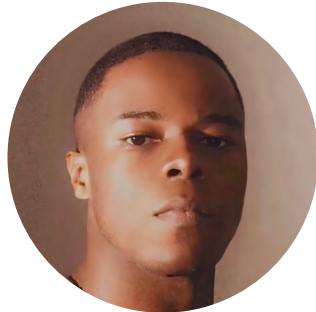


FEB. 2023

# THE CELAC STUDENT VOICE



# First Impressions of CELAC

by Noh Suhyun—South Korea

The first time I learned about the CELAC program was through the International Exchange Support department of my school, Sungshin Women's University. To me, applying to the program was just another challenge. Unfortunately, right after I was accepted into college, the COVID-19 pandemic hit and everything was shut down, including the school. I was excited for a new and revitalizing college experience, but I couldn't do anything I had anticipated. For the past three years, I've only taken online classes, which were not completely unenjoyable but certainly not as fun as I wanted. When I discovered the CELAC program, I decided to try something new.

As previously mentioned, applying to the program wasn't a challenge I had taken seriously, so I felt fear, embarrassment, and self-doubt at first. I wasn't confident in my English abilities and wondered if I would be able to take classes and live in America for a month with my limited English skills. I thought about this constantly until right before I boarded the plane, but I tried to keep a positive attitude despite my worries.

However, after taking the classes, I realized that my English was not as bad as I thought. Taking four classes showed me that I have potential in the language. In Korea, I don't have many opportunities to converse in English, so I wasn't aware that I was capable of using a foreign language. But in the CELAC program, I have many chances to practice speaking English, which is a delightful experience. Before, my language learning was focused on preparing for tests, so using English was stressful as I couldn't make mistakes in my sentences.



In CELAC, however, everyone is allowed to make mistakes and there's no pressure to be perfect. This relaxed atmosphere actually encouraged me to try my best. I never would have imagined myself doing this before. The program also includes two field trips, which are extremely valuable and meaningful experiences for me. The trip to Santa Fe was fascinating, as I got to practice my English and learn about the history of New Mexico with my fellow classmates. Understanding culture and history is important for expanding my knowledge and it was also enjoyable. The trip to Bandelier National Monument was breathtaking, and the beautiful scenery reminded me of the vastness and wonder of the world. This realization boosted my self-awareness.

I still have one week left in this life-changing experience, and I've already gained so much that I wouldn't have otherwise. The most significant change is my newfound confidence. Before, I was afraid of challenges and preferred to stay in familiar surroundings, but now, I have confidence and courage. I am very thankful for the help and support I received from everyone, and I will study hard to improve my English skills when I return to South Korea. I hope to one day assist others with my English and be a helpful person to them whenever they need.

# First Impressions of CELAC

by Natalia Simanjorang—Indonesia

On January 11th, I started my first day at the University of New Mexico. I was both nervous and excited because this was my first time studying in a foreign country. Finding the CELAC (Center for English Language and American Culture) office was a struggle, as the map provided by the school was not helpful. The university buildings were similar, making it difficult to differentiate them. However, after searching for 15 minutes, I finally located the CELAC office.

Upon entering the office, I felt nervous as I didn't know anyone there. I noticed two students sitting in the waiting area, and I assumed they were also new students like me. A staff member approached me and kindly asked if I was a new student of CELAC. She informed me that I had to wait for someone to guide us to the class.

Soon after, a man named Bart arrived and greeted us. He acted as our guide, leading us to the classroom. Our schedule for the day included a brief introduction to CELAC from Bart, a lunch with CELAC staff and new students, and an oral English test. Bart's explanation of the CELAC program made me feel that it was a good fit for me, as it not only teaches English but also American culture. The class was friendly and diverse, with students from different countries. After lunch, we took the oral English test to determine our level of proficiency in the language and what class we would be placed in.

The next day, we had a placement exam in addition to the oral test. I felt overwhelmed during the exam as there were some words I didn't know and my vocabulary was limited. Two days later, I received an email about my class placement, and I hoped to have the same classmates as those who took the test and orientation with me.

