four years. About a quarter visited their home country after two years and one in five visited home after a year or less. One in five did not visit their home country until five years or more in the United States.



### Ways of Communication with the Home Country

<i>How do you communicate with people in your home country?</i>	
Percentage responding*	
	%
Social media	66
Phone	66
Email	59
Mailing letters	15

\* Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.

- When asked how they communicate with people in their home country, two-thirds report that they communicate with people in their home country via social media and phone.
- Three in five report that they communicate with people in their home country via email.
- Nearly one in six report communicating with people in their home country by mailing letters.

### Frequency of Communication with the Home Country

<b>Communication with Home</b>				
<i>Percentage responding</i>				
	<b>At least once a week or more</b>	<b>At least once a month or more</b>	<b>A few times a year</b>	<b>Seldom</b>
	%	%	%	%
How often do you contact your parents or other relatives in your home country?	41	45	13	0
How often do you contact your religious superior in your home country?	9	53	37	2
How often do you contact your religious sisters in your home country?	21	46	33	1

- The international sisters report regular contact with their family and their religious institutes in their home countries. Two in five report contacting their parents or other relatives in their home country at least once a week. Nearly a half report contacting their family at least once a month.
- More than half report contacting their religious superior at least monthly and about one in ten does so weekly. Another two in five report contacting their religious superior a few times a year.
- Close to half of the responding sisters report that they contact their religious sisters in their home country at least once a month and another one in five reports contacting them at least weekly. Another third say they only contact their sisters in their home country a few times a year.

## Part VI: Life Experiences in the United States

### Room and Board

Half of responding sister students report that a religious institute in the United States provides them with room and board.

<i>Who currently provides you with room and board while you study in the United States?</i>	
Percentage responding	
	%
A religious institute in the United States	49
The college/university where I am studying	34
My own religious institute	14
Other	3

- More than one-third report that the college/university where they are studying provides them with room and board.
- One in seven reports receiving room and board from their own religious institute.

### Living Situation

International sisters studying in the United States were asked to describe their current living situation. More than two in five report living with sisters of both their religious institute and another religious institute.

<i>Which of these describes your current living situation?</i>	
Percentage responding	
	%
I live with other sisters of both my religious institute and another religious institute	43
I live with other sisters of another religious institute	30
I live with other sisters of my religious institute	16
I live with both religious sisters and lay persons/students	8
I live alone	3

- Three in ten report living with sisters of another religious institute only.
- Around one in six report living with other sisters of their own religious institute.
- Only 8 percent report living with a mixture of both religious sisters and lay persons/students. A very small percentage (3 percent) reports living alone.

### **Housing Arrangement**

International sisters studying in the United States were also asked about their current housing arrangement. Half (51 percent) report living in a house owned by another religious institute.

<i><b>Which of these describes your current housing arrangement?</b></i>	
Percentage responding	%
I live in a house owned by another religious institute	51
I live on campus in an apartment/house owned by the college/university or in a student residence hall	36
I live in a house owned by my religious institute	7
I live in a parish/diocese convent	5
I live in a house of a host family	1

- Just over a third report living on campus in an apartment/house owned by the college/university or in a student residence hall.
- A small number of sisters report living in a parish/diocese convent (5 percent), or in a house owned by their religious institute (7 percent).
- Only one sister reports living in the house of a host family.

### ***Living with a Religious Institute***

Two-thirds (63 percent) report living in a religious community setting, while a third (37 percent) reports living on campus or some other setting (not shown in the table).

<b><i>If you are staying with a religious community, how did you get to know this community?</i></b>	
Percentage responding	
	%
An organization assisting my study in the United States requested it for me	23
This community is the sponsoring religious institute of the college/university where I am studying	21
A priest or friend requested room and board to this community for me	21
Other	11
This community belongs to my province/religious institute	10
Sister(s) at the college/university introduced it to me	8
The college/university where I am currently studying introduced it to me	6

- Among those who live in a religious community setting, one in four respondents learned of the religious community through an organization assisting her study in the United States (23 percent), through a priest or friend requesting housing for her (21 percent), or because the religious community is the sponsoring religious institute of the college where she is studying (21 percent)
- One in ten sisters reports that the religious community she is living belongs to her religious institute or that other sisters at the college/university introduced her to the community.
- A small number of responding sisters (6 percent) report that the college/university where she currently studies introduced her to the religious community.
- One in ten reports knowing the religious community through others. Some report that their superior arranges the housing. Others report that they searched for housing on their own.

When asked about the number of sisters with whom they live, one in five responding sisters report living with 26 to 50 sisters and another one in five report living with 51 sisters or more.

<i>With how many sisters do you live?</i>	
Percentage responding	
	%
With 26 to 50 sisters	20
With 51 sisters or more	20
With 16 to 25 sisters	16
With 9 to 15 sisters	13
With 2 or 3 sisters	12
With 4 to 8 sisters	12
With another sister	4
No other sisters	3

- Around one in six reports living with a community of 16 to 25 sisters.
- Only 4 percent report living with just one other sister. Another 3 percent report living alone.

### **Sharing of Culture**

<i>Which occasions do you share your own culture with the community you are staying?</i>	
Percentage responding*	
	%
New Year	46
Christmas	39
Your own national holiday	35
Eucharistic liturgy	35
Religious institute's celebration	25
Daily prayer	25
Other	11
* Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.	

The sisters share their culture frequently with their community where they are living, especially on annual occasions such as New Year (46 percent), Christmas (39 percent), and their own national holiday (35 percent). A third also share their culture with the community at

Eucharistic liturgy (35 percent). In addition, the international sisters share their culture on other occasions, such as daily prayer and at the community's celebration.

All U.S. major superiors who were interviewed for this project mentioned the fact that the international sisters living with them share their own culture with the religious institutes. When asked about the occasions where the international sister students share their culture and customs, the major superiors responded:

*Certainly at Christmas time the four that are here this year did a wonderful Christmas program for us, dancing and entertaining us. On the feast days of the religious institute, they help us to appreciate the founding of their communities ... We celebrate each other's feasts and festivities together. So that's been enrichment for us. They help us in many ways. If we have jubilees and celebrations occurring, they'll help us make decorations and centerpieces. We had a fundraiser in [City]. So they danced as part of the entertainment. There are many ways that we find that there's a mutual exchange.*

*They have beautiful voices. They share their gifts of making flower arrangements. And I have learned when they do flower arrangements it's a different style than Americans doing flower arrangements. There is an Asian bent to it, the flowers and the curves. Myself, I have learned to love that style more than the way Americans arrange flowers. I just love the whole; there's like a poetic style and I love it.*

*On their New Year, they have a little party that they host and so they prepare their native foods... For Pentecost with the Gospel in the different languages, we have all of the international sisters represented in some way in that liturgy, and then there are a couple of our hymns that have other languages beside the English. They have Spanish, French, and Vietnamese, and so we use those hymns at times in our Eucharist liturgy. For Christmas and also our birthdays, something special like that, for our general council they make the paper decorations that are very ornate. So they share a lot of their cultural traditions with us too.*

## Ministries

Beside their studies, the international sisters also participate in various ministries while in the United States.

*Which of the following ministries have you been involved in while you are in the United States?*

Percentage responding\*

	%
Parish/diocesan ministry	27
Campus ministry on campus	22
Soup kitchen ministry	14
Other	14
Vocational ministry	10
Ministry to my ethnic/cultural group	9
Spiritual direction	9
Prison ministry	3

\*Percentages sum more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.

- More than a quarter (27 percent) are involved in parish/diocesan ministries. More than one in five (22 percent) are involved in campus ministry on campus.
- More than one in ten are involved in soup kitchen ministry, religious vocation ministries, and other ministries.



## Satisfaction with Aspects of Religious Life in the United States

International sisters were asked how satisfied they are with various aspects of their life in the United States. Nearly all respondents are “somewhat” or “very” satisfied with the availability of daily Eucharist (99 percent), with their life as a woman religious in the United States (95 percent), and with the prayer life in their local house (95 percent).

<i>How satisfied are you with these aspects of your life in the United States?</i>		
Percentage responding*		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much”</b>	<b>“Very Much” only</b>
	%	%
Availability of daily Eucharist	99	93
My life as a woman religious	95	72
The prayer life in my local house	95	75
The housing arrangement	91	67
The spiritual support I receive from my local house	91	66
The friendships I have made in the U.S.	88	42
Academic resources available for my study	87	62
The food	86	37
Opportunities to meet with other religious living in the United States	83	48
The balance of work and leisure in my life in the United States	82	40
My transportation	81	47
My health care	77	47
Someone available for help if I need it	77	45
My financial support	74	40
The availability of retreats in my preferred language	69	37
*Percentages sum more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.		

