

Jasmine Washington

“Chinese Exchange Students Discuss Old Westbury”

SUNY College Old Westbury is the most diverse college among national liberal arts colleges in 2008, according to *U.S. News and World Report*. Students from all walks of life come together and exchange their cultures, beliefs, and traditions as they further their education.

Old Westbury hosts foreign exchange students from all over the world in an attempt to show them different ways of education and life outside their norms. China is one of the many countries that foreign exchange students at Old Westbury hail from.

While many students may find enrolling in college and moving into residence halls a difficult task, Annie and Pauline, two Chinese foreign exchange students at Old Westbury beg to differ. “It was not as difficult as I thought it would be. In primary school we were taught the English language and important things about Western cultures, so that gave me a good idea what life in the US would be like,” says Pauline. Old Westbury’s environment plays a large role in making the transition from being schooled in China to being schooled in the US a lot easier. “It is very good, I really like it here. The people are nice and the professors are really friendly,” says Annie.

“In schools in China we have to read and take tests in order to pass a class. The papers and the research that we have to do at Old Westbury is new to us and is one of the few things that is taking me awhile to get accustomed to,” says Pauline. Aside from the workload, the foreign exchange students note a big difference in the number of classes that can be taken. “Back in China we have the option of taking up to 9-10 classes every semester. Each class in China is worth 2-3 credits while the classes here they are worth 4 credits,” says Annie. Outside of academics, the foreign exchange students describe a few things they dislike about Old Westbury.

Like many American students, Annie and Pauline both feel as though there are not enough on-campus activities at Old Westbury. “Unless there is a big event, there aren’t usually a lot of activities for us to participate in. Some of the clubs that I am active in make trips but they usually fall through,” says Annie.

Unlike Annie, Pauline feels that she does not attend the few events that are held on campus because she can’t convince her friends to join her. “I would love to participate in activities, join clubs, go to parties, and make new friends but I can never get my Asian friends to come with me. ‘The Jazz Night’ [hosted by Student Activities last fall] was one of the few events that I attended and enjoyed.”

One thing that Annie and Pauline agree on is something that American students at SUNY Old Westbury completely disagree with—The Café. “The food served in the cafeteria is very good. It is not as suitable as authentic Chinese food but still good. Please do not let the food that the cafeteria calls Chinese reflect what’s really served in China, because it’s quite different,” according to Annie. Pauline’s opinion of the cafeteria is quite similar to Annie’s. “The food is very delicious, I like it a lot,” Pauline says with a smile. Annie and Pauline are two of the many Asian students that have found a promising experience here at Old Westbury. Old Westbury’s exchange program has allowed for a growing number of students from not only from China but also countries such as Switzerland and Russia. A limit on space hinders the ability name every student and their experience here at Old Westbury.

As one of the most diverse institutions of higher learning in the United States, SUNY Old Westbury takes pride in accepting people from all cultures and backgrounds. SUNY Old Westbury's foreign exchange program brings students from all over the world. Students from China are many of the students who take part in this program. Although the foreign exchange students are having a mixed experience at SUNY Old Westbury, they are still enjoying their time here.