Our first class was on Tuesday and consisted of grammar and reading courses. Some of the students I met before were in my class, while others were in different classes. I met a new classmate who was in their second semester of CELAC and was also from a foreign country. They were friendly and welcoming. Our instructors were also friendly and made the classes enjoyable and engaging.

I enjoyed studying at CELAC as the program was both fun and educational. I was able to learn not only English but also American culture, and I made new friends from different countries, learning about their cultures as well.





# First Impressions of CELAC

by Nicolas Farina - Argentina

My initial impression of CELAC was like starting from scratch, but now, as I am already in my second semester, I can proudly say that it has been an amazing journey in which I have learned a great deal and there is still much more to discover.

When I started my journey at CELAC, I had already been in the United States for over a year. It took me a whole year to change my visa, but finally, I arrived in New Mexico in September 2020. Despite spending over a year in the US, my English level was still very basic. It was like starting from scratch once again, in a new country and at a university abroad. I used to think that I could only study my native language and in the comfort of my own home.

When I first joined CELAC, I felt that I had already made a significant effort to apply and start at the high intermediate level. My experience in the US was very positive, and I was lucky enough to not experience a major culture shock. Entering a university environment can sometimes be challenging.

However, when you join CELAC, you feel supported from the moment you start the application process until the end. Furthermore, starting as soon as possible with the schedule helps you get to know the program director and Bart, who assists you throughout the registration process and even after you're inside the program.



Uncertainty is always present during the first semester, as every day is a new experience, but it normalizes as you progress through the program. CELAC offers a lot of activities outside of the curricular subjects, and the team of teachers is exceptional. They are passionate about teaching and enjoy what they do.

If someone wants to learn English, have a fun learning experience, and explore the magnificent state of New Mexico, I highly recommend the CELAC program. Whether your goal is to improve your English skills or to use it as a stepping stone for future endeavors, the program will help you, support you, and equip you with the necessary tools to succeed.

# First Impressions of CELAC

by Amelia Castillo Galvez—Ecuador

My name is Amelia Castillo, I am 18 years old and I graduated from my high school in Quito, Ecuador half a year ago. Normally, when one finishes high school, they already have a clear idea of what they want to study or pursue in the future. However, in my case, I still haven't discovered my interests or passions to guide me in my university studies. Hence, I took some time to ponder on it and decided to improve my English skills and participate in an exchange program. My aunt who lives in Albuquerque told me about a program called CELAC and after researching, I liked the idea and enrolled in the course. Now, I am in my second semester. This essay is about my first impressions of CELAC.

The first day of classes was in mid-August 2022, like many others, I had a vague idea of what to expect, but when I entered the classroom, I was surprised to see that my classmates were not close to my age as I had imagined, most of them were adults with different interests. Another aspect that caught my attention was that all the teachers were young adults. Additionally, there are no dress codes, everyone can wear what they are comfortable in, even pajamas, which I found refreshing and different from my home country where people tend to judge based on appearances.

On the other hand, my first day of the second semester, which was January 17 of this year, was a little different. This time, I had a clearer idea of what to expect, and my first impression was one of intrigue and excitement. I was happy to meet new classmates from different parts of the world, including Peru, France, and Chile, among others, with whom I could learn



Despite these varying first impressions, I felt nervous and intimidated when I first arrived at CELAC. This was a new experience for me in a foreign country, with different cultures and people whose first language was English, which I am not proficient in. Also, most of my classmates only spoke English, and I was unsure if I could communicate effectively and understand them properly.

In conclusion, my first impressions of CELAC were positive, including surprise, intrigue, and excitement about meeting new classmates, teachers, and improving my English. However, I need to be less shy and nervous because both the program and the country are unknown places for me. It is easier to adapt once you are living in here.

# First Impressions of CELAC

by Sofia Londono Barba – Colombia

My initial impression of CELAC was filled with high expectations. I had envisioned a large number of students and professors studying at CELAC, and I thought all the assignments would be challenging and the amount of information would be overwhelming. However, when I arrived last month, I found that I was able to understand everything and participate in all the activities.

