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## 'A Cosmopolitan Tradition': International Students at the University of Michigan since 1847: Introduction

This exhibit explores the University of Michigan's rich history of internationalism, including early foreign students, outreach toward the international community, and clubs and organizations formed by students from abroad.



This online exhibit was created, Fall 2008, by Shannon Wait, a graduate student at the University of Michigan School of Information.

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Banner image from Jasper Cropsey's [The University of Michigan Campus, 1855](#)

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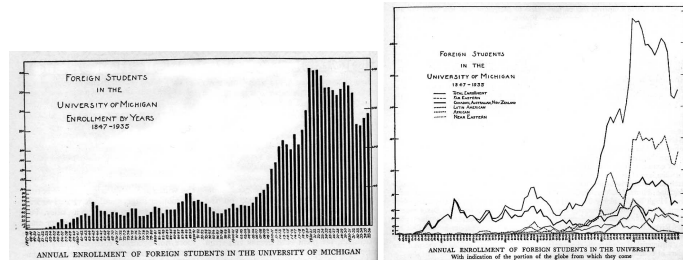
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## "A Cosmopolitan Tradition": Early Foreign Students



Charts showing international student population at UM by Wilfred Shaw, 1934.

[Click for larger.](#)

The University of Michigan enrolled its first foreign students, one from Mexico and one from Wales, in 1847, within the first decade of its founding in Ann Arbor. Over the next few years, they were joined by several Canadians and Hawaiians. Most of the early "foreign" students were the children of American missionaries who had been born abroad, and therefore may not have experienced the culture shock that later foreign students would.

Students began arriving from Asia as early as 1872, with the matriculation of Saiske Tagai of Japan, who studied literature for three years but did not earn a degree. He was joined by several more of his country - men over the next few years, including law students. The 1890s saw a great rise in the population of international students at the University, with the arrival of the first Chinese, South American and Middle Eastern students. Although it seems surprising that a midwestern University in a moderately-sized town would bring together such a cosmopolitan body of students, much of the diversity can be attributed to University President James B. Angell, who served as U.S. minister to China (1880-81) and Turkey (1897-98) and did much to elevate the reputation of the University in the eyes of the world.



[James B. Angell, ca. 1879](#)

Other forces also brought foreign students to the University; for example, [Jose Celso Barbosa](#) came to Ann Arbor from Puerto Rico in 1877 after being rejected from Columbia University's medical school on racial grounds.



Chinese Student party in Rackham Hall, undated.

The earliest international students paved the way for the many thousands of foreign-born who would seek an education at the University of Michigan. As J. Raleigh Nelson, founder of the Nelson International

House wrote in 1935, this cosmopolitanism is "a Michigan tradition that goes well back to the beginning of the history of the University."

This exhibition looks at the stories of a few of the earliest and most notable foreign students:

- [Jose Celso Barbosa](#)

- [Tomo Inouye](#)
- [John Wu](#)

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## "A Cosmopolitan Tradition": Jose Celso Barbosa



Jose Barbosa in an anonymous 1880 class album.

*The Chronicle*, a student-written and published magazine, included an article about his admission in its issue of October 27, 1877, stating that "We have no hesitancy in saying that Mr. Barbosa will have the right hand of fellowship extended to him from every side... [A]ll young gentlemen of sufficient ability are admitted on equal footing irrespective of complexion. It not being the amount of pigment matter deposited in the skin that is sought after; but the quantity and quality of the brains in the cranium."

Upon graduation in 1880, Barbosa returned to Puerto Rico and practiced medicine in his home town for several decades. In 1899, Barbosa founded the pro-statehood Puerto Rican Republican Party and for this, he became known as "the father of Puerto Rican statehood." He served as a member of Puerto Rico's Executive Cabinet, to which he was appointed by President McKinley, from 1900-1917 and was a Senator from 1917 until his death in 1921. To honor him, Puerto Rico declared his birthday an official holiday and named a post office for him in his hometown of Bayaron.

