



# EAST WEST CONNECTION

DIVISION OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AT BRYANT UNIVERSITY

SPRING 2021

## International Experiences @ Bryant



The team at Residential Life has helped make the transition back to campus easy for students, especially the many international students who returned early to complete the required 14-day quarantine period.



President Gittell made a point of hearing from students throughout the semester, including on this occasion in October outside of the Fisher Student Center, which marked his first 100 days as president of Bryant University.



Jay Amrien, MPAS, PAC (left), the founding director of the Bryant University PA Program, was among the first to receive a COVID-19 vaccination at Massachusetts General Hospital. An aggressive campus COVID testing strategy ultimately enabled Bryant to become one of the first schools in the U.S. to keep everyone safe on campus and finish the semester together.



International Education Week offered more than 16 programs and events, including late night programming that offered opportunities for community members to expand their cultural competency.

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## Bryant University

DIVISION OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

## Letter from the Vice President

Dear Friends,



**W**hile the year 2020 will be remembered for a world pandemic and unsettling politics, challenges in the U.S. will continue in 2021, even with vac-

cines and a new administration working hard to heal a divided nation. Both the pandemic and politics have profoundly affected international education. The Bryant community has met these challenges by placing the health and safety of the Bryant community as the top priority, making sure that our students, regardless of whether they are on campus or engaged remotely from overseas, are supported to meet their learning objectives.

Since Bryant's campus reopened in August, Dr. Ross Gittell, who became Bryant's 9th president in July, led the discussion on international education at the semester's first Bryant International Forum. Education leaders from four different continents gathered virtually to discuss the challenge of international education under the world pandemic (Page 4).

President Gittell's commitment to international education and Bryant's systematic efforts to support international students have been noticed by our international student leaders who interact with the Bryant administration through their involvement with the Bryant Senior Advisory Council (Page 5). Our international students also share their experiences in global learning and study abroad,

appreciating the values and opportunities of learning a foreign language and participating in cultural immersion overseas (Page 8).

I continue to be impressed by our international students' dedication for education and passion for learning under the challenges of this unprecedented world pandemic. Some international students who took the remote learning approach overseas have to get up in the middle of the night in order to participate in live class discussions via the Internet. With the support of our faculty and staff, our international students continue to overcome these difficulties, and some shared their experience during a student panel (Page 3).

Page 9 tells stories of two international students' journey to return home, illustrating the enormous challenges that international students are facing. The Division of International Affairs, through its various offices and programs, continues to maintain online engagement and provide guidance to our students concerning visa and travel policies as well as the logistics for their safe return to campus this spring.

The Global Scholar Story Series, designed to share faculty international stories and their pathway to achieve global academic success, continued with Dr. Kim's talk illustrating his path as a scholar from South Korea to Bryant (Page 7). With 23 years teaching and research at Bryant and now serving as a professor and chair of the Economic Department, Dr. Kim's international experience inspires our students, serving as a role model for our international students. Similarly, Professor Chen Zhang brought the latest AI theory and technology to

his class, preparing our students for the coming industrial revolution (Page 10).

The past semester has no doubt been a challenge for both our faculty and students alike, and even more so for our international students. However, like all previous pandemics or other disruptive world events that have impacted education, international education will return to normal because the fundamentals of American higher education remain strong. The current pandemic has taught us lessons in compassion, collaboration, and global connectedness and has reminded us the value and importance of face to face human interaction while advanced technologies have helped in sustaining learning and engagement through this COVID era;

I invite you to read this issue of "East-West Connection," and submit your ideas, comments, photographs regarding your international experience or international programs for future editions. I also invite you to participate in all upcoming international related programs, in person or online, that are designed to build a strong and diverse Bryant international community.

Vice President for International Affairs  
Charles J. Smiley Chair Professor

## Student Panel: Sharing Experiences of Engaging Remotely

**A**n unprecedented 2020 created an academic year unlike any other in recent history. Students attended classes remotely from locations scattered across the country and globe. **Emily Collins-Garcia**, Coordinator for International Student Integration, organized a student-led discussion to share experiences of engaging remotely during the fall of 2020. Moderated by **Miguelina Feris '21**, president of the International Student Organization, the forum was an opportunity to hear student perspectives about what has worked, and what hasn't, in this new era of online learning.

Students felt that the experience of learning remotely in the spring of 2020 prepared everyone for the fall semester. **Ullas Tadisetty '21** said that digital engagement and remote learning began to feel normal by the end of the fall. **Jordan Alan Smith '23** appreciated the required class discussion forums held on Blackboard, which helped students feel engaged and heard.