In high school, I studied English for three years and my teachers taught me the basics of grammar, but the classes weren't interactive. Our English skills did not improve as we always had classes in the same room with the same teacher and sometimes, instead of taking classes, we would just watch movies. However, at CELAC, I noticed that many different teachers with different teaching styles. I like the ones who adequately encourage the students and are interactive. I believe it is important to communicate with others in order to gain more information.

I would like to participate in activities where the students and teachers can work together to improve our speaking, reading, and listening skills. I also believe it is important to carry out activities outside of the classroom with people from different backgrounds so that I can observe the informal way they communicate.

In any case, the classes at CELAC have provided me with a wealth of new and unique information that I did not encounter in my English classes in Colombia. However, I would also like to contribute to class discussions by bringing books, magazines, or articles on topics that we can discuss.



# First Impressions of CELAC

by Renata Carolina Guerra Trigo –Chile

CELAC is an important platform for my future. This is because the program offers everything needed to learn English.

The CELAC program has excellent professors and different levels of English courses that are tailored to your abilities. Moreover, the program provides a diverse group of classmates from different parts of the world.

When I arrived in Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA on December 20th, I was very excited to start the CELAC program. A few days after my arrival, I visited UNM, and I felt a bit confused. But then I met Bart Hill, who was a very kind person and explained everything about the program to me.

My first day at UNM, I felt many emotions, but when it was time to attend the class, I felt comfortable. The people there are all very friendly. This day was an introduction, and Bart explained all the necessary information about the program, including the rules, the city, and other essential points.





# First Impressions of CELAC

by Pablo Castellanos Aguirre —Bolivia

This is my second semester at CELAC, and I have learned a lot in the program. From the start, I had high expectations to develop my English skills and reach an academic level that would enable me to meet the requirements for a Master's program. I came here with a plan and am working hard to achieve it. By the end of the semester, I hope to have made significant improvements in my pronunciation, listening, and writing skills, which I believe are the most important areas to focus on.

At the beginning of the program, I was more focused on constructing proper sentences, but now I realize that pronunciation is also crucial. Some people still struggle to understand what I'm trying to say, even when I use the correct vocabulary. I have come to understand that I need to improve my pronunciation, and though it may be challenging, I am making progress. I just need to be patient and keep working at it.

Listening is also an important aspect of communication, and I believe I have improved in this area. I am able to understand various accents and the way people speak, but there are still some challenges, especially with people who have strong accents.



Writing is one of my strengths, but if I want to pursue a Master's degree, I need to improve even more. My pronunciation and listening will improve naturally as I live here and practice every day, but writing requires more effort. I need to work hard in my classes and participate in activities that will help me learn and practice my writing skills.

In conclusion, I believe that this program is beneficial and I have high expectations for its outcome. We all need to stay focused and give our best effort in order to achieve our goals. Every day we learn something new and everything counts as long as it helps us improve.