Dr. Jose Celso Barbosa was born on July 27, 1857 in Bayamon, Puerto Rico. He received his primary and secondary education at Puerto Rico's prestigious Jesuit seminary, which he was the first racially-mixed student to attend. In 1875, he came to New York City and learned English. His goal was to study law, but he was persuaded by his doctor to study medicine due to his own poor health.

Barbosa enrolled at the University of Michigan in 1877, after being rejected from the College of Physicians and Surgeons (which became Columbia University Medical School) because of his race.

Date... *March 28<sup>th</sup> 1910*

Name... *Jose C. Barbosa (Albornoz)*  
in full first name middle name last name

Date and Place of Birth... *San Juan Puerto Rico West Indies*

Date of admission to University... *October 1877*

Degrees (if any) from other institutions, with Place and Date  
*A.B. Porto Rico Seminary, 1875... M.D. University Havana, 1893. Honorary degree U.S. University of Michigan*

Academic or other official positions held, with Titles and Dates  
*Assistant Secretary of Education of the Colony, 1897... and Member of the Executive Council of Porto Rico 1900 appointed by U.S. Service in Civil and Spanish Wars, with Rank and Regiment and by and reappointed twice by Consent.*

Occupation... *In the Executive Council*

Present Address... *San Juan Puerto Rico (P. O. Box 524) San Juan, P. R.*

[If changing often, give permanent address also. If more space is needed for any item, use back of this page.]

*Jose C. Barbosa M. D.*  
Office: Room 311  
Apartment 134.

Form filled out by Barbosa in 1910. From his necrology file. [Larger version](#)

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## "A Cosmopolitan Tradition": Tomo Inouye



Tomo Inouye in Ann Arbor, left, ca. 1900.

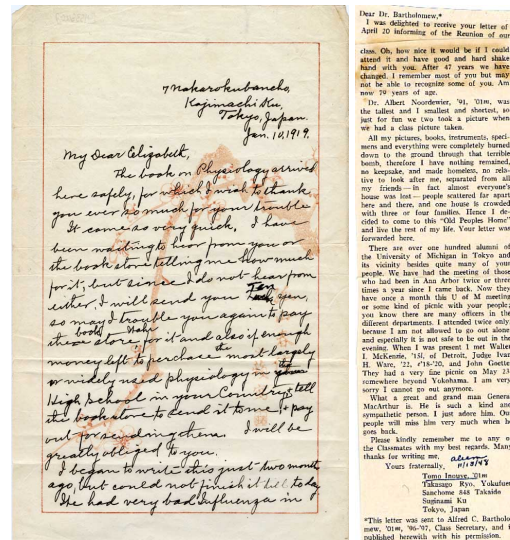
Tomo Inouye was born in present-day Fukoka, Japan in 1870. She received her primary and secondary education in Japan, before coming to the United States in 1896. She first entered the Cleveland Municipal Medical College, before enrolling the

Michigan Medical School in 1899. While at the University, she made many American friends and received her M.D. in 1901. The next year, she returned to Japan and opened a medical practice in Tokyo, and served as a school physician for several girls' school there.

If not the first, she was certainly one of the first female doctors in Japan, and the first Japanese woman to attend or earn a degree from the University of Michigan.

In 1945, her home and practice were destroyed by bombing. In a 1948 letter to her classmates at UM, she wrote: "All my pictures, books, instruments, specimens and everything were completely burned

to the ground through that terrible bomb, therefore I have nothing remained [sic], no keepsake, and made homeless, no relative to look after me, separated from all my friends." To read the rest of the letter, click [here](#).



Two letters from Inouye, 1919 and 1948. [Click for larger.](#)

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## "A Cosmopolitan Tradition": John Wu



John Wu, from his Alumni Records file.

John Wu (Wu Ching-hsiung) was born China in 1899 and studied law at the Comparative Law School of China in Shanghai before coming to the University of Michigan in 1918. While at the University, he wrote an article for the March 1921 issue of the *Michigan Law Review*, entitled "Readings from Ancient Chinese Codes and Other Sources of Chinese Law and Legal Ideas." At the age of 22, he struck up an unlikely friendship with Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes (then 80 years old), and the two corresponded for the next 11 years. The correspondence between Holmes and Wu was published in *Justice Holmes to Doctor Wu: An Intimate Correspondence, 1921-1932*.