- More than nine in ten (93 percent) report being “very” satisfied with the availability of daily Eucharist. More than seven in ten are “very” satisfied with their life as a woman religious and the prayer life in their local house.
- About nine in ten report being “somewhat” or “very” satisfied with their housing arrangement, the spiritual support they receive from their local house, the friendships they have made in the United States, the academic resources available for their study, and the food.

- Four in five respondents report being “somewhat” or “very” satisfied with their opportunities to meet with other religious living in the United States (83 percent), with the balance of work and leisure in their life in the United States (82 percent), and with their transportation (81 percent).
- Three in four are at least “somewhat” satisfied with their health care, with the knowledge that there is someone available for help if they need it, and with their financial support.

### Satisfaction with Support Received in the United States

More than nine in ten responding sister students report being at least “somewhat” satisfied with their support from their family members (92 percent) and the support of the sisters of the religious community with whom they currently live.

<i>How satisfied are you with the support you receive from these people?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much”</b>	<b>“Very Much” only</b>
	%	%
My family members	92	75
The sisters of the community that I am currently living with	91	62
My religious superior in my home country	87	59
My religious sisters in my home country	86	53
The religious superior in the United States	86	59
The sisters of my community who are studying/ministering in the United States	81	50
My friends in the United States	78	37
My friends in my home country	77	39
Religious friends outside my religious institute in the United States	74	34
People from my home country who live in the United States	70	32
The bishop and priests in the diocese where I am studying	48	17

- More than four in five respondents report being at least “somewhat” satisfied with the support they receive from their religious superior in their home country and from other religious sisters of their community – in their home country as well as those in the United States.

- Seven to eight in ten report being at least “somewhat” satisfied with the support they receive from their friends – in the United States and in their home country – as well as from people from their home country living in the United States.
- Nearly half of respondents report being at least “somewhat” satisfied with the support they receive from the bishop and priests in the diocese where they study.

### ***Most Positive Experiences in the United States***

When asked about their most positive experiences, the majority of the international sister students mentioned generous and friendly people in the United States, freedom and religious tolerance and respect, multicultural understanding and willingness to learn about new culture, and good education. Some of their responses include:

- Warm welcome, hospitality, cooperation and time management.
- I met a lot of generous and friendly people, including Americans and Vietnamese.
- Example of religious life of priests, religious brothers, and aging sisters: Generosity, willingness to assist.
- Religious freedom and mutual respect.
- Some customs of culture surprise me in the beginning, e.g., Americans are very straightforward when talking.
- Living with people of different culture and background has been positive because of the ability of understanding each other and the care and concern from the lay people.
- Have opportunities to learn culture, language, and knowledge. Understand religious life in the United States.
- Have opportunity to listen, read, and speak English with American people.
- Have opportunity to learn about the U.S., people, culture, especially meeting with many people of different culture, class, jobs, and experiences.
- I have learned a lot about the Education system of U.S. I learned how to manage my life more independent and mature in way of living religious life.
- In America I find the system of education is quite different from my country. Here the technology is very high.

## Future Plans

When asked about their future discernment, more than two in five (44 percent) report that they will return to their home country after completing studies. Another third (35 percent) report that their future plans are determined by their religious superiors.

<i>Which of these best describes the plan as discerned for your future?</i>	
Percentage responding	%
To return to my home country after completing studies	44
I don't know. My future plans are determined by my religious superiors	35
To apply for an advanced degree in the United States	21
To stay in the U.S. to do ministry temporarily	4
Other	2
To stay in the United States permanently	1

- One in five (21 percent) plans to apply for an advanced degree in the United States.
- A small number of respondents (4 percent) plan to stay in the United States temporarily to do ministry after completing studies. Very few plan to stay in the United States permanently or have some other plan for their future.

## Part VIII: Challenges

International sisters studying in the United States encounter several challenges. Some encounter challenges with their studies in school. Others experience difficulty in adapting due to differences in language and culture. The U.S. major superiors also express concerns for the international sisters regarding their continuing religious formation. Data from interviews with four U.S. major superiors also indicate that they are sometimes challenged by a lack of communication from the superiors in the home countries of the international sister students. The U.S. religious institutes that host these sister students may also experience some challenges in financing the arrangement.

### Challenges for International Sister Students

#### *Challenges on Campus*

Respondents were asked about how challenging they find different aspects of life on campus. Two in three at least “somewhat” agree that they find it challenging to participate in academic discussions.

<i>Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: I find it challenging to...</i>		
	Percentage responding	
	<b>“Somewhat Agree” or “Strongly Agree”</b>	<b>“Strongly Agree” only</b>
	%	%
Participate in academic discussions	66	28
Understand the American educational system	63	16
Choose a major	62	20
Engage in group work with my classmates	59	24
Complete class assignments	60	33
Understand the cultures on campus	60	18
Understand classroom lectures	59	16
Have relationships with other students	56	24
Access academic services (proof-reading)	53	22
Interact with my professors	49	22

- Three in five report that they at least “somewhat agree” that they find it challenging to understand the American educational system, choose a major, engage in group work with their classmates, complete class assignments, understand classroom lectures, and understand the cultures on campus.

- Half of respondents at least “somewhat agree” that they find it challenging to have relationships with other students, access academic services, and interact with their professors.

When asked about the challenges they encountered in their studies they encountered, one sister from Nigeria, who is pursuing a Masters in Theological Studies, mentions this in her interview:

*Academically, I had a little challenge when I came in because I have been in education all this while back in Nigeria. I graduated from the college long ago so I stayed like six, seven years, eight years, after my graduation before starting again. And coming here, coming into theology and education, I don't know about theology so it was like a big challenge for me. I have to study hard to make it, and I am happy... Another challenge in academics was the inclusive language they use. In Nigeria it's not done that way. In Nigeria we use like “he” and that “he” is for everybody, for either male or female. Yes, but if you want to talk to the person direct, you can use he or she, but in the church you can't use, we use people, we use “he,” we use mankind, but here the inclusive language is more stressed. I'm careful, like choosing words, so that was a challenge.*

### ***Challenges with Cultures, Weather, Language***

Culture is one of the major issues that the international sisters encounter when they first arrive in the United States. The international sisters may also encounter differences in the living styles that cause them to be uncomfortable. One international sister from Africa expresses her experiences in these words:

*First, the challenge I have is the culture. In our country and in my own region, in my state in particular, we live a communitarian life. We live together. You are together with your neighbors. You can go into their house, get whatever you want. I really miss that. That is not here at all. You cannot know, for instance, the people living opposite us. I don't know who they are, and they don't know us either. So it's really a challenge because when you want to feel free to relate with people, they are not related with you that way. Sometimes when you see them, they really give you a cheerful face. That I appreciate, as if they are welcoming you in a special way.*

Weather is another challenge the international sisters encounter when they are in the United States. One Nigerian sister living and studying on the East Coast of the United States confided this:

*The cold is really sometimes an obstruction. That is, even when you want to feel free, dress freely, the weather wouldn't allow that. The challenge I have is to get over the weather. It's so serious, that the snow and this winter is my first experience. It wasn't that easy for me at the initial time, because I have porous skin, I get cold easily. In fact I'm allergic to cold somehow, so coming down here with the sisters back home, they are saying “We hope we will be able to cope with this cold weather.” Coming here, I saw it with full force, so I have to adapt to it.*

Language is really a challenge for the international sisters, especially those are from non-English speaking countries. Almost all international sisters participating in the focus groups shared their challenges with the English language.

*English is my second language. So I cannot speak out in class and then whenever I have courage and try to speak out in class, most of them have that kind of face, "What? What?" They have many wrinkles in their faces, and they try to understand my English. That makes me very discouraged. So far, to me, the language is very challenging.*

### ***Challenges with Religious/Spiritual Formation***

The U.S. sisters are aware of the fact that the living environment and the different religious lifestyle of communities in the United States becomes a challenge for the international sisters. The U.S. sisters are concerned that the U.S. religious lifestyle may affect the international sisters. A U.S. sister in the Midwest shares this:

*I don't know if challenge is the right word, but there's a little bit of an uncomfortableness in the fact that we're training them to be like white, middle-class American women religious. And so I'm a little uncomfortable, how will they return to their countries? How will they be able to fit back into the culture from which they came? Are we educating them to be such liberal thinking women like we are, that they're not going to fit well? That's troubling for me. It is concerning for me that they will not be able to be accepted back into wherever they need to return to.*

This U.S. sister continued to share her concern over the fact that several international sisters are still in early stages of formation:

*The challenge is that these are young women are in early stages of formation. We are concerned about their formation. The fact that they are young in their vowed religious life. They are busy with their studies, we're busy with our ministries, but to try to address occasionally that [there are] those formation needs that they do have.*

Another U.S. sister is a little concerned over the international sisters' spirituality resources. The sisters in the East Coast observed this:

*What I found difficult is they didn't bring books or anything with them for spirituality. In the beginning, I believe in some ways their spirituality got a little stunted until we could teach them in English and until they could read simple things in a spiritual book. A lot of them didn't bring the Bible, didn't bring a spirituality book that would nourish them while they were still going through [their adjustment].*

*I also think in the beginning they were so intent on learning English and learning the American way – not because they weren't good sisters – but everything else got pushed out of their life and they just focused on this. I remember Sr. [Name] had to have a talk with them and she said "you know what? We have meditation and we do reading and we*

*spend time in chapel” and so she had this little direction with them and after that then we noticed that there was more balance in their life. In the beginning though it wasn’t a big part of their life only because they were so anxious to do well in this country.*

### **Concerns**

The biggest concern expressed by the responding sister students is their ability to participate in the life of their religious institute. Three in five (60 percent) respondents were at least “somewhat” concerned about their ability to participate in their religious institute’s life.

