

The 40th Session of the Student Body Senate

Florida International University

Miami, Florida

S.R. 04 027

Reinstating the I: Enhancing International Student Support Act

IN THE SENATE

March 25th, 2024

Senate President Pro-Tempore Tiara Campbell, Senate President Kaily LaChapelle, Senator Rhea Watkins, Senator Jordan-Ashley Brown, and Kenrick Brown introduced the following resolution, which was presented on the Senate floor

A RESOLUTION

To pledge support for the diverse international student community, aiming to address their often overlooked challenges, through initiatives such as advocating for better tuition rates and increased support services; To create a more inclusive and supportive campus environment; To call on university leadership and policymakers to recognize the value and potential of international students; and to foster empathy and understanding to ensure their success.

Be it enacted by the Senate of the Student Body at Florida International University assembled,

Whereas, at Florida International University is home to over 3,500 international students that come from over 140 countries,

Whereas, international students at Florida International University face challenges with campus life amenities, financial support and accessibility, and academic support and engagement due to a lack of and inadequately maintained resources at the Florida International University,

Whereas, Senate President Pro-Tempore Campbell addressed these concerns at the Student Government Association Strategic Listening Plan Town Hall to President Kenneth Jessell, Provost Elizabeth Bejar, and other high-level administration,

Whereas, the Senate organized an International Student Town Hall on February 9th, 2024, to offer a space for international students to voice and express their concerns and experiences,

Whereas, detailed notes were taken, documenting all things said during this town hall by Executive Administrator Natalie Martinez,

Whereas, the notes taken from the International Student Town Hall were sent to President Kenneth Jessell, Provost Elizabeth Bejar, Interim Vice President for Student Affairs Charlie Andrews, Assistant Vice President for the Division of Academic and Student Affairs Sanyo Matthew, Assistant Vice President for the Strategic Initiatives and Projects Valeria Stevenson, and Assistant Director for Operations in the Division of Academic and Student Affairs Damaris Valdes,

Whereas, the current food options at Florida International University are notably unhealthy, resulting in numerous international students experiencing significant health issues,

Whereas, the lack of diverse and nutritious food choices on campus fails to meet the dietary needs and preferences of the international student community,

Whereas, ensuring the availability of inclusive food options is imperative to accommodate the diverse dietary needs of our international student community,

Whereas, the incorporation of various international cuisines at the 8th Street Campus Kitchen on a regular basis will foster inclusivity and cater to the dietary preferences of international students,

Whereas, the incorporation of more on campus dining facilities that provide international cuisine with dietary preferences of international students,

Whereas, prioritizing international student housing is essential to foster a sense of belonging and security within the university community,

Whereas, the daunting requirements and burdens associated with off-campus housing render it unfeasible for many international students,

Whereas, allocating designated rooms or floors in the residence halls on campus for international students will enhance their sense of security and contribute to a more enriching college experience,

Whereas, international students have lacked academic support and engagement here at the Florida International University,

Whereas, many international students have been hindered from advancing in their degree pathway as a result of a delay in transferring credits obtained at overseas tertiary institutions,

Whereas, establishing academic advisors specializing in the needs of international students based on their geographical locations can enhance academic success and integration,

Whereas, the Student Government Association advocates for the establishment of academic advisors who can effectively support international students in navigating the process of transferring credits earned from overseas tertiary institutions, and other pressing academic issues faced that hinder integration,

Whereas, as of 2024, there is currently no designated faculty at Florida International University trained or specialized in addressing the unique needs and concerns of the international student community,

Whereas, dedicated faculty or peer advisors who offer holistic support encompassing emotional, social, and financial aspects are indispensable for the well-being of international students,

Whereas, the Student Government Association urges Florida International University to implement faculty or peer advisors for international students who are assigned to the students in the Panther Success Network similar to general academic advisors, honors advisors, pre-health advisors and etc.,

Whereas, the International Student and Scholar Services offers a welcome session that is mandatory for international students and is separate from the first year orientation,

Whereas, enhancing these sessions for international students by extending its duration and providing helpful resources such as career development, how to transfer credit obtained from tertiary overseas institutions, academic success coaching etc., can facilitate their integration and transition into the university community,

Whereas, career fairs primarily targeting American citizens fail to adequately support and educate international students in securing employment opportunities, necessitating the inclusion of employers willing to sponsor international students,

Whereas, the recruitment of employers at career fairs who are willing to sponsor international students can enhance the diversity and inclusivity of employment opportunities available to all students, thereby enriching the overall campus community and fostering global perspectives,

Whereas, the presence of such employers at career fairs not only provides valuable networking opportunities for international students but also promotes cultural exchange and understanding within the professional sphere,

Whereas, fostering partnerships with employers who support international student sponsorship aligns with the university's commitment to promoting global citizenship and preparing students for success in an increasingly interconnected world,

Whereas, many international students may lack familiarity with the processes involved in opening a bank account, filing taxes, and other financial matters prevalent in the American system, hindering their ability to navigate financial responsibilities effectively,

Whereas, the provision of financial literacy resources tailored to international students can empower them to manage their finances effectively during their academic tenure, promoting financial independence and stability,

Whereas, increasing scholarship opportunities can alleviate financial burdens and foster academic excellence among international students, enhancing their ability to pursue higher education without undue financial strain,

Whereas, in 2020 Florida voters approved incremental wage increases, which means the minimum wage will not officially be \$15 until 2026,