Wu returned to Shanghai in 1930, after spending several years lecturing around the United States. In China he became a famous judge and lawyer, and in 1933, was appointed to the Legislative Yuan by the son of former President Sun Yat-sen, and composed the first draft of the Chinese constitution. He later joined the Catholic church and translated religious works, including the Book of Psalms, into Chinese. Recognized for his scholarship and teaching of natural law, Wu was Professor of Law at Seton Hall University School of Law from 1951 to 1961.

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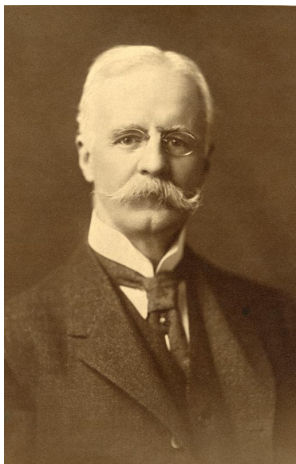
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Barbour Scholars, 1942-43. From the Barbour Scholars records.

## "A Cosmopolitan Tradition": Barbour Scholarships

The Barbour Scholarships for Oriental Women (now known as the Rackham Barbour Scholarship for Asian Women) were created at the bequest of Regent Levi L. Barbour in 1914. The scholarship program was intended to support the studies of exceptional female students from the area that was known at the time as the Orient, encompassing the large region extending from Turkey in the west to Japan and the Philippines in the east.



Levi Barbour



Barbour Scholars Gloria Cortes and Gloria Manalo, ca. 1950.

The scholarships supported study in the fields of science, medicine, mathematics and other specialties relevant to the development of the women's native countries. By the 1940s, they had expanded to include the social sciences and the humanities.

Barbour was inspired to create the scholarships by two Chinese women who studied medicine at the University of Michigan, Mary Stone and Ida Kahn. The women were "adopted" as

teenagers by medical missionary and UM alumna Gertrude Howe, and came to Ann Arbor, enrolling as the University of Michigan's first Chinese students, male or female, in 1892. In 1895, Kahn wrote "[Ann Arbor Through Chinese Eyes](#)" ([full text](#)), an article for the student magazine *The Inlander*. Kahn and Stone graduated in 1896 and returned to China to practice medicine. Kahn founded a hospital in

Shanghai, while Stone started the Chinese Red Cross.

Levi Barbour met Stone and Kahn while traveling in Asia, and was so impressed with the work they were performing that upon his return to the United States, he began to plan for a scholarship to enable other Asian women to follow in their footsteps.



Mary Stone (left) and Ida Kahn.

The first Barbour Scholars arrived in 1918--there were only two, and they were initially housed by the Barbours. Through the 1920s and 1930s, the number of available yearly scholarships increased to a few dozen as the program was shown to be a success. By 1943, 212 women had been provided with a total of 500 years of University training. In the earliest years of the program, most Barbour Scholars studied medicine and science, but in later years, subjects studied included political science, sociology and art history.



Barbour Scholars, 1932-33. From the Barbour Scholars records.

During their time at the University of Michigan, the Barbour Scholars were forced to adjust to dormitory life and the rather stringent rules pertaining to lifestyle and free time provided by the University. They were forced to request permission from the dean even to leave campus for the weekend, and were not allowed to cook their own food or, in at least one case, travel to New

York for vacation. All of this must have been strange to adult women, who were sometimes directors of schools or had received advanced degrees back home.

It seems that most Barbour Scholars did return to their native countries after completing their degrees; by 1943, approximately 70% (150 out of 212) had gone back. A few stayed permanently in the United States, or remained in Ann Arbor for a few years after completing their degree due to World War II. Many Barbour Scholars went on to become very successful in their fields. Several, including Yi-fang Wu and Lucy Wang, became the presidents of Chinese girls' colleges, and scores others were involved in education, both as teachers and administrators. They also went on to practice medicine, do religious work, start businesses, and become librarians and architects.



