

Eduardo Custodio Leal



Today's portrait features Eduardo Custodio Leal, an undergraduate majoring in Chemical Engineering and Statistics & Data Science with a concentration in Energy Studies.

"I was born and raised in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. All of my family has been here for several generations, so I'd only visited places outside of my hometown during family trips. Going to college abroad had been my biggest dream since I can remember—my parents always encouraged me to work hard so I could fulfill this goal. Many teachers in high school doubted my ability and said that I would never be able to get a scholarship in the U.S., but many others believed in me and helped me get through the application process. Filling out college applications was especially hard because very few people do it in Brazil, let alone in my city.

Getting that acceptance letter from Yale was one of the most rewarding moments of my life. Because I'd spent all of my time focusing on academics and extracurriculars, I had never really contemplated the cultural shock that would come with moving to a different country. I struggled a lot during my first year to make friends and navigate new spaces, with an extra layer of not being able to express myself properly in a foreign language and according to a whole different set of social norms. Whenever I translated inside my head a sentence I would usually say in Portuguese at a given situation, it would come across entirely wrong to my colleagues.

In the end of my first year I applied to be a peer liaison at La Casa Cultural: The Latino Cultural Center at Yale. I felt that the relationship between the Brazilian community on campus and the center was complicated, since many Brazilians couldn't see themselves represented in that space. When I applied, I hoped to be able to help the center

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become the space I wish I had been a part of during my first year. I have been working at La Casa for two years now, and the community there has provided me with the support I needed to flourish at Yale.”

Photo Credit: @surbhib42 #humansofoiss @lacasacultural

https://www.instagram.com/p/B_fTrpwJybO/ [1]

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