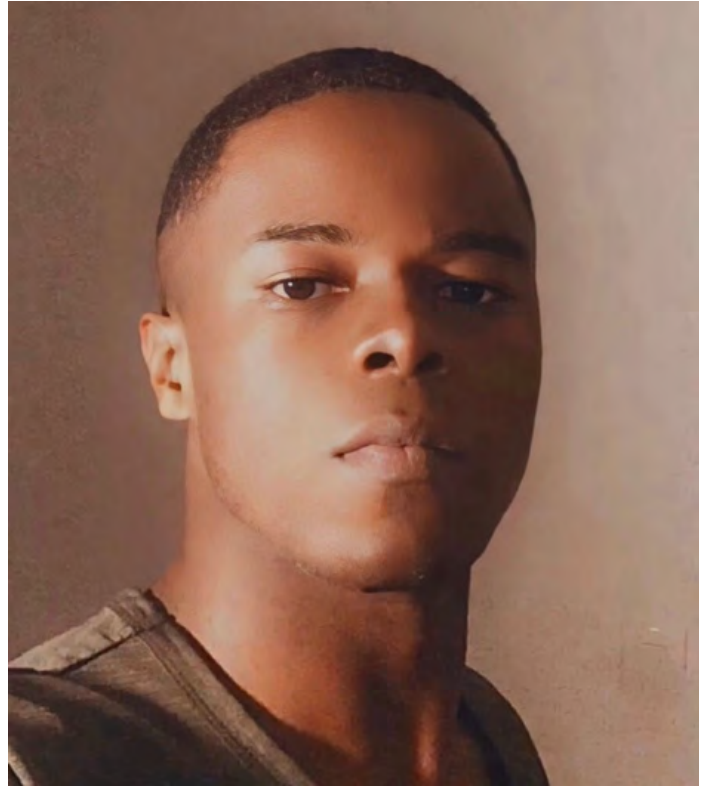


# First Impressions of CELAC

by Alan Win Mbouloukoue Obami –France

The Center for English Language and American Culture (CELAC) provides comprehensive English language training for students to succeed in academic and professional settings. But what is my first impression of CELAC after the 1st week of classes? The program offers four main courses: Conversation, Grammar, Reading, and Writing, each of which lasts for approximately one and a half hours, with a 10-minute break in between. The classes are designed to make non-native English speakers feel confident in speaking, writing, and listening to English. With hard work and dedication, it is possible to rapidly improve one's English skills.

Thanks to the F1 visa, foreign students have the opportunity to learn English in the United States, where the language is widely spoken, and to immerse themselves in the culture and history of the country. As someone who has had a lifelong love for the United States, I believe the CELAC program is an excellent opportunity.



In conclusion, I believe that CELAC is a fantastic program for foreigners to learn English and gain conversational abilities. At CELAC, we have the chance to meet people from all around the world and to learn about different cultures, as well as to improve our English skills quickly so that we can pursue full-time degrees at the University of New Mexico without taking the TOEFL exam.

# First Impressions of CELAC

by Yadi Salgenek—China

How can people improve their English? There are many places and programs to learn English, such as CNM or adult night high school, but I choose the CELAC program in UNM. It is the best for English language learners. The classes are small and intimate, allowing for more individual attention from the teacher and opportunities for students to ask questions and participate in discussions.

The staff at CELAC are incredibly helpful. UNM is a big school, but students at CELAC don't need to worry because they can get help and get to the right place. The staff are always available to answer questions and assist in ordering study materials. Additionally, old students help new students. The program fosters a supportive community where older students are happy to help new students adjust.

There are a multitude of free activities available on the UNM campus, including swimming lessons, gym access, tennis, basketball, and football programs. These opportunities allow students to not only improve their English, but also engage in physical activities and meet other students.



Overall, I like the CELAC program. In this program people can learn English. The classes are small and personalized, the staff is helpful, and there are numerous activities available to enhance the learning experience. For anyone looking to improve their English, the CELAC program at UNM is the ideal choice.

# First Impressions of CELAC

by Janet Marlene Valerio Heller —Peru

In today's demanding and competitive world, whether it be in our personal, professional, or business lives, image plays a crucial role in making connections and building relationships. The first impression we make is crucial as it sets the tone for what's to come and the image or brand we project holds great significance in building trust, credibility, and establishing values.

The image we project is a form of non-verbal communication that tells a lot about who we are. This brings us to the question: what was my first impression of CELAC (Center for English Language and American Culture)? In terms of infrastructure, security, and atmosphere, it is important to consider these factors.

CELAC is situated within the UNM (University of New Mexico) campus, but is smaller in area compared to the university as a whole. The infrastructure is decent, with medium-sized study rooms and some advanced technology available. Additionally, the presence of a library, market, and restaurant on campus provides a certain level of satisfaction.

The security within the university is better than outside. However, the location of UNM, being near dangerous avenues, may make some students feel unsafe, so it's important to always stay vigilant.



The atmosphere at CELAC is warm and friendly. The staff is incredibly welcoming, providing kindness and helpful guidance. The teachers are highly professional and patient, while the classmates are cooperative and friendly, creating a positive learning environment. I appreciate the diversity of the student body, as it allows us to learn and share different cultures.