The panelists also discussed the challenges and difficulties. They agreed that attending classes in different time zones, engaging in hybrid class discussions remotely, and maintaining focus in a virtual learning environment posed hurdles. Balancing home and school life has become more challenging, as



Jordan Smith '23



Ullas Tadisetty '21

engaging remotely has altered family expectations as they study from home.

Several panelists emphasized the important role of the International Student Organization's (ISO) in keeping them engaged with campus. Some cited the planning this year's virtual i2i dance show as an instrumental experience in keeping them involved.

Many said they simply miss being on campus. Although technology makes maintaining connections easy, virtual relationships will never be the same as in person and it has been difficult for some to foster new bonds away from campus.

The students also offered advice to others who find themselves in similar remote learning situations. "Do not be afraid to speak up and let your professor know about technical difficulties or about engaging the remote learners," Feris said. "Do not hesitate to ask for help."

Bryant's robust support efforts stood out during the discussion. The Office of International Students and Scholars continues to host office hours for students every Tuesday and Thursday. Students can easily book online appointments with remote learning coaches and connect with staff at the Academic Center for Excellence. All resources of the Douglas and Judith Krupp Library remain accessible and students can chat directly with a Krupp librarian via its website. The Amica Center for Career Services holds virtual career fairs, and appointments with career coaches can be scheduled online.

## Bryant International Forum Brings Together Leaders from Bogota, Florence, Smithfield, and Zhuhai

International education leaders from universities on four continents joined the Bryant International Forum virtually to discuss their universities' reopening experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and the outlook for international educational exchanges beyond 2020. The conversation was timely as institutions pause and revamp many exchange programs until conditions can allow global travel to revitalize.

Dr. Ross Gittell, Ph.D., President of Bryant University, offered welcome remarks to the global audience, sharing Bryant's success in reopening and stressing Bryant's commitment to continue international education exchanges.

- **Dr. Hong Yang, Ph.D., Vice President for International Affairs, gave introductions and moderated the discussion. The distinguished panel included:**
- **Maria Carolina Serrano Ramirez, Director of International Relations, Universidad de La Sabana, Colombia**
- **Eny V. Di Iorio, Ph.D., Dean of Academic Development, Lorenzo de' Medici Institute, Italy**
- **Glenn Sulmasy, J.D., LL.M., Provost and Chief Academic Officer, Bryant University**
- **Daniel Borgia, Ph.D., Academic Dean, Bryant University Zhuhai, China**

"This was a very interesting webinar," said **Gaytha A. Langlois, Ph.D.,** Professor of Environmental Policy at Bryant University. "Having traveled in Bogota and in China made the discussions more poignant to me. I was particularly taken with the idea of turning fear into courage, and the caution for not referring to post-COVID times while the pandemic stays with us for some time to come."

The Bryant International Forum, sponsored by Bryant's Division of International Affairs, provides a platform for global leaders and experts to share and discuss global topics with members of the Bryant community and beyond.



Caption needs semicolons to read Clockwise from top left: Kongli Liu, Ed.M., Assistant to the Vice President for International Affairs; Daniel Borgia, Ph.D., Academic Dean, Bryant University Zhuhai; Hong Yang, Ph.D., Vice President for International Affairs; Glenn Sulmasy, J.D., LL.M., Provost and Chief Academic Officer; Ross Gittell, Ph.D., President of Bryant University; Maria Carolina Serrano Ramirez, Director of International Relations, Universidad de La Sabana, and Eny V. Di Iorio, Ph.D., Dean of Academic Development, Lorenzo de' Medici Institute (center)

## International Women Stand Out on BSAC

The Bryant Senior Advisory Council (BSAC) brings student voices directly to University leadership. Many of Bryant's most exceptional seniors serve on this year's council. The 43 members of this diverse group representing the student body arrived at Bryant from a myriad of backgrounds.

**Siru Chen '21** and **Miguelina Feris '21** are two of the outstanding women charged with bringing the voice of international students to the table.

Feris, who also serves as President of the International Student Organization (ISO), has forged a path advocating for international students at Bryant. She credits this to the Global Studies program and involvement with ISO. "BSAC is an opportunity to culminate my Bryant experience," she says. "It is a platform to give back and apply what I have learned about advocacy, and a chance to speak up on behalf of students from the Dominican Republic, Latino students, and all international students."

