

International Student Spotlight Interview



Name: Apissada (Pailyn) Thavornpiyakul

Year at K-State: Freshman

Major: Interior Design

Home country: Thailand

What was it like coming to K-State? How did you decide to come here?

I decided to come here because I came here (to Kansas) for high school two years ago, so I've been around in Kansas for a while and my host family are K-State fans. I came to visit, really liked it, first impression decided to come here and I really love it. It's the best decision I've made. I have many good friends and people are really nice, I like my classes and everything is perfect. Everything fell into place and there's just a lot of opportunities. One of my friends graduated from here and he told me they have a really good international student program here. My biggest concern – if this school would open or accept the international students, the environment and everything, it worked out. I love it.

What has your experience been like so far?

It's been really good, it's great because I made an American friend which leads to multiple friends that I have now. It's been really good knowing them and they're actually teaching me, their culture and language, that makes me improve a lot of things. I get to do a lot of things in my residence hall, I'm involved in a lot of things. I grew up Buddhist, and after I met those friends I became involved in the campus ministry and now I am a Christian, and it's completely changed my life after I came to college. A lot of good things have happened in a short period of time, it's been really good. I'm excited for next year and more.

What were some of the big differences when you first arrived (social, academic, weather, etc.)? Was there anything that was really surprising?

I would say that Thai culture and American is kind of similar in some ways, but also different. I adjusted really well here two years ago, but the first month being here in the United States is still really hard. Homesickness is really big, but after a while making friends and being busy with

school makes that go away. The difference would probably be food, growing up there for 17 years and now I don't get to eat that anymore. Also time difference, and weather – we don't have snow in Thailand, we don't have tornadoes. I get to learn more about snow, what do you do, how do you drive? Stuff like that, little things that I get to learn.

Was K-State what you expected? Was Manhattan what you expected?

I don't think so because at first I thought that K-State I wouldn't make friends because it's so big of a school. I never thought that I would have as much friends that I have now because I thought everybody would be busy with school. I would be busy, we're never going to see each other, and it's completely different. In a big school with a lot of different background, I thought it would be hard to get them to know me, and me to know them, but it's not like that at all. It's really easy and people are really nice. I think I'm lucky that I get to come here, and Kansas is such a good place to study and come to school.

Is classroom culture a lot different here?

In Thailand, in high school the teacher will go to the classroom – we stay in the same room the whole time. But in college, probably the same now since they collaborated with other Asian countries to open the schools, the school year is the same time as in America. So in college it's probably almost the same, but the style of living is different. We stay in a dorm too, but it's not like you go far away from home, it's because you don't want to go home – so you stay in a dorm. But high school is still different, it's really different because you don't get to choose your course, what you're going to take. They have fixed schedules for you every year and you have a uniform – so it's like private school, but in public.

What do you like about being a student at K-State?

I feel that within the first year that I'm here I get to do so many things and make so many friends. I feel really lucky that I get to come here to a bigger school because a bigger school has more opportunity for me. If I go to community college I don't get that opportunity because there are less students and a smaller environment. You get more opportunities for scholarships and be involved on campus. I really like serving people, I just want other people to come here and to feel the same way that I do. I just can't think of any reason why you don't like K-State, I just really like it a lot. They give me a lot of opportunity to do things, I don't think any other school, smaller school I could do that. I really like that they don't separate us from American students and the international students, which is really nice.

What kinds of things are you involved in on campus?

I'm going to be a Resident Assistant in Haymaker next year. I'm part of StuMo (Student Mobilization), ISSS, and I'm part of HGB (Hall Governing Board) as the Social Chair.

What do you do for fun in Manhattan?

I went to Locked Manhattan, we had eight girls for my friend's birthday. It's really nice that Manhattan, a small town, has such fun things. You get to use your brain, you're locked in the room and work together. We go bowling, we play board games, we go the rec, we like to be outside.

If you could have known one thing before moving here, what would it be?

Maybe if I knew my roommate before, it would be nice to contact each other. Also know that it's so hard to travel around without a car. The weather and how it gets really hot in the summer, I never experienced the heat here. The weather and how Kansas is in general. I didn't know what is Kansas, where is Kansas? It's really nice to be here and study. Also we don't know if you don't have a lot of shopping places, which is nice sometimes. You don't get to spend a lot of money and you don't get distracted by that.

Do you have any advice for incoming international students?

I feel that a lot of my international friends don't step out of their comfort zone to get to know more American students. You should take advantage of being here and getting the most of being here in the United States. If you stick with the language, the people, I feel like that is also good – you maybe never met each other in your country, and you met each other here which is really nice when you go back and you can still contact each other, but also you are here on purpose to know the culture, the language, and so stepping out of your comfort zone and getting to know American friends that would change a lot of your student career. Don't be shy, go talk to people, don't just be friends with those that speak the same language, or someone you already know, you don't meet anyone else. Take advantage of this, it's a really good opportunity being here, a lot of people wish they could be here, but they don't get that opportunity. Take advantage of being in the United States making new friends, learning about cultures. I definitely would suggest living in the residence halls because that's where 500 other residents live, and more chance to meet new people and become friends. Also, remind yourself by asking questions – what is the purpose and goal of coming to K-State? It's not only we come here to study, but we are here representing the country we are from.

What would you like others to know about being an international student at K-State?

They (domestic students) also think that international students only want to be friends with each other, so that is not true. I would also like others to know that being an international student is not mandatory or required, but we are here voluntary because we want to learn more about you and your language. It's very interesting to see how people across the world live. It's not always easy to be away from home. I want students here to know that we want to learn about you, but we also want you to learn about us. Also, take this advantage of people coming here, learn more about their culture and language while they are here.

Would you mind sharing a phrase from your native language and what it means?

ความพยายามอยู่ที่ไหน ความสำเร็จอยู่ที่นั่น – is what I live up to because it means "where there is a will, there is a way." It may not exactly mean the same in Thai, but I believe that if I try and set goals, I will be able to achieve them.