In conclusion, the first impression is key and I would say that my first impression of CELAC was a positive one. The friendly and welcoming staff and the excellent class environment make it a great place to continue learning and make the experience highly satisfactory.



# First Impressions of CELAC

by Sara Milena Martinez Ruiz—Colombia

It is my first time studying online, and I started at an English institute called CELAC. My first impression was incredible. Being Colombian, I am now in a school located in the United States, and it is a very good experience, even though it is online.

Despite that, I can still appreciate the environment and interact with the teachers and classmates. The school is good, big, and beautiful. The teachers are always patient and kind to me. At times, it can be hard for me to understand what they are saying, but that is just part of the learning process. Despite the difficulties, I am confident in my ability to succeed.

I really like the school and that is why I want to continue studying there. My goal is to obtain my certificate from CELAC, and I hope that this semester will be just as positive as my first experience.



# First Impressions of CELAC

by Khaled Abueed – Jordan

I have been in the CELAC program for two weeks now. On my first day, I was welcomed nicely and had the opportunity to meet the head of the department and the instructors. I have four amazing instructors for my four English classes. From day one, they have supported and encouraged us to be active in the classroom. I appreciate this program because it offers a good opportunity for exposure to other nationalities and cultures. I can learn so much from my classmates, and this will help me be more open to people from around the world. I am very excited about this.

The program also offered a tour of the UNM campus and gave us the chance to eat lunch together. I never would have imagined sitting at a table with people from so many different countries.

I trust this program and I am confident that it will improve my English skills and help me learn American habits. It's truly rewarding and allows me to connect with people I may never have had the chance to connect with otherwise.



# First Impressions of CELAC

by Mohammad Alsouliman – Jordan

The University of New Mexico is one of the most renowned educational institutions in the United States, and it is well known for its developed English classes offered through the CELAC program. The CELAC program boasts a team of elite instructors and an organized curriculum.

I have been a part of this program for a couple of weeks now. The registration process was well-arranged and the response from the administration was prompt. On my first day, I was in awe of the beautiful and colorful building, where I saw international students moving around. When I arrived at the meeting room, I saw around ten students from different countries looking at each other, and Mr. Bart, the coordinator and administrative teacher, was smiling behind the desk. His warm welcome filled me with a cool feeling and touched my heart.

At first, the CELAC program seemed complicated, but as time went by, I found myself enjoying being a part of it. The curriculum was divided in a professional manner among four classes, connecting all the classes towards the same goal. In the beginning, I was confused, but by the second week, I started to understand the pattern and how all the classes were interconnected. The CELAC classes have opened up a new chapter in my educational plan and motivated me to improve myself.



However, just like anywhere, not everything is perfect. Parking is a concern for many international students and me. Most parking spots are reserved and I tried to book one online, but they were all full. You have to walk a bit further to find parking. Homework is important for improvement and sometimes I find it challenging. The teachers were responsive and helpful to this matter and the students can study with a better pace. Nothing can not be solved through communication.

In conclusion, the CELAC program is an excellent educational system that helps students achieve their goals in the English language for both daily life and academic purposes.



# First Impressions of CELAC

by Nakyoung Lee - South Korea

On my first day at CELAC, I was a little nervous. I got lost on campus initially because the building where my class was held had multiple entrances, and one was locked. I felt frustrated and wondered if I was in the wrong place. Eventually, I found the door and made it to class.

In class, everyone was a stranger to me, and I wasn't very confident in my English. Additionally, it was challenging to understand Spanish-accented English. However, after a month, I adapted to the program and the people. I was surprised by the cost of textbooks compared to the prices in Korea, but I opted for used books.

In this semester, I have both old and new friends from many different countries. They are all kind and friendly, so I aspire to be a good classmate like them. CELAC is an excellent program not just for learning English but also for understanding different cultures. I recommend this program to anyone who wants to learn both language and culture. This is my last semester, so I hope to finish well.