Chen, who began her studies at Bryant Zhuhai, considers service on the council a serious responsibility. "I can no longer be a student focused merely on myself," she says. "I need to become more insightful about the things around me to seek the best ways of enhancing life at Bryant."



Siru Chen '21



Miguelina Feris '21

Both say the experience thus far has been great, describing Bryant University President **Ross Gittell, Ph.D.,** as genuinely interested in learning about them and receptive to student ideas. They hope BSAC can help leadership better support students who are passionate about social and racial justice issues this year. They also would like to see BSAC initiate events focused on improving media literacy to help combat misinformation prevalent in our media ecosystems.

Although this academic year has been a challenge as they engage remotely from the Dominican Republic and China, both are excited about future interactions with BSAC. "The people of BSAC have amazing ideas, insights, and experiences," says Feris, and she will "continue to speak truth directly to leadership on behalf of students so that they can hear the reality of their experiences at Bryant." For her part, Chen says that "being part of BSAC is among the unforgettable experiences of college life. ... It is a pleasure to get to know the other outstanding students on the council, to learn from them, and to team up with them up to facilitate improving the Bryant experience for all."

## International Education Week 2020 Celebrates Study Abroad, and Cultural Competency

International Education Week (IEW) is an annual celebration of international education and cultural competency. Events at Bryant University featured a series of activities highlighting the value of study abroad and created spaces where the community came together to learn more about our international students and scholars.

IEW 2020 offered over 16 programs and events, including guest speaker Andy Stoll, a social entrepreneur and global citizen who, drawing on his experiences traveling the world, spoke on the importance of cultural competency as a leadership skill for the 21st century.

Highlights from IEW 2020 include:

- *A Study Abroad Experience with the International Student Organization:* Participants learned about one another's experiences studying abroad and as international students within the U.S.
- *Language Is the Roadmap to a Culture:* English as a Second Language speakers shared the many ways their native languages reflect their cultures and how that influences learning English
- *Global Community Hour:* Louise Barro '23 led participants on a virtual trip to Senegal with layovers in Burkina Faso and Gabon.
- *Fireside Chat Global Learning, Global Experiences:* Three senior International Business majors discussed how the program is jumpstarting their careers.



Emily Collins-Garcia (right) organized a Global Mask Wearing Photo Contest during IEW promoting safe and responsible engagement.

IEW is a collaborative effort among multiple departments on campus, says events organizer **Emily Collins Garcia**, Coordinator for International Student Integration at the PwC Center for Diversity and Inclusion.

Student help, including marketing assistance provided by **Anya Ha '22**, a Communication major who is attending Bryant remotely from Russia, also was an important contribution.

The Office of International Students and Scholars calls International Education Week “an opportunity to celebrate the benefits of international education and exchange worldwide.” A joint initiative of the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Education, “IEW is part of our efforts to promote programs that prepare Americans for a global environment and attract future leaders from abroad to study, learn, and exchange experiences.”

## Global Scholar Stories Series Continues



Professor of Economics and Department Chair Jongsung Kim, Ph.D.

Global Scholar Stories, a series that provides faculty and other scholars a forum to share their diverse backgrounds and research with the Bryant community, continued with Professor of Economics and department chair **Jongsung Kim, Ph.D.**

Kim spoke about his path that took him from Korea to Johns Hopkins University in Maryland before arriving at Bryant. Born in Seoul, capital city of South Korea, Kim received both his undergraduate and master's

degrees from Kyung Hee University in Korea before completing his compulsory military service.

A presentation at an International Monetary Fund conference put into motion events that landed Kim at Johns Hopkins. He reminisced about the outstanding university staff who drove from Baltimore to pick him up at JFK Airport in New York City after delays caused him to miss a connecting flight. The courtesy left a deep impression on Kim, who at the time was a young student on his first

experience abroad.

Kim also recalled how the international faculty and student population at Bryant has changed since he joined the faculty nearly 23 years ago. At that time, he was just one of few Asian faculty members on campus. Since then, he said, the number and diversity of international students in his classes have grown, and he supports Bryant's path of internationalization and expanding global opportunities for students.

After completing his doctorate in economics, Kim taught at Loyola University and Johns Hopkins before coming to teach at Bryant University in 1998. His teaching and research interests include inequality, the impact of immigration on the labor market, and current affairs in East Asian economies. He is the author of *Labor Supply and Occupational Structure of Asian Immigrants in the U.S. Labor Market*, published by Garland Publishing Company.