<b><i>Since you came to the United States, how much of a concern is each of these to you personally?</i></b>		
<i>Percentage responding*</i>		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very” %</b>	<b>“Very” Only %</b>
Ability to participate in the life of my religious institute	60	26
Tiredness	52	14
Sense of belonging	45	17
Anxiety/stress	45	13
Overwork	42	11
Depression	25	7
Chronic illness	24	9
Weight issues	20	6
Loneliness/isolation	17	6
Alcohol or drug use	3	1

\* Percentages sum more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.

- More than half (52 percent) are at least “somewhat” concerned about their tiredness and close to half (45 percent) are as concerned about their sense of belonging and anxiety/stress. While the respondents in this study (45 percent) are less likely than the respondents in the Trinity Washington University/CARA study (54 percent) to be concerned about their sense of belonging, they are more likely than those sisters (45 percent compared to 31 percent) to be concerned about their anxiety/stress.
- More than two in five respondents (42 percent) are at least “somewhat” concerned about overwork. A quarter are at least “somewhat” concerned about depression, which is also higher than those in the Trinity Washington University/CARA study (12 percent).



- As for other health issues, another quarter of international sister students are at least “somewhat” concerned about chronic illness and one in five is concerned about weight issues. Nearly as many (17 percent) are concerned about loneliness/isolation.

### *Most Negative Experience in the United States*

When asked to describe their most negative experience since they arrived in the United States, the international sister students mentioned language problems, the severe cold winter weather, problems of understanding culture, racism. Some of their responses include:

- Difficult when unable to speak, listen, understand English in communication.
- I am sometimes tired and stressed because of many homework, assignments because of lack of English proficiency.
- Language has significant impact in study. If not prepared for language well, I will be limited in gaining knowledge.
- Weather is a challenge
- Winter scares me hence remains indoors
- When I had a cold for 3 months
- Difficulty to understand the culture in the first year, no chance to experience other areas of the country/town apart from the college.
- Difficulty in getting along with White Americans.
- American culture is very different from Vietnamese culture and difficult to adapt.
- Racism from my US friends, whom I am studying with. The way they look at me, smile at me, talk to me.
- Being despised because of my ethnicity.
- Racism from my own sisters and Abuse of their leadership positions.
- Difficult when unable to speak, listen, understand English in communication.
- I am sometimes tired and stressed because of many homework, assignments because of lack of English proficiency.
- Language has significant impact in study. If not prepared for language well, I will be limited in gaining knowledge

## Challenges for U.S. Religious Institutes

The U.S. religious institutes who host these international sister students also face challenges in these relationships. Some institutes struggle to provide financial support for these students. Others express frustration with difficulties in communicating with other religious superiors from the sisters' home countries.

### *Finances*

Hosting international sister students means a financial commitment from the host institute for room and board for the sister as well as other necessary, but perhaps unanticipated, resources. This can be a challenge for the U.S. religious institutes who undertake this financial burden. As some U.S. religious institutes have also been providing the international sisters with books, they may find it difficult to continue:

*As the college is waiving the tuition fee for them, we help them the best we can with books. That can be an expense there, but we try to get second-hand books, or we get books off the internet, many of the books are e-files and the issue with the students and the books is no different from the other students. A lot of the students in our college struggle to have books, but we make certain that they start out with books because they just can't be successful otherwise. But the college picks up the tuition and we help with the books. Now there are some expenses, just some living expenses that can be a little difficult, for example, because we're a big institution here we have about 35 sisters in this building. We realized that our sisters really live on very thin finances.*

*The past year we told the sisters that we could not afford to pay for books. So those sisters who were with us, especially in [City], we still continue to pay their book bills. Any new sisters who come to our communities have to figure out how to pay their book bills. We also ask sisters if they could also contribute to pay their living stipends because you can imagine 40+ sisters are a lot of sisters, especially when we have less and less sisters who are actually working. And we have to deepen our investment in our health care to take care of our older sisters. So we cannot quite be as generous as we want to.*

### *Communication with Major Superiors of International Sisters*

The U.S. religious superiors are also sometimes concerned over the fact they rarely have opportunities to communicate with the congregational leaders of the international sisters:

*That's another challenge for us in America, that we don't have the contact with their superiors and what their superior is expecting from us as a receiving community. That is a big, big challenge for us.*

*I think there is a void right now in the communication between those of us who are [local] superiors here in the States and the superiors back in Vietnam. I don't think we communicate frequently enough. I get caught in the busyness of my leadership role and I*

*am awed though by the trust that those superiors are putting in us. Because they're giving us the best and the brightest of their religious institutes and I'm awed by that trust.*

## **Part IX: Suggestions from U.S. Major Superiors**

### **For Superiors Wishing to Send Their Sisters to Study in the United States**

Several major superiors of U.S. religious institutes recommend that the major superiors of the sending religious institutes visit the United States, to learn about the location and institution where their international sisters live and study. That way, the major superiors of the sending religious institutes would have an opportunity to communicate with the hosting religious institutes and better comprehend the culture and environment that their sisters confront. Accordingly, the religious institutes from the home country could then help the international sisters to readjust better when they return after completing their studies. One major superior shares in these words:

*I think it would be good for the sisters, the superiors in Vietnam to visit here at least once so that they have a sense of the American culture. Academics in the United States is an ivory tower. You are in a very idealized world. ... There is something I think that would benefit if the superiors had a view of the pressures of study, the expectations of study from the world of the student. And I think it would be good for us, those of us on the American side who are substituting for superiors, if we kind of created a more regular communication piece for the sisters back in Vietnam because in some ways they send them here and then they don't see them until they return and there's been a whole lot of change that has occurred in between and just for the re-transitioning, re-enculturation back to Vietnam, if they go back, to facilitate that.*

The challenges of both sending and hosting religious institutes resonates in the words of other major superiors. While they recognize the lack of communication with the sending religious institutes, they also recommend that it is better to have more frequent communication with the contact persons of the sending religious institutes:

*I said it somewhere before, somehow the receiving sisters and the sisters that are coming into communities, there has to be some kind of blending with us. I'd say to you now with technology, Skype would be a good thing but they can't speak English and we can't speak Vietnamese. That's the issue. I don't know if there could be translators or something. But I think it's important that there are receiving sisters who get to talk with the communities that are sending sisters. I think it's important that we talk. I don't know their expectations, they don't know my expectations. If we could work together and blend it, it would be more beneficial to these sisters.*

Along with improving the lines of communication, the U.S. religious institutes also recommend that the sending religious institutes communicate frequently with the sisters they have sent to the United States:

*I would say definitely to keep in close touch with them and I really don't know that they don't do that. Every once in a while they'll share that they heard from their mother superior or I'll get a letter periodically from the different mother superiors. I would think that the sisters in leadership would talk to the sisters coming back to the home country*

*from study to let them know that it will be a challenge to be away from community. But, like in our situation they become part of our community, so hopefully that bridges a big gap.*

### **For Sponsoring Religious Institutes**

The major superiors of U.S. religious institutes spoke highly in favor of encouraging other U.S. religious institutes to welcome international sister students to live with them. Some comments are as follows:

*I certainly would encourage it. It's been just a hugely positive experience for us. We can afford it, we're blessed financially and currently, we have room now. I certainly think that it's such a mutual benefit. We have benefitted our sisters here. They've tutored, they've read papers, they've edited, and they've talked to the college instructors. It's just been a very wonderfully mutual benefit for us and we're happy to do that for the individual women and for their communities and for the church, so we have no qualms, no regrets, no bad experiences, it's been really just very fine.*

*I would say to them don't be afraid. We have had no regrets, no regrets at all. For me I have been very happy and our sisters are welcoming them, they love them, they are happy to help them and we are happy for that too. It gives our older sisters meanings. Every day they get up and they know they have to go to class and they are going to teach these sisters one to one. And that is very good for them. I would say to any welcoming community, "Don't be afraid." Just the first month serve them rice, vegetables, fruit and tea and then they will learn.*

## **Part X: International Sister Students in the United States: A Case Study of Religious Institutes in Vietnam**

CARA contacted the Office of Religious Life in Vietnam for the list of religious institutes currently present in Vietnam. There are 150 institutes of women religious present in Vietnam, of which eight are contemplative. Because contemplative religious institutes do not send their members to study in the United States, CARA contacted the major superiors of the 142 religious institutes who are active and therefore could send their members to study in the United States.

