

International Student Spotlight

Edition #11 April 8, 2026



A Home Away from Home: The Story of Burman University's International Office



In August 2025, something quietly historic began at Burman University. It didn't start with a ribbon-cutting or a grand announcement. It began with a desk pushed against a wall, a vision, and a deep conviction that our international students deserved a centralized, compassionate, one-stop support hub they could call home.

That humble desk—perched on a wall of what is now the International Lounge—became the birthplace of the **Burman University International Office**.

A Vision Rooted in Research, Prayer, and Community Need

Before the office had walls, furniture, or even a name, there was a month of research, consultations, campus visits, and conversations with faculty and staff—many of whom were immigrants themselves. Their message was clear: *Burman needs an International Office*.

The university listened. The Vice President for Academics gave full support under the direction of administration. And the work began.

Building an Office from the Ground Up

In those early days, the International Coordinator worked long hours—writing the International Student Handbook (now proudly displayed on the university website), drafting operational plans, and shaping the philosophy of the office. Every page, every paragraph, every idea was crafted with one goal in mind:

To ensure that every international student feels seen, supported, and valued.

Meanwhile, renovations began. Cupboard doors were removed. Old furniture was cleared out. The space became a blank canvas.

And the designer in him came alive.

Colours were chosen. Furniture was sourced—strategically purchased during massive Labour Day sales to stay within budget. But the flooring was still a problem. So, in true “get-it-done” fashion, a quick drive to **L.A. Carpet and Tile Inc.** resulted in new carpeting secured within ten minutes. A few days later, the flooring arrived, that would transformed the space into something warm, welcoming, and worthy of our students.

While Gerald—guided by Darren from Facilities—worked tirelessly to prepare the space, the International Coordinator was assembling furniture, planning the grand opening, coordinating guests, and still writing the handbook. Students passing by were occasionally recruited to assemble a chair or two, and faculty members helped move desks and boxes. It was a community effort.

October 8, 2025 — A New Era Begins

On this day, Burman University officially opened its **International Office and Lounge**. The Jamaican Consul was present, and greetings were sent by the Chair of the Edmonton Consular Corps. It was a proud moment—not just for the university, but for every international student who had longed for a space like this.



A Place of Support, Prayer, Food, and Family

Since that opening day, not a single day has passed without the International Office providing support.

Sometimes it's a snack.

Sometimes it's academic advising.

Sometimes it's immigration information.

Sometimes it's a listening ear.

Sometimes it's prayer—because some students walk in carrying burdens too heavy to bear alone.

Sometimes it's simply preparing lunch for a student who hasn't eaten.

Whatever the need, the office has endeavored to meet it.

Programs That Celebrate Culture, Community, and Joy

Since its launch, the International Office has hosted:

- **Games Night**
- **Karaoke Welcome Back Party**
- **Black History Movie Night**
- **Pre-Valentine Sweet Treat Social**
- **Cultural Extravaganza**
- **Christmas Dinner Hosting Program** (matching students with families—more families volunteered than students!)
- **Classy Christmas Gala (Dec 7, 2025)** — where international students dressed like royalty and were showered with gifts from faculty, staff, and friends of the office
- **Upcoming: International Graduates Celebration 2026**

Every event has been designed with one purpose:

To put a smile on the faces of our international students.

A Community of Generosity

The International Office has been blessed by sponsors who believe in the mission:

- A television for the meeting room
- Assistance with exam rescheduling fees
- Financial support for students in crisis
- Food donations for the Burman Pantry
- Winter jackets, clothing, and toiletries
- A recent sponsorship of **three quarter-barrels of brand-new items**, plus ongoing food donations (oil, rice, canned goods)

These gifts have helped not only international students, but any student in need.



Keeping the Campus Connected

The office has:

- Published **bi-monthly International Student Spotlight** editions
- Shared global cultural celebrations
- Provided detailed reports on hosted events
- Offered ongoing immigration information communications
- Maintained an open-door policy—students walk in without appointments, and the day is rearranged to meet their needs

The lounge now includes a **fridge, microwave, and air-fryer toaster oven**, which have been a blessing to students needing a warm meal. These are now presently hosted in the office space. Sooner than later they should be in their rightful place in the lounge when the kitchenette is installed

A Commitment to Excellence

The International Coordinator continues to sharpen his expertise—studying immigration regulations, strengthening advising skills, and ensuring that every student receives accurate, ethical, and timely support.

Because immigration matters are time-sensitive.

Because students deserve excellence.

Because this office exists for them.

A Final Word to Our Students and Supporters

To every student who has walked through the doors:

You matter. You belong. You are loved.

To every supporter who has donated, volunteered, or encouraged the office:

Thank you. Your kindness is felt deeply.

To every international student who has not yet visited:

Don't wait until you are in a crisis. Come early. Come often. We are here for you.

The Burman University International Office is more than a department.

It is a family.

A home.

A ministry of compassion.

A place where every international student is celebrated.

And this is only the beginning