The Global Scholar Stories series is sponsored by the Division of International Affairs. If you are interested in sharing your story, please contact [international@bryant.edu](mailto:international@bryant.edu).

## Fireside Chat: Global Learning, Global Perspectives

The International Business (IB) program is jumpstarting the global careers of three senior IB majors.

In a discussion moderated by **Jacqueline Saslawski, J.D.**, Lecturer of Management and Director of the IB program, **Jenna Gurley '21**, **Christopher Condon '21**, and **Safeen Ahmad '21** spoke about their experiences in IB block, a group of four international business classes taken together with the same cohort. IB block culminates in a global business simulation requiring students to make tough decisions with real consequences.

“The faculty in IB block have so much real-world experience,” Gurley said. Ahmad pointed out that “each class in the block is linked to the other,” which really helped him “understand intersectionality in the business world.”

Study abroad and international internship experiences were influential in preparing each student for a successful senior year, they said. Ahmad said his internship in Spain developed his communication and

team management skills, which often came in useful during IB block. Gurley agreed, and noted she was “more flexible and adaptable after coming back from abroad.” The environment in France forced her to work on her language skills. She stayed with a host family that did not speak English, and each day’s activities transformed into new growth opportunities. Although his internship in China was primarily in English, Condon acquired problem-solving and critical-thinking skills that he applied frequently during IB block.

The students agreed that as freshman the requirements of IB majors seemed daunting but they urge freshman to embrace the challenges. “Talk to your classmates in Global Foundations of Business,” said Gurley, because “you will share many classes and team projects together.” Ahmad encouraged listeners to see the bigger picture. “The Global Foundations of Character & Leadership and Global Foundations of Business courses I took as a freshman prepared me to study and intern abroad,” he said. “Study abroad

experience prepared me for my IB block semester. IB block prepared me for practicum, and practicum is preparing me to begin my career after graduation.”

Condon was pragmatic, telling listeners that an IB major “will be what you make of it. You will have opportunities to distinguish yourself and open up to working with people from different backgrounds.”



**Jacqueline Saslawski, J.D., MPA**  
Director of the IB program



**Safeen Ahmad**  
International Business  
Double Concentration in  
Finance and Spanish



**Christopher Condon**  
International Business  
Finance Concentration,  
Chinese Minor



**Jenna Gurley**  
International Business  
Double Concentrations in  
Accounting and French

## Long Road Home

After the pandemic hit and many borders abruptly closed, international students faced a dilemma: Should they stay in the United States and try to ride out the pandemic here, or head home and risk not being able to return?

Some Bryant international students chose to make the daunting journey home from Smithfield. **Jianzhi (Stephen) Liang '21** and **Baochun (Kristy) Wu '21** transferred to Bryant after studying accounting for two years at Bryant Zhuhai and had planned to complete their studies in Smithfield. The pandemic disrupted that game plan.



Baochun (Kristy) Wu '21, in China

Stephen and Kristy admitted that securing a plane ticket was the most frustrating part of their journey home. As the pandemic became more volatile, international air travel slowed to a crawl. Flight and ticket cancellations became the norm. Uncertainties surrounding flights caused anxiety and added stress to an already troubling situation. Working within their networks of family, friends, and travel agents, both Stephen and Kristy were finally able to get seats on flights that would eventually take them home, but not before ticket prices had soared nearly 650%.

After securing her ticket, Kristy’s itinerary took her to five cities, included three flights over 43 hours, and lasted 16 days, including a required two-week quarantine upon arrival in China. In order to board the airplanes, each was required to use a mobile phone app to track their health for a full 14 days prior to the scheduled flight. With no signs of any coronavirus symptoms, a quick scan of a QR code showed the airline crew that each was safe to board.

Once they landed in China, they immediately received a test for the coronavirus before leaving the airport. From there, the government, in partnership with airlines and the hospitality industry, quickly transported them to local hotels where they would complete a two-week quarantine.

Stephen imagined his quarantine would be lonely but found the hotel staff to be friendly and responsive to his needs. “In quarantine, the most joyful thing was that I could order food and anything else I wanted online, and the staff at the hotel would deliver them to

my room,” he recalled. “Something unexpected during quarantine was that hotel staff would celebrate the birthdays of those in quarantine with flowers, cake, and a song.”

Kristy was also anxious about spending 14 days alone in a hotel room, but she too praised the hotel staff for helping get her through it. Each hopes that the virus will come under control quickly and that all of their Bulldog family members are staying safe.