After repeated follow-up, CARA received 89 responses from religious institutes of women, for a 63 percent response rate, of which 46 institutes are diocesan and 43 are pontifical. Among the 89 responding religious institutes, 39 completed the survey and the other 50 refused, explaining that they either did not have any members currently studying in the United States or their members studying in the United States have not yet returned or are newly returned. Thus, these 50 institutes reported that they did not have any experience of sisters returning after they completed their studies in the United States.

The responses to the survey were made in Vietnamese. Thus the quotes used in this section were translated into English by the researcher.

### **Perceptions of Study Abroad**

When asked about their expectations for sisters studying abroad, and in the United States in particular, the majority of Vietnamese major superiors believe that sending their members to study in the United States will enable those sisters to broaden their knowledge of the intellectual, religious, and church life in the current socio-cultural context and to develop their professional and leadership skills; thus making better contributions to the life and ministry of the religious institutes. Some of their responses include:

*Study abroad among religious sisters in Vietnam is not difficult nowadays. Broadening knowledge and vision and learning in developed countries is essential these days. Sending the sisters to study abroad is considered an opportunity to develop human resources for the religious institutes. The sisters returning from study abroad contribute significantly to the religious institute, not only through their professional experiences and skills but also they help the religious institute have a broader vision about our ministry and religious life.*

*Study abroad should be encouraged. Modern equipped facilities and seasoned professors abroad are lacking among colleges and universities in Vietnam. Therefore, sending our sisters to study abroad is a good opportunity for us to open our vision because our sisters after they return, will share what they learn and their experiences with other sisters in our community, together helping us enhance our religious life and other pastoral areas.*

*We want to send our sisters to study abroad, especially in the United States, because our sisters will have the opportunity to learn new knowledge and new ideas to develop our community. We hope that when the sisters return, they will contribute their new ideas and*

*knowledge to help with our community's development. We encourage our sisters to choose majors consistent with their talents, so that after completing their studies the sisters will return and improve our religious and ministry life.*

In addition to contributing their expertise and knowledge to the religious institutes, the Vietnamese major superiors believe that their sisters studying abroad develop networks within the colleges and universities where they study and with the other religious institutes and organizations they get to know, becoming a bridge to connect the church in Vietnam and other churches in the world. Some of their responses include:

*The sisters studying abroad create networks and contacts that connect the Vietnamese Church and the Church in Europe or America.*

*The sisters studying abroad help our community to develop connections that enable our community to enhance our sisters' education. For example, these sisters could learn about and request scholarships for other sisters in our community to study abroad.*

### **Positive Experiences with Sisters Returning after Studying in the United States**

The Vietnam major superiors that have already had sisters return after studying in the United States share positive experiences about those sisters. Some of these positive experiences are: Love for their community, openness, sense of responsibility, confidence, independence, strong collaboration, English speaking skills, creativity, good professional skills and experience. Below are some examples:

*The sisters come back with broader knowledge and have a sense of responsibility for their assigned tasks. They are humble, mature, and joyful in their assigned apostolic works. The sisters are assigned to take leadership roles in the congregation according to their talents and abilities.*

*The sisters are open in communication, active in ministry, and have a broader vision. Some of sisters minister in formation for postulants, teaching them courses that are in the majors they pursued in the United States.*

*The two sisters who returned after study in the United States minister well because they minister in the areas that they studied in the United States. The sisters are joyful, obedient, and serve at their best. They live harmoniously with other sisters in the community. They are faithful to their religious life, complying with their congregation's rules and regulations.*

*With their knowledge and the experiences they received as a result of studying in the United States and having the opportunity to interact and live in the U.S. modern society, the sisters have a deeper faith life, helping them be more mature in their religious vocation. The sisters have selectively introduced the skills and experiences they learned to enhance the congregation's life and ministry. In addition, thanks to their life experience with the U.S. sisters, the sisters introduced some organizational and living*

*ways from the U.S. community to the congregation, which diversify our life experiences.*

*The sisters live in harmony with the community life with open hearts, and they easily collaborate with others. They love and actively build up the community life. The sisters are humble in interacting with the community and in receiving assignments that may not be their expertise. The sisters are passionate about sharing their new knowledge with other sisters, especially the learning and teaching methods they learned in the United States with their hope that these will enhance the community.*

*I see that the sisters have made contributions to the community in many areas. The sisters recommend other sisters to be active, and courageously voice their ideas honestly. The sisters are willing and open to share their knowledge, experiences, and skills with others as well as encourage them to receive those new ideas.*

### **Negative Experiences with Sisters Returning after Studying in the United States**

When asked to share any negative experiences related to the sisters returning from studying in the United States, the major superiors report few negative experiences, although some major superiors relate behaviors that may be considered negative. These behaviors include the difficulty of adjusting to community life, being too open, over-confidence, tending to ministry outside the community, unnecessary communication, and difficulty in accepting regulations. Their responses include:

*Being influenced by the U.S. culture, the sisters find it difficult accept other viewpoints from the Vietnamese culture.*

*Sometimes, the sisters think and act “too openly,” like those of the western culture.*

*The sisters are over confident in their abilities.*

*Once they study abroad, the sisters have a tendency to seek ministry outside the community. They become likely to lose their religious identity.*

*These sisters are able to minister well in their expertise, but they have too much unnecessary communication.*

*The sisters are not patient with the progress of other sisters and some have difficulty in accepting the house rules and regulations.*

### **Concerns about Sending Sisters to Study in the United States**

The major superiors in Vietnam reported several concerns about sending their sisters to study in the United States. The most common concern that the majority of the major superiors shared include concerns about the sisters’ religious vocation while away from the community. They are challenged to find a sister who is mature enough to live her religious life away from her community. Some of their responses include:



*There are many challenges to sending the sisters to study in the United States. Our greatest challenge is our sisters' religious life. The sister enters the community to become a sister, not an expert. We want to train a sister, not a doctor. The current social trend may negatively influence her, leading her far from our charism and tradition. Our hope is that the sisters stay in a religious community while studying in the United States.*

*We are concerned about our sisters' religious life while they study in the United States. We are afraid that our sisters do not become a witness on campus and in a religious community. They may be overwhelmed by culture shock without our close support. We are also afraid that our sisters could not keep up with their studies.*

*Our challenge is to find a mature sister who is able to study and overcome challenges in religious life far from home, to find one who is spiritual and mature in her emotional and psychological life, and who loves the community.*

*Our biggest challenge is that when we send our sisters to study in the United States, we are afraid that our sisters will ignore their spiritual and religious life, lose their religious identity and have difficulty in adjusting to the community life.*

Some other concerns expressed by the major superiors include living environment and finances. Some of their responses include:

*Our biggest concern is to seek a safe living environment so that she can maintain her religious life and study well.*

*If we cannot find scholarships for our sisters, we are not able to provide finances for them to study abroad.*

### **Advanced Education Abroad or in Home Country**

Given both the benefits and concerns of sending their sisters to study abroad, the majority of major superiors in Vietnam are still willing to send their sisters to study abroad. They believe that study abroad brings many benefits, both for the congregation and the sisters who are sent to study abroad. The benefit mentioned most was their positive experiences with the sisters studying abroad and their perceptions of study abroad. The major superiors also recommend that superiors should select carefully the sisters sent to abroad.

Discussing how they choose majors to recommend to their sisters who are studying, the major superiors report that they recommend majors that fit the charism and apostolic work of their congregation, as well as the interest and the talents of the sending sisters. Some of their responses include:

*I recommend to other major superiors that they should select and should send their sisters to study abroad, despite the challenges. In the long run, study abroad will benefit both the congregation and the sisters who study abroad. I recommend to other major*

*superiors that they help their sisters select programs and majors that are helpful for the consecrated life, such as psychology, spirituality, biblical studies, theology, or majors related to the apostolic work of the congregation.*

*If a scholarship is available, I would recommend study abroad as it brings benefits for the congregation. Although study abroad has many challenges in language and culture, it will bring benefits for the congregation, including learning methodology, self-study, high intellectual demand, and others.*

*I think our sister who study abroad should pursue majors that are not available in Vietnam or that will enhance their expertise. Other majors that are available at home, such as kindergarten education, music, or dancing, can best be pursued locally so that the sisters can remain in their congregation.*

*If there are opportunities to study abroad, the congregation should send their sisters to study abroad. However, the congregation should select sisters, who are emotionally mature and not attracted to material comforts.*

*In my opinion, it is beneficial for sisters to study abroad. Study abroad is challenging, not only in language, culture, and custom but also in ways of thinking. However, study abroad will help our sisters widen their knowledge and vision in new and positive ways, thus contributing to the development and ongoing formation of the congregation.*

**Appendix I: Questionnaire with Response Frequencies**



# International Women Religious Studying in the United States

This survey asks you about your life and study experience in the United States. Please be assured that your responses are completely anonymous. If a question does not apply to you, please leave it blank. N= 285

1. Where are you currently studying? **NR=4**

- 85 <sub>1</sub> Catholic college/university
- 8 <sub>2</sub> A non-Catholic college/university
- 6 <sub>3</sub> Other: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Are you currently studying English as a Second Language?

