

Embracing Diversity: Finding Home at a Hispanic-Serving Institution

When I first arrived at Texas Tech University as an international student from India, I was excited yet overwhelmed. I had left behind my family, my friends, my language, my food, and everything that was familiar to me. But I was determined to find a sense of belonging in this new world. What I did not expect was that I would find that home in a culture that, at first, seemed so different from mine—Hispanic and Latinx culture.

Texas Tech's Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) designation is more than just a label for me; it represents a vibrant, thriving community where students from all backgrounds can come together and feel seen, valued, and supported. I first witnessed the power of this community when I attended the HSI Summit, twice. As a volunteer, I saw firsthand how the Hispanic/Latinx community embraces its rich heritage while welcoming others into its fold. I met students who spoke passionately about their culture, history, and struggles. These conversations resonated with me deeply because, like them, I carried my own story of resilience and determination.

I have formed strong friendships with many Hispanic and Latina students who have shown me the true meaning of acceptance. They have shared their traditions, their music, their food, and their stories with me, allowing me to see how much our cultures have in common. In both Indian and Hispanic cultures, family is everything. We celebrate with vibrant festivals, cherish home-cooked meals, and hold deep respect for our elders. I remember one of my closest friends teaching me how to make tamales while I introduced her to Gajar ka Halva (Indian Sweet), and in that moment, our cultures blended effortlessly. It is these small, meaningful exchanges that remind me why diversity is so powerful, it is not about separation, but about learning from one another and growing together. I believe we can do so much with these collaborations and exchanges.

As a Community Advisor on campus, I wanted my residents to experience this same cultural appreciation that I did. Many of them had never explored Hispanic culture beyond what they saw in mainstream media, and I felt it was important to showcase the richness of this community. I planned events last semester that introduced my residents to Hispanic music, food, and traditions, using my role to promote a space where students from all backgrounds could connect and celebrate diversity. One of the most memorable moments was seeing my residents engage in a discussion about what Hispanic heritage meant to them, and I realized that Texas Tech's HSI status does not just serve Hispanic students but creates an environment where all students even international students like me can thrive by embracing and understanding different cultures.

One of the most defining moments in my journey at Texas Tech was when I struggled with feelings of isolation and homesickness. It was my Hispanic and Latina friends who reminded me that I was not alone. They welcomed me into their homes, invited me to their celebrations, and treated me like a family member. Their warmth reminded me so much of my own culture, where guests are treated like family and food is a love language. Because of them, I never felt like just an international student trying to navigate a foreign country, I felt like I belonged.

My vision for a truly Hispanic-serving campus continues to promote and encourage these cross-cultural connections. The Hispanic and international communities at Texas Tech have so much to offer each other, and I hope to see even more initiatives that bring us together. Whether through language exchange programs, cultural festivals, or mentorship opportunities, I believe that we can create an even more inclusive environment where students from all backgrounds feel valued.

I want to continue advocating for diversity and inclusion at Texas Tech while exploring the culture myself. I want to ensure that future students, especially those who come from far away as I did, find the same warmth and acceptance that I have found here. Because at the end of the day, it's not just about one group or one particular culture, it is about all of us, coming together, learning from each other, and building a stronger, more united community here at Tech.