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equally qualified, compare what you have both learnt in the course of your careers, and consider how your experiences and skills could complement each other's.

Talk extensively about cultural differences. The value of international collaborations comes from the different perceptions, communication styles, work styles, customs and other forms of variety that a new colleague can bring to both the work and the social spheres. Understanding and speaking about differences will help to prevent conflicts that might arise. If they occur nonetheless, you will be able to more easily agree on how to handle similar situations in the future.

On arriving in Belgium, I noticed that I was used to a more 'direct' communication style than were my local colleagues, as a result of my previous research post in the Netherlands. This prompted me to ask the locals for advice on how to approach discussions with my PhD supervisors, interviews for grant applications or negotiations with project partners. I am convinced that such exchanges have greatly helped me to establish and uphold successful collaborations.

Offer help with practical matters. Navigating a new health-care system, finding a good phone plan or arranging childcare are time-consuming at best and nerve-racking at worst. I was forever grateful to a co-worker in Belgium who helped me to arrange health insurance and an annual public-transport pass and pointed out the place that sells the best bread in town.

Ideally, your university's international office should provide a welcome pack that explains which administrative and practical matters need to be arranged and how. Make sure that the new researcher gets one before their arrival.

Pay attention to the little things. Little things count for someone whose life – particularly their social life – has been turned upside down. Suggesting a coffee together outside work or offering to show your new colleague a nice place in town might help them to forget the stresses of relocating for a little while.

During my stay in the United Kingdom, I joined a group of fellow PhD students for weekly Friday breakfasts at a cafe close to our university. These mornings allowed us to bond, and I learnt a great deal about UK life outside the workplace. If you get along with the newcomer, you might make a new friend.

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DIVERSITY DEFICIT DRAGS ON

There are promising signs for gender and ethnic representation in US graduate programmes, but parity is still far off, says study. **By Virginia Gewin**

The number of Indigenous and Latinx students enrolling in US graduate-level programmes for the first time rose between autumn 2017 and 2018, according to a report from the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) in Washington DC, which represents more than 500 universities, mainly in the United States.

The report found that first-time enrolment in PhD and master's programmes grew by 8.3% and 6.8%, respectively, among American Indian/Alaska Native and Latinx students (Latinx refers to US residents with origins in

comprise 11.6%, the report found. By comparison, according to the 2010 US census, black and African American people represent 13.4% of the nation's population, and Hispanic or Latinx individuals represent 18.3%.

Indigenous students represent less than 1% of first-time enrollees, even though their total enrolment rose by 1.2% from a year ago. "More work has to be done in the graduate-education community to increase the representation of these students in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields," says report co-author Hironao Okahana, the CGS's associate vice-president for research and policy analysis. "All fields of study need to be a welcoming place for people from a variety of different backgrounds."

First-time international enrolment in graduate-level programmes fell for the fifth consecutive year, and is now down to 20% of all enrolment. The study found that the decline was most marked in engineering programmes, in which first-time enrolment of international students fell by 8.3% from 2017 numbers.

Female students continue to be outnumbered by their male counterparts in some graduate-level STEM programmes. They account, for example, for only 38.2% of physical and Earth-sciences graduate students and 32.1% of maths and computer-science students. "While the rate of growth for women in sciences looks good, there is still a long way to go to catch up," says Okahana.

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Latin America). Among other science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields, maths and computer science saw a 40% and 14.2% increase in the proportions of American Indian/Alaska Native and Latinx students enrolling, respectively. The proportion of black and African American first-time enrollees in physical and Earth sciences rose by 12.5%. Results are based on responses from 589 institutions in an annual survey.

Yet, overall, US graduate-level programmes still have low proportions of students from minority ethnic groups. Black and African American students comprise 11.8% of total first-time enrollees, and Latinx students