



Monique Nogueira

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Monique is an architecture and environmental design student at Los Angeles Trade-Technical College, with a background in architecture, interior design, and sustainable design. Originally from Brazil, she brings both international perspective and hands-on experience to her academic and professional work. Through her involvement with the Climate Center and the Building Resilient Futures Fellowship, she has contributed to projects focused on climate resilience, community-centered design, and environmental equity. Her work reflects a strong interest in how design can support more sustainable and inclusive futures.

1.

How are current immigration policies shaping students' ability to plan your career after graduation—are they creating uncertainty, limiting options, or forcing you to rethink their path?

Current immigration policies create a lot of uncertainty for international students when planning a career after graduation. In my experience, the California Center for Climate Change Education gave me a valuable opportunity to grow as a work student and be involved in meaningful projects. That experience helped me a lot academically and professionally. At the same time, there are opportunities connected to associated offices and professional networks around campus that I cannot fully pursue because of my F-1 status. So even when students are doing everything they can to prepare for the future, immigration rules can still limit their path.

2.

What are the biggest barriers students are facing right now—from visas to licensure to employment—and where do they feel the system is most out of sync with the reality of being a student today?

One of the biggest barriers students face is that the immigration system doesn't align with the reality of how careers are built today. We are encouraged to gain experience, make connections, and prepare for professional life, but visa restrictions often make that much harder. In my case, I have had access to valuable academic opportunities, but not every professional opportunity connected to that environment is possible for me. Another challenge is OPT. There is a lot of pressure around applying correctly, following strict deadlines, and then finding a job within a limited time. The 60-day limit adds a lot of stress, especially in competitive fields.

3.

If those barriers remain in place, how might that influence students' decision to stay in the U.S. or build your career elsewhere—and what does that mean for the profession here?

If these barriers remain in place, many students may have to think more carefully about whether staying in the U.S. is possible long term. But I still think many of us want to stay, contribute, and build our careers here if we are given a fair opportunity. That is why support from schools, mentors, and professional networks is so important. With better pathways and more understanding of the reality international students face, the U.S. can continue to benefit from talented students who are ready to contribute with dedication, new ideas, and diverse perspectives.