Barbour Scholars, c. 1965. From the Barbour Scholars records.

The Barbour Scholarship still exists and is now awarded through Rackham Graduate School.

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## "A Cosmopolitan Tradition": International Student Organizations



Women's Cosmopolitan Club, ca. 1922. From the Constance Ohlinger papers.

The first international student organization at the University of Michigan, the Cosmopolitan Club, was formed around 1900. Shortly thereafter, several country- and region-specific organizations sprang up. The Chinese Students Club first appeared in the *Michiganensian*, the student yearbook, in 1912 but probably existed for several years before. By the 1920s, a Women's Cosmopolitan Club had been formed, and several other ethnicity and language-based groups, such as the Hindusthan Club, had been established.



Feng, T. N. Chan, H. Chow, Bang, C. Liu, H. Lee, K. Hu, Pan, Younz, Mah, T. C. Chan, F. Louis, Lau, Kwan, Yee, Yen, H. Hu, Cheung, T. Lee, Lin, Wong, L. Liu, N. Chang, Jao, Shiao, Fei, E. Chang, Sun, T. Huang, Pang, Mark, Shao, Shu, Yin, Lem, Mei, Huang, Jen, Chu, A. Liu, S. Liu, S. Huang, L. Louis, Leung, Lei, Ho, K. Chow, Yanz, Yao, Yu, Lo, Chi, Liem, K. Shen, Song, C. Chang, R. Chen, Y. Shen, Hsu, Li, K. Y. Wang, L. Wang, Ma, Yuan, V. Liu, F. Chen, K. H. Wang, C. Lee, Yeh, Djeng, Chiang, Mrs. R. Chen, Hsiao, Wu, Cheng, Y. Chen, Yong, D. Chan.

Chinese Students Club

As the number of international students grew during the mid-twentieth century, the University began to create programs and infrastructure for its foreign students, who often sought out information about American culture and at the same time, speakers of their own languages. An instrumental liaison between foreign students and the University administration was J. Raleigh Nelson, who was hired to teach English to engineering students in 1908, and was soon named Counselor to Foreign Students in the College of Engineering. In 1933, his title was broadened by President Ruthven to Counselor of Foreign Students. Nelson and his group of students began meeting regularly in the Michigan Union.

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## "A Cosmopolitan Tradition": The University and International Students

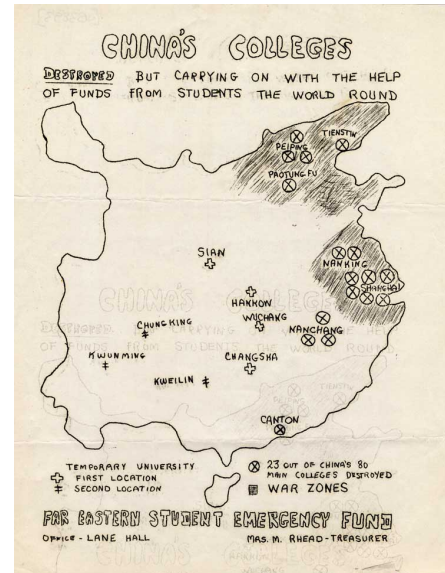


Unidentified women at an International Center event, undated. From the International Center records, Box 17.

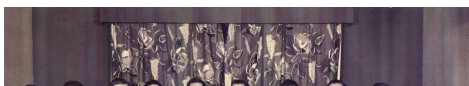
In the mid-twentieth century, the University of Michigan experienced a spike in the enrollment of foreign students. By 1961, it had enrolled 1,436 foreign undergraduate and graduate students, more than any other University in the United States. The University dealt with this gradual increase by founding an International Center, which grew out of Professor J. Raleigh Nelson's counseling and attention to the needs of foreign students, first in the School of Engineering, and then University-wide.