Jianzhi (Stephen) Liang '21, took a selfie in his personal protective equipment before boarding his flight.

## International Faculty Spotlight – Chen Zhang

Artificial intelligence (or “A.I.”) and Big Data are widely predicted to create a Fourth Industrial Revolution that many say is now underway, with the power to change how we live and work. Thanks to Associate Professor of Information Systems and Analytics **Chen Zhang, Ph.D.**, students who take “Deep Learning and Robotics” (ISA ST401) will be prepared to help lead and shape this future. The course is possible, in part, due to a Faculty Innovation Grant that supported the procurement of cutting-edge A.I. robots.

Deep learning applications in robotics is in a state of enormous growth, says Zhang, a cloud computing expert who designed the course and proposed the purchase of the robots, TurtleBot3 and SoftBank Robotics humanoid NAO in his appeal for the Innovation Grant he was awarded for the course, which launched in Fall 2020.

The idea behind the course is to help Bryant students be part of this trend by preparing them to create new applications for the technology. It is one way Zhang is contributing to an ongoing Bryant initiative to prepare students for a future driven by A.I.

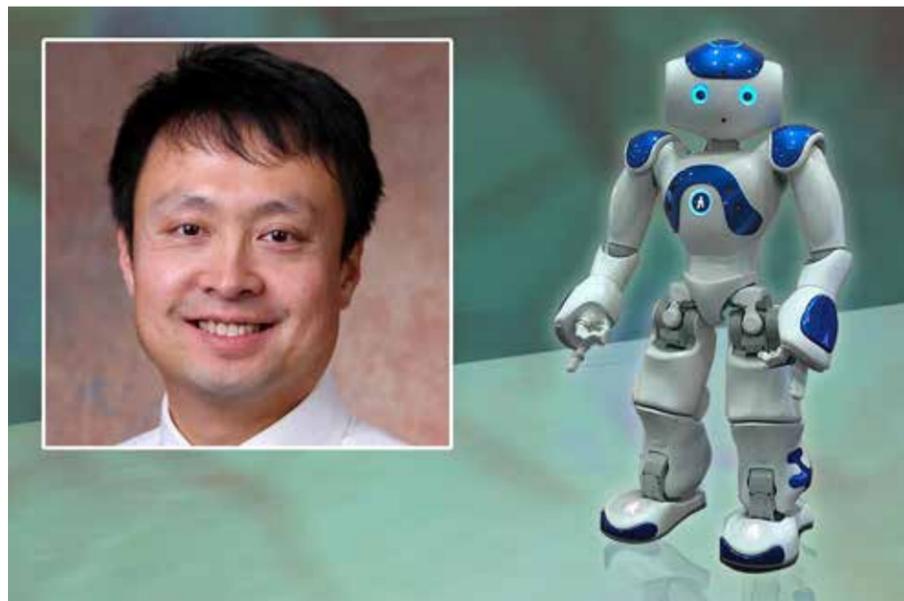
Zhang believes that the students' experiences with the new technology in the course, along with what they learn in their liberal arts courses, will benefit their personal competency, future employers, and society, aligning with the intentions of the Faculty Innovation Grants, which are to support academic growth through new teaching and learning strategies.

“This is a very experiential course,” says Zhang. Using popular deep learning programming tools, and after practicing on simulation systems, the students will be able to program the physical robots, a unique hands-on opportunity that has drawn students to the course.

“This subject is not only super interesting, but very important to the technology world today. I would highly recommend this class to anyone who is interested in any of these things,” said **Lauren Canning '21**, an Information Systems and Analytics major.

“We are able to interact in real time with robots, which is something that not a lot of people ever get the opportunity to do,” says **Nicholas Vencile '20**, an Information Systems major. “What excites me about the course is being able to create, control and even talk to robots, which is a very fascinating and positive experience.”

As a result of exposure to the technology in the course, “students will be more competitive in the job market because they will be more innovative in whatever role they're playing in their future career,” says Zhang, “and that is a key differentiator. The key skill in the Fourth Industrial Revolution is to be innovative in the ways that are going to apply those cutting-edge technologies.”



Associate Professor of Information Systems and Analytics Chen Zhang, Ph.D.

This story is already playing out, says Zhang, as demand for the skills is strong and growing – not just in industrial automation but to humanoid applications in service industrial sector such as banks and hospitals, and to deep business analytics and analysis models as well. “The job outlook looks great.”