- 53 Yes<sub>1</sub> 47 No<sub>2</sub> **NR=5**

3. Which degree are you currently or planning to pursue?

**NR=4**

- 10 <sub>1</sub> Associate degree
- 46 <sub>2</sub> Bachelor's degree
- 33 <sub>3</sub> Master's degree
- 6 <sub>4</sub> Doctoral degree
- 5 <sub>5</sub> Other: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Which program are you currently or planning to enroll?

**NR=5**

- <1 <sub>1</sub> Communication
- 15 <sub>2</sub> Education
- 6 <sub>3</sub> Nursing
- 10 <sub>4</sub> Psychology
- 12 <sub>5</sub> Religious Studies
- 38 <sub>6</sub> Theology
- 16 <sub>7</sub> Other: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Who currently provides you with finance(s) for tuition to study in the United States? *Check all that apply.*

- 22 <sub>1</sub> My own congregation
- 67 <sub>2</sub> The college/university where I am studying
- 15 <sub>3</sub> A religious congregation in the United States
- 7 <sub>4</sub> Other: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Who currently provides you with room and board while you study in the United States? *Check all that apply.*

- 15 <sub>1</sub> My own congregation
- 34 <sub>2</sub> The college/university where I am studying
- 19 <sub>3</sub> A religious congregation in the United States
- 3 <sub>4</sub> Other: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Did you study at another Catholic college(s) in the U.S. before you began the current one? 84 Yes 16 No **NR=5**

- 7a. *If yes*, did the college(s) provide scholarship for you?  
84 Yes 16 No

## Experiences on Campus

8. What is your usual mode of dress when you are on campus?

**NR=7**

- 63 <sub>1</sub> Full habit (your congregation's habit)
- 10 <sub>2</sub> Modified habit (shirt and veil)
- 8 <sub>3</sub> Religious symbol
- 19 <sub>4</sub> No habit
- <1 <sub>5</sub> Other: \_\_\_\_\_

9. How do you travel to campus? *Check all that apply.*

- 51 <sub>1</sub> I walk or bicycle
- 18 <sub>2</sub> I drive
- 11 <sub>3</sub> The sisters in my community gives me a ride to college
- 19 <sub>4</sub> I take public transport (metro, bus, university shuttle)
- 4 <sub>5</sub> Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please use these responses for items 10-22:**

- 1=Not at All/Never
- 2=Seldom/Occasionally
- 3=Periodically/Regularly
- 4=Frequently/Always

*Since you begin your college studies in the United States, how often do you do the following on campus?*

**1 2 3 4 NR**

- 13 11 19 57 **27** 10. Attend Mass on campus
- 18 19 20 42 **33** 11. Attend prayer services on campus
- 7 26 33 33 **29** 12. Attend workshops/events hosted by the college/university
- 21 22 28 29 **40** 13. Participate in campus ministry activities
- 21 29 24 27 **39** 14. Participate in student organizations
- 11 37 29 23 **34** 15. Participate in cultural events
- 20 34 29 17 **40** 16. Participate in informal social activities with students (e.g. picnic, a meal, birthday)
- 4 21 43 32 **28** 17. Talk about faith and religion with others on campus
- 8 31 39 21 **33** 18. Have conversations with people whose religious beliefs are other than my own
- 7 30 40 24 **31** 19. Talk about religious vocation with others on campus
- 24 41 30 6 **36** 20. Invite others to have a meal with me
- 20 36 34 10 **40** 21. Invite others to spiritual activities with me
- 17 37 37 9 **49** 22. Invite others to visit the community with whom I am staying (if applicable)

**Please use these responses for items 23-28:**

- 1=Do not plan to do
- 2=Consider doing
- 3=Plan to do
- 4=Done or in progress

*Which of the following have you done or do you plan to do before you graduate?*

**1 2 3 4 NR**

- 22 26 29 23 **41** 23. Participate in an internship or field experience
- 51 28 10 11 **49** 24. Hold a formal leadership role in a student organization or group
- 29 34 26 12 **43** 25. Work with a faculty member on a research project
- 30 34 20 17 **44** 26. Co-ordinate faith-related activities (e.g., faith sharing group, prayer service, CLC group)
- 7 19 31 42 **38** 27. Participate in community service/volunteer activities
- 34 33 20 12 **44** 28. Co-ordinate ethnic/cultural programs (e.g., international students group, festivals, international week)

**Please use these responses for items 29-38:**

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Somewhat Disagree  
3=Somewhat Agree 4=Strongly Agree

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: I find it challenging to ...

**1 2 3 4 NR**

- 9 28 47 16 **9** 29. Understand the American educational system
- 18 21 41 20 **12** 30. Choose a major
- 29 23 27 22 **8** 31. Interact with my professors
- 15 27 43 16 **8** 32. Understand classroom lectures
- 13 22 38 28 **9** 33. Participate in academic discussions
- 15 26 35 24 **8** 34. Engage in group work with my classmates
- 23 24 30 22 **11** 35. Access academic services (proof-reading)
- 17 27 32 23 **8** 36. Have relationships with other students
- 13 27 27 33 **9** 37. Complete class assignments
- 12 28 42 18 **10** 38. Understand the cultures on campus

**Communication with Home**

**Yes No NR**

- 42 58 **7** 39. Do you have family members or relatives in the United States?
- 50 50 **7** 40. Does your congregation have a province or community based in the United States?
- 89 11 **7** 41. Do other sisters in your congregation study or minister in the United States?

**Life Experiences in the United States**

Since you arrived in the United States, who provides these services to you? Check all that apply. Please select "Did not need" if you had no need for this service.

	Not Provided	My Congregation	Another Religious Congregation	Parish/Diocese	College/University	Someone Else	Did not need
47. Academic resources	1	26	17	2	59	11	<1
48. Acculturation training	7	12	28	2	37	14	10
49. Finance for personal expenses	6	49	15	0	12	23	1
50. Health insurance	15	23	14	1	31	7	1
51. Housing	1	15	41	2	32	3	1
52. Language acquisition	3	11	23	<1	52	11	11
53. Legal services	6	13	17	2	42	6	10
54. Mentoring support	5	28	20	1	33	13	7
55. Spiritual support	3	40	28	5	31	16	1

56. Please describe any other services you needed when you first arrived that were not provided.

**Yes No NR**

- 43 57 **13** 42. Have you ever visited your family in your home country since you began your study in the United States?
- 42a. *If yes*, when did you first visit your family after you arrived in the United States?  
21 After 1 year or earlier 12 After 2 years  
36 After 3 or 4 years 11 After 5 years  
9 After 6 years or more
- 43. How do you communicate with people in your home country? *Check all that apply.*  
59 Email 66 Phone  
15 Mailing letters 66 Social media (e.g., Facebook)  
0 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please use these responses for items 44-46:**

1=Seldom or never 2=A few times a year  
3=About once a month 4=Two or three times a month  
5=Once a week 6=More than once a week

**1 2 3 4 5 6 NR**

- <1 13 21 24 29 12 **12** 44. How often do you contact your parents or other relatives in your home country?
- 2 37 30 22 6 3 **15** 45. How often do you contact your religious superior in your home country?
- 1 33 20 26 9 12 **14** 46. How often do you contact your religious sisters in your home country?