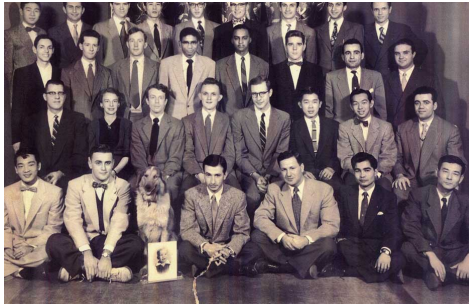
Founded in 1938 and with Nelson as its Executive Director, the Center provided one-on-one guidance, as well as a place for students to share their culture and experiences with one another. Such a group also allowed students to organize religious and charitable activities, particularly relief efforts for disasters in their native countries. During this period, the J. Raleigh Nelson House for international students was also founded. The House provided a cooperative and multi-cultural environment for approximately 30 men from around the world. The Nelson House put out a newsletter, "Nelson House News," which printed letters from residents and former-residents of the house, and gave updates on special activities, house renovations, and other items of interest.

Under the directorship of Dr. James M. Davis (1954-1964), the



Flyer for a relief effort to help Chinese colleges destroyed by World War II. From the Office of Ethics and Religion records, Box 6.





Inhabitants of the Nelson House, c. 1950. From the Betty Hutchinson papers.

International Center stressed personal contact with guidance counselors and the importance of the newly-founded International Student Association (ISA) as a voice for international students. The ISA, like the Cosmopolitan Club before it, hosted many social events for international

students, at which the student body at large was welcome. Of particular interest was the International Bazaar, an evening of costumes, elaborate scenes meant to replicate foreign locales and food and drink. In at least one year, a kissing booth manned by foreign students was set up.

Beginning in the 1960s, the University began offering a special orientation for newly-admitted international students through the Office of Orientation. It also published guides for foreign students adjusting to life in the U.S., including a booklet entitled "International Neighbors: Living in Ann Arbor" with advice on shopping, dating, tipping, and when to arrive at parties.



International Student dance, undated. From Box 17 of the International Center records.

The Center's tradition of providing important services to foreign students, visiting scholars, and faculty has continued to the present day. The Center offers information on immigration and visas, non-academic counseling, advice on living in Ann Arbor, as well as information for American students traveling abroad.

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## International Students at the University of Michigan: Sources for Study

### Barbour Scholarship for Oriental Women Committee

- University of Michigan. Barbour Scholarship for Oriental Women Committee records, 1914-1983
- 1 linear ft. and 3 outsize folders

History, list of recipients, minutes of meetings, correspondence, printed matter, and photographs.

[Finding Aid available online.](#)

### English Language Institute.

- University of Michigan. English Language Institute records, 1940-2004.
- 19 linear ft.

University department responsible in part for the development of materials for the teaching of English as a second language.

Correspondence, notes from staff meetings, printed materials, and administrative records, especially records of South East Asia Regional English Program; include files of directors Charles C. Fries and Robert Lado and administrator George E. Luther.

[Finding Aid available online.](#)

### Hutchinson, Betty L.

- Betty L. Hutchinson papers, 1953-2005
- 0.1 linear ft.

House parent at the University of Michigan's J. Raleigh Nelson International House in 1953-1954. Nelson House was located at 915 Oakland Avenue, and named to honor the founder of the International Center on campus.

Nelson House News (No.1, 1955), photographs, and correspondence with former international students and visitors to the Nelson House during Hutchinson's tenure as house parent.



Chilean students, ca. 1945. From the English Language Institute records.

- 1 folder



Barbour Scholars Gloria Cortes and Gloria Manalo (Philippines) in the lab. From the Barbour Scholars records.

### International Center

- University of Michigan. International Center records, 1930-1976
- 18.75 linear ft.

Files of executive directors, J. Raleigh Nelson, Esson M. Gale, James Davis, and Robert O. Klinger; contain files relating to the counseling and guidance of foreign students at the University of Michigan; administrative records of the National Association of Foreign Student Advisors; and photographs.

[Finding aid available online.](#)

### Vertical File on Foreign Students

- Call Number: FIMU F1 General: Foreign Students

File contains newspaper clippings on the subject of foreign students at the University of Michigan.

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