## International Students and Alumni are a Powerful Network

The power of our Bryant network is a valuable tool. We come from different backgrounds, live and work in all parts of the world, and possess unique experiences. The one thing that connects us all is our Bryant network. Tools like LinkedIn and WeChat have been the most popular form of staying connected with Bryant friends, classmates, and professors. What if there was a centralized platform to find mentors, career opportunities and network with other alumni from your industry or region?



**Alumnifire** for Bryant is a free grassroots networking and mentoring platform. Through a monitored approval process, only those from the Bryant community can join and gain access to the growing number of alumni, students, faculty, and parents on

the platform. Over 2,000 alumni have already signed up to provide services including career advice, resume reviews, informational interviews, job shadowing, internships and more. With several noteworthy features like the search tool, direct messaging, and the ability to see who is offering services, **Alumnifire** makes it easy for members to connect.

Take advantage of your Bryant network by building lasting relationships while helping us grow our network of students and alumni on **Alumnifire**. Visit [bryant.alumnifire.com](http://bryant.alumnifire.com) to learn more and sign up.

## 4MILE Accepting Applications



**4MILE** (Multicultural and International Leadership Experience) is a cultural and leadership program uniquely designed for first-year international and domestic multicultural students. The week-long program is designed to provide international and multicultural students with a jumpstart to the semester with opportunities to meet faculty, staff and other students at Bryant while incorporating team-building exercises, cultural and social workshops, and presentations.

**Peer Counselors** serve in a leadership role in assisting incoming multicultural and international students become members of the Bryant Community. They serve as mentors, group facilitators, and as a resource. This opportunity enhances personal and professional growth, while having the ability to have a positive impact on the experience of incoming students.

The **Program Assistant** provides administrative support and marketing initiatives to the overall management and coordination of 4MILE. The Program Assistant serves as the liaison between incoming students, family and CDI staff. This position requires emphasis on pre- 4MILE summer and the duration of the program.

**Deadline to apply is February 22, 2021.**

Applications are accessible through Engaged at [engaged.bryant.edu](http://engaged.bryant.edu) or by scanning the QR code.





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## Upcoming Events

### Lunar New Year Celebration 2021 Thursday, February 25, 7:30pm

This annual cultural celebration enriches the campus community through multiculturalism and diversity. The program features student performances and raffle prizes. This year's event is a virtual celebration. Come greet your friends and wish everyone a Happy New Year online.

### I2I Movie Premier Friday, March 5, 7:00 PM

I2I 2020: Cultural Empowerment is a cultural dance show that incorporates dance, food, and geography. This event will showcase the work that our scene leaders created for this year's show.

### Visiting Writers Series: Sejal Shah Thursday, March 18, 4:00 PM

Join non-fiction essayist, Sejal Shah for a writing workshop: What People Don't Say: Writing What Is Taboo. She will discuss publishing her book of essays as a neurodiverse writer and how genre and publishing expectations can work for or against writers of color. At 7:00pm she will read from her new book, *This Is One Way to Dance* (2020).

### Global Scholar Stories

Members of the Bryant community are invited to share their global experiences. Community members interested in sharing should contact Kongli Liu at [kliu1@bryant.edu](mailto:kliu1@bryant.edu). Check the Bryant Events Calendar for the upcoming schedule of Global Scholar Stories.

### Global Community Hour

One of Bryant's signature educational activities helps build cultural competency by taking the audience to new countries around the globe each semester. Hosted by international students and scholars, Global Community Hour includes a presentation about the focus country's culture followed by a small sampling of local cuisine. Seats are limited. For more information, contact the Office of International Students and Scholars at [oiss@bryant.edu](mailto:oiss@bryant.edu)

### HSK Test

A six-level, international standardized Chinese proficiency test designed to examine students' ability in the application of the Chinese language in their studies and personal lives.

### YCT Test

A four-level, international standardized test of Chinese language proficiency, designed to help young students evaluate their Chinese language skills.

### REGISTRATION DEADLINE

10 Days prior to the exam date

*For more information, please contact Ms. Xiuli Lyu at [lxuli@bryant.edu](mailto:lxuli@bryant.edu) or visit [china.bryant.edu](http://china.bryant.edu) and click on "Test Services" through the Confucius Institute tab.*

The Division of International Affairs supports the University mission to meet its global strategies. The division provides support to international students and scholars for their cultural immersion, academic success, social networking, and career preparation throughout their educational experience at Bryant.

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