Whereas, the critical need to increase FIU student wages, particularly for international students, is paramount to alleviating financial strain and providing opportunities for sustainable income, thereby supporting their academic pursuits and overall well-being,

Whereas, the criteria for obtaining in-state tuition in the State of Florida as an “out of state” and international student has been deemed as a robust process,

Whereas, Florida International University should advocate for this process to be achievable by engaging in regular conversations with the FIU Board of Trustees, State University System Board of Governors, State Representatives, and Senators, thereby ensuring that a solution can

come into fruition, and international and out of state students can access affordable education without undue financial burden,

Whereas, improving the affordability and accessibility of FIU health insurance for international students is essential for their overall well-being and access to healthcare services,

Whereas, enhancing international student outreach in outside countries and offering resources for standardized test preparation can attract diverse talent and facilitate international student recruitment and integration,

Now, Therefore, the Student Government Association commits to continuing to center and support international students at FIU by establishing the International Student Committee as a permanent committee and working closely with the International Student Union to be able to continue to advocate for policies in this resolution,

Now, Therefore, the Student Government Association calls upon the Office of Business Services to work closely with FIU Administration and international students to:

- a. Establish at least one healthy food option that is catered to international cuisine, especially Caribbean, due to having no options
- b. Increase international food options at 8th street by having an “International Day” once a week

Now, Therefore, the Student Government Association will continue to advocate for international students to have priority housing due to limited space in coming years on campus,

Now, Therefore, the Student Government Association advocates for international student financial support and accessibility by increasing international student focused programs, organizations, and departments through funding, which will help with securing grants, donations, and sponsorship to allow for an increase in scholarships offered to international students

Now, Therefore, the Student Government Association continues to advocate for international student financial support by strongly advocating that the state of Florida and FIU continue to increase student wages to be more competitive and reasonable within the economy with rising inflation; on-campus jobs should be at least \$15 an hour,

Now, Therefore, the Student Government Association calls upon FIU to implement academic resources and accessibility by establishing both academic advisors and peer mentors specific for international students needs,

- a. Transfer credits
- b. Securing In-State tuition
- c. Financial literacy
- d. Navigating a new country

Now, Therefore, the Student Government Association prioritizes international student health and well-being by advocating to decrease insurance prices for international students, especially because it is a required purchase,

Now, Therefore, the Student Government Association urges the administration to recruit employers at career fairs who are willing to sponsor or hire international students for internships or jobs,

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved by the Senate, the Student Government Association will send a copy of this resolution to the FIU Division Leadership, the FIU Board of Trustees, State University System Board of Governors, to be able to utilize the concerns, comments, tragic experiences, and listed action items within this resolution to drive the implementation of helpful resources for international students at FIU.

Sources:

1. <https://iss.fiu.edu/#:~:text=We%20are%20glad%20you%20chose,proud%20to%20have%20you%20here!>

1. Alakaam, A. A. (2016). *International Students' Eating Habits and Food Practices in Colleges and Universities*. In K. Bista & C. Foster (Eds.), *Campus Support Services, Programs, and Policies for International Students* (pp. 99-118). IGI Global.

2. Poyrazli, S., & Grahame, K. M. (2007). *Barriers to adjustment: Needs of international students within a semi-urban campus community*. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 34(1), 28.

3. Saha, N. (2018). *International Students' Experiences With Academic Advising at a Mid-Western Public Research University* (Order No. 10871607). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses A&I; ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global; Social Science Premium Collection. (2059239073). <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/international-students-experiences-with-academic/docview/2059239073/se-2>

4. Zhao, C. M., Kuh, G. D., & Carini, R. M. (2005). *A comparison of international student and American student engagement in effective educational practices*. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 76(2), 209-231.

Senate Resolution Transmission Form

This resolution is presented by the Senate of the Student Body at Florida International University. It is presented by the Senate President Pro-Tempore and affixed with the signature of the Senate President. Both the Senate President and the Senate President Pro-Tempore affirm that the information presented below is accurate and that the resolution has successfully passed in the Senate of the Student Body. The resolution is presented on this day and at this hour for signature or veto.

<i>SR 04 027</i>			
Date Introduced:	<i>03/25/2024</i>		
Committees Assigned:	(1) Rules and Administration (2) International Students Ad-Hoc Committee		
Rules and Administration: <i>3/19/2024</i>	5 <i>For</i>	0 <i>Against</i>	0 <i>Abstaining</i>
International Students Ad-Hoc Committee: <i>3/14/2024</i>	5 <i>For</i>	0 <i>Against</i>	0 <i>Abstaining</i>
Vote on the Senate Floor: <i>3/25/2024</i>	19 <i>For</i>	1 <i>Against</i>	0 <i>Abstaining</i>
 <hr/> Signature of the Senate President		 <hr/> Signature of the Senate President Pro Tempore	

Presidential Signature of a Senate Resolution

On this day, at this time, and in this place, the Senate of the Student Body at Florida International University does hereby present this resolution to the desk of the President of the Student Body for signature or veto. The Senate has passed this resolution and all its accompaniments, in accordance with the Constitution and Statutes of the Student Government Association at Florida International University. It is presented in good faith, whereas the officers of the Senate have affixed their signatures to affirm that the resolution has followed due procedure and is valid. The Senate will await your decision.

SR 04 027



Kaily Lachapelle, Senate President



Tiara Campbell, Senate President Pro-Tempore



Karina Hernandez, Senate Floor Leader



Alexander P. Sutton, Student Body President