**Please use these responses for items 57-60:**

1=Not at All            3=Somewhat  
2=Only a Little        4=Very Much

*How much did you know about the following before you entered the United States?*

**1 2 3 4 NR**

- 10 46 30 14 **11** 57. English language  
32 46 18 3 **12** 58. American culture  
32 43 21 4 **11** 59. Religious life in the United States  
28 47 2 4 **12** 60. Catholic Church in the United States

**Please use these responses for items 61-96:**

1=Not at All            2=Only a Little  
3=Somewhat            4=Very Much

*How satisfied are you with these aspects of your life in the United States?*

**1 2 3 4 NR**

- 1 4 23 72 **10** 61. My life as a woman religious  
<1 11 45 42 **10** 62. The friendships I have made in the U.S.  
3 6 24 67 **12** 63. My housing arrangement  
<1 13 49 38 **12** 64. The food  
3 10 30 48 **12** 65. My health care  
4 15 34 47 **13** 66. My transportation  
7 19 34 34 **13** 67. My financial support  
3 21 31 45 **12** 68. Someone available for help if I need it  
3 14 34 48 **12** 69. Opportunities to meet in person with other religious living in the United States  
2 3 20 75 **11** 70. The prayer life in my local house  
<1 <1 6 93 **11** 71. Availability of daily Eucharist  
1 8 25 66 **12** 72. The spiritual support I receive from my local house  
15 16 32 37 **13** 73. Availability of retreats in my preferred language

**1 2 3 4 NR**

- 4 14 42 40 **12** 74. The balance of work and leisure in my life in the United States  
2 10 25 62 **12** 75. Academic resources available for my study

*How satisfied are you with the support you receive from these people?*

**1 2 3 4 NR**

- 3 10 28 59 **16** 76. My religious superior in my home country  
3 11 33 53 **16** 77. My religious sisters in my home country  
2 6 17 75 **14** 78. My family members  
6 17 38 39 **14** 79. My friends in my home country  
8 6 27 59 **21** 80. The religious superior in the United States  
4 6 29 62 **15** 81. The sisters of the community that I am currently living with  
7 15 41 37 **15** 82. My friends in the United States  
7 12 32 50 **17** 83. The sisters of my community who are studying/ministering in the United States  
8 12 32 50 **15** 84. Religious friends outside my congregation in the United States  
28 24 31 17 **18** 85. The bishop and priests in the diocese where I am studying  
9 21 38 32 **16** 86. People from my home country who live here

*How much of a concern is each of these to you personally?*

**1 2 3 4 NR**

- 48 28 14 9 **14** 87. Chronic illness  
16 39 32 13 **14** 88. Anxiety/stress  
29 27 28 17 **16** 89. Sense of belonging  
10 38 38 14 **13** 90. Tiredness  
37 38 18 7 **15** 91. Depression  
96 1 1 1 **17** 92. Alcohol or drug use  
41 43 11 6 **14** 93. Loneliness/isolation  
24 33 32 11 **14** 94. Overwork  
50 31 13 6 **14** 95. Weight issues  
20 20 35 26 **15** 96. Ability to participate in the life of my congregation

97. Which of these describes your current living situation? *Check only one response.* **NR=10**

- 4 <sub>1</sub> I live alone  
17 <sub>2</sub> I live with other sisters of my congregation  
29 <sub>3</sub> I live with other sisters of another congregation  
41 <sub>4</sub> I live with other sisters of both my congregation and another congregation  
9 <sub>5</sub> I live with both religious sisters and lay persons/students  
<1 <sub>6</sub> I live with lay people/family  
<1 <sub>7</sub> Other: \_\_\_\_\_

98. Which of these describes your current housing arrangement? *Check only one response.* **NR=11**

- 6 <sub>1</sub> I live in a parish/diocese convent
- 7 <sub>2</sub> I live in a house owned by my congregation
- 51 <sub>3</sub> I live in a house owned by another congregation
- 27 <sub>4</sub> I live on campus in an apartment/house owned by the college/university
- 8 <sub>5</sub> I live on campus in a student residence hall
- <1 <sub>6</sub> I live in a house of a hosted family
- 2 <sub>7</sub> Other: \_\_\_\_\_

99. If you are staying with a religious community, how did you get to know this community? *Check only one response.* **NR=30**

- 9 <sub>1</sub> This community belongs to my province/congregation
- 9 <sub>2</sub> The college/university where I am currently studying introduced it to me
- 11 <sub>3</sub> Sister(s) at the college/university introduced it to me
- 21 <sub>4</sub> This community is the sponsoring congregation of the college/university where I am studying
- 19 <sub>5</sub> An organization assisting my study in the United States requested it for me
- 19 <sub>6</sub> A priest or friend requested room and board to this community for me
- 13 <sub>7</sub> Other: \_\_\_\_\_

100. With how many sisters do you live? **NR=32**

- 3 <sub>1</sub> No other sisters      4 <sub>2</sub> With another sister
- 12 <sub>3</sub> With 2 or 3 sisters      12 <sub>4</sub> With 4 to 8 sisters
- 14 <sub>4</sub> With 9 to 15 sisters      16 <sub>6</sub> With 16 to 25 sisters
- 20 <sub>7</sub> With 26 to 50 sisters      20 <sub>8</sub> With 51 sisters or more

101. Which occasions do you share your own culture with the community you are staying? *Check all that apply.*

- 40 <sub>1</sub> Christmas      35 <sub>2</sub> Eucharistic liturgy
- 46 <sub>2</sub> New Year      25 <sub>4</sub> Congregation's celebration
- 26 <sub>5</sub> Daily prayer
- 37 <sub>6</sub> Your own national holiday (New Year, festival)
- 11 <sub>7</sub> Other: \_\_\_\_\_

102. Which of the following ministries have you been involved in while you are in the United States? *Check all that apply.*

- 23 <sub>1</sub> Parish ministry
- 10 <sub>2</sub> Vocational ministry for your community
- 3 <sub>3</sub> Prison ministry
- 14 <sub>4</sub> Soup kitchen ministry
- 9 <sub>5</sub> Spiritual direction
- 9 <sub>6</sub> Ministry to my ethnic/cultural group
- 21 <sub>7</sub> Campus ministry on campus
- 4 <sub>8</sub> Diocesan ministry
- 14 <sub>9</sub> Other: \_\_\_\_\_

113. Please indicate your current level of proficiency in English

	None or Limited	Minimum Proficiency	Fluent or Native
a. Comprehension	17	58	25
b. Speaking	19	59	22
c. Writing	20	59	21

**NR=12**

**NR=12**

**NR=16**

**About you**

- AVG=1979 **NR=17** 103. Year you was born
- AVG=1999 **NR=15** 104. Year you entered religious life
- AVG=2004 **NR=16** 105. Year you professed your first vow
- AVG=2010 **NR=23** 106. Year you (expect to) profess perpetual vows
- AVG=2013 **NR=17** 107. Year you first went to study in the U.S.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 108. What is your country of origin?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 109. What is your native language?

**Yes No NR**

- 83 17 **15** 110. Do all members of your religious community wear a full habit (traditional habit)?

111. Which of these best describes your primary ethnicity/cultural background? *Check only one response.*

- NR=13**
- 2 <sub>1</sub> European/Canadian/Australian
- 22 <sub>2</sub> African/Afro-Caribbean
- 6 <sub>3</sub> Latin American/Mexican
- 70 <sub>4</sub> Asian/Pacific Islander
- <1 <sub>5</sub> Other: \_\_\_\_\_

112. Which of these describes your current legal status?

- Check only one response.* **NR=15**
- 2 U.S. citizen      10 Green card
- 7 R1 religious worker visa      81 F1 student visa
- 0 B1/B2 tourist visa      <1 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

114. What are your future plans? *Check all that apply.*
- 21 <sub>1</sub>To apply for an advanced degree in the United States
  - 45 <sub>2</sub>To return to my home country after completing studies
  - 1 <sub>3</sub>To stay in the United States permanently
  - 4 <sub>4</sub>To stay in the United States to do ministry temporarily
  - 35 <sub>5</sub>I do not know. My future plans are determined by my religious superior
  - 2 <sub>6</sub>Other: \_\_\_\_\_

115. Overall, how would you evaluate your entire education and life experience in the United States? **NR=12**  
 0 Poor    12 Fair    69 Good    19 Excellent

<p>116. What has been your most positive experience since you arrived in the United States? <b>Response=214</b></p>	<p>117. What has been your most negative experience since you arrived in the United States? <b>Response=117</b></p>
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## **Appendix II: Responses to Open-ended Comments**

**Q. 116: What has been your most positive experience since you arrived in the United States?**

*Academic improvement*

*Adaptation of culture differences*

*All I meet - sisters, religious brothers, professors and friends are willing to assist when in need*

*Always I am encouraged to overcome difficulties, which makes me always want to learn from others.*

*Always receive assistance when in need*

*Always study*

*American culture*

*American culture: getting in line and wait for organize*

*American people are very friendly and willing to help*

*American people are very helpful and friendly if we need their help*

*American people are very on time*

*American Sisters are very generous and willing to support me*

*Americans are generous.*

*Americans are good*

*Americans treat people with dignity and respect, and the hospitality and generosity of Americans, especially American religious sisters & the church*

*Appreciation of performance good concern about how I am going on, encouragement*

*Assistance of professors in campus- friendly and caring*

*At the first place where I started my education, I felt homesick and wanted to give up everything. However all DWC brothers and priests encouraged me whenever I was down or sympathized whenever I were sad.*

