

# US higher education - benefits & challenges

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**Abstract:** *The number of Vietnamese higher education students in the United States has been increasing over the past few years ranking the sixth leading country of origin for all international higher education students in the United States. From the perspectives of academic scholars, fleeing the family nest for a stint abroad has considerable merit to be more independent and more resilient in all spheres of life. The pillar of Vietnam economy might be based on the workforce from overseas if knowledge and skills acquired can be practically applicable in each specific area to benefit both the local and the foreign countries. Unquestionably, Vietnamese students head for the Western countries for unmatched applicable diversity in majors, creative learning environments, mixture of backgrounds and experiences of both the students and the teachers from all over the world. This article explores further to get an overview of the importance, the challenges, and the work outlook after a strenuously academic journey from abroad, especially from the US.*

**Keywords:** *US higher education, challenges - rewards, job outlook*

## 1. Introduction to the US higher education

US higher education system is characterized by its diversity and independence in which both in-state students and out-of-state applicants are encouraged to be exposed to flexibility, openness, and innovative ideas. Public universities or state universities in the US depend heavily on the Government for financial support. State universities are normally a part of a state university system which composes of different campuses spreading across each state. As state universities are supported by public funding, they usually charge lower tuition fees than private universities – though the actual amount students pay can vary vastly depending on the originality of each student. A lower rate is charged for “resident” or “in-state” students, and a higher rate for “non-resident” or “out-of-state” applicants. International students either pay the same fees as out-of-state students, or a separate international rate.

## 2. What students get from higher education in US

The majority of students in the US attend public universities and colleges, private universities account for a significant proportion of enrolments – and many of the country’s most elite and globally famed institutions. This includes the leading institutions like Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Stanford, Caltech, Columbia, Cornell, Johns Hopkins, etc.

Private universities do tend to dominate at the top of national and international rankings but they are not under complete monopoly. Overall, fees at private universities tend to be higher than those at

public universities and colleges. Higher education in the United States is known for offering a wide variety of degrees and major options to students. Before committing to a major, students should take into consideration of factors like program cost, salary expectations, and the employment rates in that field of study. In addition, each choice should be aligned with the personality, the interest, and the academic and professional goals. Whether you ultimately want to immigrate to the United States or return to your home country, earning a degree at a university in America has the potential to expand the future career opportunities. During their schooling, international students can take advantage of experiential learning, and internships in order to gain hands-on, real-world experience in their field of interest. Not only does this provide with valuable learning opportunities, but it can help to build strong relationships with future employees.

While immersing in a learning environment surrounded with native speakers, students opt to perfect their English skills which help you gain a competitive advantage in the job market, especially if students wish to work for an established international organization. Mastering a strong knowledge of more than one language and culture can possibly make you a valuable asset to any organization, as the demonstration of the cross-cultural communication skills and interpersonal skills will reap rewarding benefits for the organization.

Pursuing a degree at an American university offers chances for students to expand their global network

gaining new cultural experiences, and forming a mixture of perspectives. The interaction with a wide variety of viewpoints synthesizing from the diversifying international communities on campus formulates innovative ideas which in turn creates breakthroughs at the workplace.

### 3. Visible & invisible challenges when studying in US higher education

When studying in US, it is inevitable that students have to mingle with both American and foreign students who speak their native language and dialects with strange accents, so students may face language barriers leading to emotional trauma and depression. Words and phrases used by a particular age group may not be interpreted the same way as another. Conflicts arise if interpretations and interference are different. For example, using sarcasm creatively to express complex emotions to convey thinly veiled disapproval or scorn, but sometimes the listener or the recipient of communicative messages misinterprets the intention of the speaker.

In addition, culture shock is also of prime concern. International students idealizing their perceptions embark on adventures with a hope to expand both their academic knowledge and their knowledge of the world, but facing with the unpleasantly unexpected things can lead to scary nightmares. The acculturation process depends on various factors, such as the general personality, the motivation to adapt, language skills, support of fellow and host nationals. Some try to adjust to the seemingly mild cultural differences, while others may have to hide their discontentment to a certain degree which gradually ends up with a symptom of loneliness or homesickness. These feelings may make them unfocused on the lectures, and disconnected with the surroundings and. The prolonged loneliness and homesickness can have serious health implications, including decreased mental and physical health and the impediment of their learning progress.

In parallel with language barriers and culture shocks, international students still have to face with accumulation issues despite the fact that they bring a source of cultural diversity to colleague campuses and enrich classroom discussions through their cultural and ethnic experiences. Unlike many countries around the world, the healthcare system in the United States is not nationally sponsored by the Government. This means that international students have to purchase private health insurance with a view to covering unexpected accidents and illnesses that occur during their stay in the host country. However, the insurance

premium is relatively high in comparison with their financial capacity, so some students have to sacrifice their health and instead, to choose to save money.

Last but not least is the issue of crimes and safety. Some areas in the United State are brutally dangerous places with murders, kidnappings, growing terrorism, and escalating violence, etc. stemming from political instability and the integration of immigrants from different social classes. These security and safety phenomena provoke collective fears and uncertainty, hence, both students and their family members become the victims of psychological tortures leading to posttraumatic stress disorders which later on develop into psychiatric illnesses permanently jeopardizing their life quality and their future.

Admittedly, a subset of human-caused disasters can have a particular devastating impact which in reality, the masterminds of their catastrophic events should feel ashamed of their sophisticated hidden motives and compensate for their everlasting losses and their invaluable sacrifice.

### 4. Conclusion

The core principle of obtaining a degree in the US correlates with specific prospects regarding relevant economic development, social inclusion, personal recognition and self-pride. The complete process is like a bird-nest marvellous principle in achieving interconnectedness and flexibility to grow full-fledged academically and professionally on a global scale. Virtually in return for such rewards and earning a college degree in the US, the students also have to put their life at risk and make a lot of tangible and intangible sacrifice. It is undoubted that together with more automated, digitalized and fluid job markets, and the inevitable replacement of repetitive jobs, degrees - knowledge - experience from US gain the upper hand and lay a firm foundation to visualize and compatibly manage the unprecedented challenges. Resilience building skills throughout the long-term process in the US can boost confidence, energize inner strengths to remove any blocks hindering progress on the way to accomplishments which sometimes seem to be insurmountable.

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