

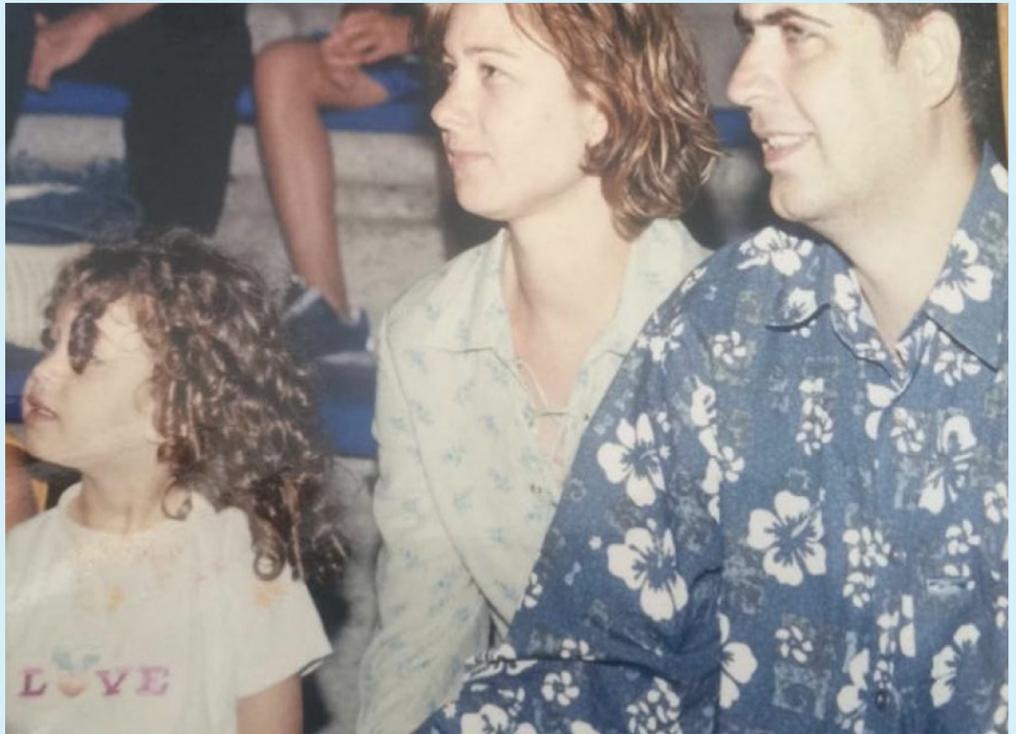
# International Students Miss Families, Refle

**Cal Ransom**

*This Week Editor*

While any student can experience homesickness at college, with Parents' Weekend and Thanksgiving approaching, students with family members in the United States are able to reconnect with support systems from home in ways that many students with parents outside the U.S. cannot. In most cases, international students only see their parents twice during the academic year for longer breaks — granted travel expenses and visa paperwork permit.

“My parents asked if they should come for Parents' Weekend,” Ada Ates, fourth-year Neuroscience and Computer Science major, said. “I said, ‘No, not for two days only,’ ... it would take them two days to get here [from Turkey].”



Ada Ates sits with her parents.

*Courtesy Ada Ates*

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, families from outside of the U.S. hoping to visit their children have faced additional challenges. There is now a backlog in visas required to enter the United States after the pandemic curtailed the Department of State's ability to process applications in 2020. On an average month in 2019, 60,866 applicants were waiting to schedule an interview to get their visas. As of Sept. 30, 2022, the number of applicants waiting for an interview was 435,063. That's seven times the number of people in 2019.

“My mom is scheduled for her appointment in March of next year, and my dad and my brother in June — they can't visit until they have their visa ... they'll probably only see Oberlin in my sophomore year,” College first-year Karthik Ranganadhan said.



Karthik Ranganadhan poses with Monday Sundays, a group that gets together and eats ice cream on Mondays to celebrate the new week.

*Courtesy Karthik Ranganadhan*

During breaks, when domestic students often go home, international students who can't go home find support from family, friends, and student organizations.

“I encourage international students to get involved in organizations a lot,” Assistant Dean and Director of International Student and Scholar Services Josh Whitson said. “When it comes to things like Thanksgiving break, where many domestic students might be going home but international students often do not, having those connections in the student organizations is usually really helpful because a lot of the time, the organization will have an event [over break], or everyone will go for the special Thanksgiving meal at [Stevenson Dining Hall] together.”



Ates (center) sits on her grandmother's lap with her cousins.

*Courtesy Ada Ates*

# Struggle on Finding Community Away From Home



Ranganadhan sits with his parents, brother, and grandparents.

*Courtesy Karthik Ranganadhan*

Some international students can also get off campus by visiting extended family and family friends during breaks.

“Fortunately, my mom has one of her really old friends who lives in Chicago, ... one of my dad’s old friends is in Utah, [and] my grandmother found relatives who live in Cleveland [who] I was with for fall break,” Ranganadhan said.

Whitson says outsiders often underestimate how lonely international students are during holidays.

“Often for the student, if they’re coming from somewhere that doesn’t celebrate Christmas, and they don’t celebrate Christmas, it is another day for them,” Whitson said. “They’re happy to have the day off. ... But then when it’s, say, Chinese New Year, that’s often when an international student is gonna be like, ‘I have to go to class, but my friends back home in China don’t have to go to class cause everyone has off right now,’ and, ‘Wow, I really wish I was with my family because this is when the family gets together.’”

“I still talk to my parents every day,” Salma Ahmed, a second-year Psychology major, said.

She added that it’s hard to miss special occasions like birthdays, but she still sings “Happy Birthday” over FaceTime.

“I like that I’m still connected to them,” she said.



Salma Ahmed poses with her mother. *Courtesy Salma Ahmed*



Ates has dinner with her extended family.

*Courtesy Ada Ates*



Juliana Gaspar bakes with a group of Brazilian students.

*Courtesy Juliana Gaspar*