*Awareness about diversity*

*Be stronger and more confident; learn more everyday*

*Being allocated a "sister to sister" to journey with me and provide some basic scholastic and personal needs*

*Better environment for studying English than in Vietnam*

*Better environment for studying English than in Vietnam*

*Broadening my knowledge and learning from class sittings, interaction with other cultures, vast library*

*Change in ways of seeing things and practice critical thinking*

*Clean living environment; have opportunity of learn scientific knowledge and culture*

*Clearly see that I am loved*

*Community life of American Sisters*

*Creativity especially in religious communities*

*Diverse experiences about different cultural, religious, and people.*

*Diversity and "freedom to speech"*

*Education*

*Education, freedom, comfortable*

*Efficiency in planning and organizing*

*Enculturation*

*Enrich more knowledge and culture; experiences deeply the Eucharist; Widen vision of education*

*Everybody has love and support of one another*

*Example of religious life of priests, religious brothers, and aging sisters: Generosity, willingness to assist.*

*Experiences of community life and ministry of American Sisters. They give me optimism and practicality in what they live and serve*

*Exposure to Multi-cultural issues among people of different origins.*

*Feel helped, welcome, and supported from the school and friends*

*Freedom*

*Freedom*

*Freedom respect individuals*

*Freedom to register for class, receiving positive assistance from professors*

*Friendliness of American Sisters*

*Friendliness of American Sisters*

*Friendliness of those whom I come into contact*

*Friendliness, generosity of the sisters and professors; professors are very supportive; access to all materials needed for school*

*Friendliness, politeness of Americans*

*Friendship, respect for others*

*Generally, I have been respected as a foreigner.*

*Generosity*

*Generosity of American sisters and American people*

*Generosity of priests, sisters, and people in the United States*

*Get more knowledge; open my mind from their lives*

*Getting along*

*Good learning resources*

*Good quality education and never to give up*

*Good studying condition. American people are very generous and friendly*

*Harmonious and friendly living*

*Have a good learning environment*

*Have a lot of resources to study and is assisted by many people*

*Have daily mass when I take class on campus (I am an online student)*

*Have opportunities for self-development*

*Have opportunity to learn about the U.S., people, culture, especially meeting with many people of different culture, class, jobs, and experiences*

*Have opportunity to listen, read, and speak English with American people*

*Have opportunities to learn culture, language, and knowledge. Understand religious life in the United States*

*Have opportunities to learn, understand more*

*Have opportunities to religious life and culture in the United States*

*Have resources to study*

*High technology used in studies*

*Hospitable community, friendly environment*

*I am assisted by many people even though I don't know them*

*I am very welcome by others.*

*I can share with Native American and that is very great*

*I can study with many foreigners*

*I do not understand this question.*

*I feel respected when I work on paperwork; fairly in line*

*I feel that I'm in an atmosphere of brotherhood, I have felt at home, whenever I have needed help I have obtained it*

*I had a nice experiences in the US as culture, friendship and so forth.*

*I have a good college to study*

*I have learned a lot about the Education system of U.S. I learned how to manage my life more independent and mature in way of living religious life.*

*I have to solve everything by myself. By doing so, I feel stronger than before.*

*I learned a lot of different things that I cannot learn in my court. I did not feel that I am alone at here. I got a lot of support and help from my friends, community and school.*

*I live in Indianapolis. I never been in any other states. I could found here very good people filled with good faith and friendly.*

*I met a lot of generous and friendly people, including Americans and Vietnamese*

*I met some good friends here, even though some of them came from South America*

*I receive support and assistance from American religious congregations where I am living and the school I am studying*

*I stay here like staying at home.*

*I study and live in a religious community's environment, thus are shared and nourished both study and spiritual life*

*I was surprised by the welcome*

*Improving my English and knowing more about American culture*

*In America I find the system of education is quite different from my country. Here the technology is very good.*

*In America I find the system of education is quite different from my country. Here the technology is very high.*

*Increasing my faith in religious life and sharing the joy in the community life, meeting new friends in the U.S.*

*Independence in study, work, and life*

*Independence, responsibility; Learn more about knowledge, culture, and people*

*Independence; having opportunity to explore and widen talents hidden inside*

*Independent people*

*Individuality and indifference of some people here*

*Intercultural; Faith sharing*

*Inter-culture*

*Interesting my faith in religious life and sharing in the community life. Meeting new friends in the U.S.*

*Joy and harmony of a religious sister helps me to interact with friends, professors, and others*

*Knowing new people, different cultures*

*Learn a new culture; make many new friends*

*Learn about culture*

*Learn about culture and religious life in the U.S.; modern life*

*Learn about culture, enculturation, and adaptation to culture*

*Learn a lot about beautiful culture and life and delicate behavior of American people and religious priests and brothers*

*Learn and enrich knowledge and life experiences from professors, students, and friends*

*Learn culture from different countries; Learn culture and living environment in the U.S.; learn learning style and prayer life from religious sisters from other congregations and students on campus*

*Learn culture, language and people in the U.S.*

*Learn good things from education, Americans are friends, willing to help*

*Learn many experiences from student life, meet and work and study with others*

*Learn many new things: Religious life in the United States; culture; knowledge*

*Learn many things that I did not know before*

*Learn more knowledge and culture*

*Learn new good things from the Americans as well as living harmoniously with people from other countries*

*Learn new things, culture, and ways of working, new knowledge, dare to give opinions*

*Learn new U.S. culture*

*Learn other teaching methods and learn how to live with others of different cultures*

*Learn to be open and welcome others*

*Learn very much about American culture, and living environment I am in.*

*Learning about communication in almost everything.*

*Learning how to open my heart and respect others who're different levels, age, and culture*

*Life is secure*

*Live and work in group, Live and work independently*

*Live harmoniously and learn from one another. Help one another when in need*

*Live with sister in America.*

*Living in community from the same congregation*

*Living with my host community very joyful and kind hearted*

*Living with people of different culture and background has been positive because of the ability of understanding each other and the care and concern from the lay people*

*Lots of opportunities and support*

*Love and assistance of American Sisters*

*Many American are very kind. Religious orders are very generous, and willing to help in different ways*

*Mature in behaviors*

*Maturity, not relying on others; respect freedom of others*

*Meet and interact with others*

*Meet people from so many different cultures*

*Meeting friendly people, and people who are ready to help me in my studies*

*Method and learning environment*

*Multicultural*

*Multiculturalism*

*Multicultural experience*

*My most positive experience in USA is living with the religious community, which is Feliciano sister community*

*My positive experience here, the welcome of the sisters, the study and the good coexistence between us*

*Open mind; helpful; friendly; generousities*

*People are friendly*

*People are open and willing to help if need it*

*People are very calm*

*People are welcoming and ready to help when you need help.*

*People in the United States respect religious leaders and I am very grateful for that*

*People's concern towards to the religious sisters*

*Planning ahead and well organized institutions. Availability of resources*

*Professors always assist students in their studies when in need. Thus, students feel comfortable and confident in studies*

*Professors are very supportive*

*Racism*

*Receive good results in study*

*Relationship with lectures*

*Religious congregations of US and Vietnamese communities who have been so generous to me. Otherwise, I don't think I would be able to pursue my studies*

*Religious freedom and mutual respect*

*Religious Presence in the Parish*

*Respect individual and freedom*

*Respect others*

*Respect the difference and encourage for freedom and individual development*

*Respect the human person*

*Safe environment, life and people in the U.S.*

*Sense of welcoming and cheerfulness of the sisters with whom I am living.*

*Serving spirit of religious communities' superiors*

*Sharing life with American religious communities; Understand about culture and life of the Americans*

*Sharing, care, and assistance of American sisters and Vietnamese people*



*So far, I don't have any negative experience.*

*Spiritual & academic support, exposure to advanced technology in my study, opportunity to interact with other cultures, opportunity for self-expression.*

*Spiritual as well as academic guidance and support, attending various conferences in different parts of US*

*Spiritual life on campus, assistance in spirituality, patience of professors, teaching method in the U.S.*

*Study*

*Study the experiences the U.S. educational system and example of religious life of religious communities in the United States*

*Support from the university I attend and from my sisters in the US*

*Supports of the religious congregations which I have been living, of the professors and school*

*Teacher's support and encouragement have strengthened me to fulfil my study so far*

*Teaching is very good and good and resourceful books*

*The ability to connect with the right people enabled me to get this far in my studies. Mostly very supportive*

*The acceptance*

*The best experience is the possibility of broadening the feeling of fraternity among my sisters. Also, broadening my missionary horizons end this new reality.*

*The care I receive*

*The Christian Spirituality Program at Creighton University far exceeded my high expectations! Excellent program and wonderful faith community in which to live and study.*

*The concept of social justice, democracy, and individual freedom*

*The entire CSP program at Creighton University!*

*The generosity of our sponsors*

*The great quality of educational facilities and resources*

*The hospitality of the sisters I live with*

*The land of Opportunity.*

*The practical education given to the children. The good relationship and support from the citizens.*

*The sisters in the community with whom I live are so good and support.*

*The technical of education is different from my country here is better you get everything which will help in academic.*

*The United States is a great country with excellent education and cultural mixing that is easy to adapt to since we are all the melting pot here in the United States. American people are very warm, friendly, especially living in religious community. I feel at home. Students are very helpful.*

*The weather*

*The welcome of the sisters of my congregation*

*The welcoming of the religious congregation I live with as one of them though I belong to another congregation*

*To be able to access academic resources I would not access otherwise.*

*To learn a new language*

*To live in international sisters community, my English language growth*

*Vietnamese people in the U.S., generosity of American sisters*

*Warm welcome, hospitality, cooperation and time management.*

*Warm welcoming*

*When I was screamed at by a security man in the university*

**Q.117: What has been your most negative experience since you arrived in the United States?**

*90% students are Vietnamese, thus lack of opportunities to speak English and learning new things*

*A lack of encounters with religious, Spanish-speaking youths*

*Abortion is accepted in the United States*

*Adapt to new food and weather*

*Afraid of mistake when speaking English that others do not understand. Lack vocabulary to answer*

*Alien among the youth*

*Allot of stress when studying English in the beginning*

*American culture*

*American culture is very different from Vietnamese culture and difficult to adapt*

*American environment is over free. If not mature enough, it is easy to be tempted.*

*Anxiety about the 3rd year doctoral studies financial help*

*As a person who learned the second language, I do not feel I am listened, understood, empathized and supported by some natives.*

*Away from community back home*

*Be shy to give my opinions*

*Being despised because of my ethnicity*

*Being judged by the English accent you have.*

*Being misunderstood because of language*

*Climate change*

*Cold drinks and food*

*Cold, tornados, humidity*

*Culture*

*Culture shock, difference in language, culture, age*

*Culture shock; limited English*

*Daily culture shock*

*Deficiency in human relationship especially with regard to strangers*

*Difference in language*

*Difference in language*

*Difference in language, difficult in communication*

*Difficult to encounter religious life experiences as in Vietnam. Difficult to pray when using another language*

*Difficult to understand exactly what the Americans think about us because they live too individually. They don't care much about other emotion.*

*Difficult to understand foreigners*

*Difficult when being sick without health insurance*

*Difficult when unable to speak, listen, understand English in communication*

*Difficulty in community life and sisterhood*

*Difficulty in explaining when misunderstood (due to language, culture)*

*Difficulty in finance, thus having difficulty in registering for class and transference.*

*Difficulty in getting along with White Americans*

*Difficulty in language, miss family and community back home*

*Difficulty in language, not known to speak and not dare to take with other Americans. Hide myself*

*Difficulty in learning English*

*Difficulty to understand the culture in the first year, no chance to experience other areas of the country/town apart from the college,*

*Difficulty with American Sisters, who do not accept another member different from their congregations*

*Discrimination*

*Discrimination*

*Dislike American food*

*Do not understand what others say when shopping, at airports, hospitals*

*Don't have one.*

*Driver license understanding me. Business needing to get in formation does not understand my language.*

*Driver license understanding me. Business needing to get information from does not understand my language (English)*

*Enculturation*

*Feel helpless and self-depreciating with limitation of language*

*Feel helpless and self-depreciating with limitation of language*

*Food and culture take me a long time to adjust*

*Food.*

*Food.*

*Foods in some first years*

*Gossiping among students*

*Hard to learn the language*

*Have difficulty in adapting to food*

*Have little social life and little communication, thus having limitation over speaking English*

*Health insurance and the tuition for the college students*

*Health issue, stress because of study*

*Health problem*

*Hectic program with a lot of impute without time to internalizing them.*

*High rate of divorce, thus many single parents*

*High tuition fee, shock of language*

*Home sick.*

*Homeless people and racism*

*Homesick*

*I am homesick. I miss family, community, and country very much.*

*I am reluctant to communicate because of language and culture*

*I am sometimes tired and stressed because of many homework, assignments because of lack of English proficiency*

*I am still trying American foods, but I cannot or am not familiar with many kinds of food here*

*I cannot keep up with discussions in classroom*

*I do not understand this question.*

*I don't have*

*I had compulsory lessons in the University when the holy-mass was in the same Catholic university.*

*I haven't had negative experiences*

*I should pass my studying programs, so I sometimes get stressed about my grade. I cannot do the spiritual counseling. I need to share spiritual communication.*

*I sometimes find difficult to distinguish between a "true" or "false" praise by Americans. They smile with me, but behind that smile, it is opposite.*

*In the beginning, I could not understand and hear what Americans said, which made me sad and not want to continue*

*Individualism and racial attitudes*

*Individualism where the sense of my neighbor is not known by the majority*

*Invisible biases against people of color*

*Invisible racism in class*

*It is difficult to make friends with American students*

*It was very difficult to learn new language for me. Also the culture, food and weather is different.*

*It was very hard to learn new language for me. Also the culture and weather and food is different*

*It's been more than ten years since I came in USA. I cannot think of any negative experience. People are always good to us. God is good!*

*Lack of communal activities*

*Lack of confidence*

*Lack of confidence while speaking English*

*Lack of connection. Because of independence leads to lack of connection with others.*

*Lack of finances for daily upkeep as a student*

*Lack of interaction with locals*

*Lack of self confidence*

*Language*

*Language barrier*

*Language, weather*

*Language*

*Language has significant impact in study. If not prepared for language well, I will be limited in gaining knowledge*

*Language, homesick, take a lot of time to study, hard*

*Like in other countries. We are always reminded of the political conflicts, killings, and unrest. Americans are very independent and sometimes do not care about those that are struggling.*

*Limitation in language*

*Limitation of language has significant impact in life*

*Limitation of understanding when American people speak in their context; tension with homework and study*

*Limitation over language*

*Limitation over language*

*Limited health insurance*

*Little space in housing*

*Little space in housing*

*Live together with others sister Vietnams but different convent.*

*Losing my loved ones when I am far away from home, narrow concept of African continent*

*Loss of belongings in one religious life*

*Many rules*

*Missing my home food*

*Multiculturalism*

*My most negative experience is when the newly sworn in President talked about deporting people who are non-USA citizens. This makes me wonder whether USA citizens are not in other countries in the world*

*My speaking English is not fluently*

*None*

*Not a negative but a challenge I had to adjust in the use of technology most of the time.*

*Not adapt to food*

*Not depend on materials*

*Not knowing to drive*

*Not much, except too much cold and snow during winter.*

*Not understand English*

*Not understanding when they were speaking fast*

*Nothing*

*Over feed me*

*Overcome language*

*Over-freedom*

*Over-freedom*

*People wearing shorts even front of your parents, and to share one bed with dogs*

*Personal life*

*Personal safety*

*Processed food.*

*Racism*

*Racism*

*Racism from my own sisters and Abuse of their leadership positions.*

*Racism from my US friends, whom I am studying with. The way they look at me, smile at me, talk to me...*

*Sense of individualism*

*Since my studies are only in the summer, I have had to pay the cost of the student visa each year. That has been a minor challenge.*

*Some American people criticize me when I cannot eat American food*

*Some customs of culture surprise me in the beginning, e.g., Americans are very straightforward when talking*

*Some of culture is not the same from my country. But I become to accept it because I am here.*

*Some people not understanding culture differences between here and my own country*

*Sometimes discrimination; Felt isolated when not knowing language*

*Spend little time in speaking English with others*

*Stress to complete within two years*

*Stressful; private life*

*The difficulty to get a high TOEFL score to attend to Boston College.*



*The language barrier when I first arrived to the US*

*The negative political climate towards immigration*

*The school in the U.S. but 90% students are Vietnamese. Thus it is difficult to learn language and culture*

*The time limit in Eucharist celebration and prayer. Having much time for other thing and less for God.*

*The way of expressing each other is different here, and it causes misunderstanding of each other*

*There are so many rules and policies.*

*Too individualistic*

*Too many people overweight*

*Too much freedom*

*Too much freedom in every activity*

*Too much individual freedom*

*Transportation system is not good, so it is difficult to move around without a car.*

*Trump and his supporters*

*Unable to understand American culture and language*

*Very homesick of family and community during feast and holidays*

*Weather; culture - straight speaking*

*Weather*

*Weather*

*Weather is a challenge*

*When a security man at the university screamed at me*

*When Americans do have positive attitude about Vietnamese religious and Vietnamese people*

*When I first arrived here, I did not want to talk with people because my English was poor.*

*When I had a cold for 3 months*

*Winter scares me hence remains indoors*

*Winter season*

*Winter-cold*