



—a Ferris State international education newsletter

## Looking Back, Looking Ahead:

Greetings from the Office of International Education. This week we are celebrating ***International Education Week***. It is an opportunity to celebrate the efforts to prepare our students for a global environment and attract future leaders from abroad to study and learn with us.

**Looking back**, thirteen years ago, faculty and staff across our University came together to create the Globalization Initiative. We advocated for investing in international education and strengthening international student enrollment efforts to address anticipated declining domestic enrollment. We discussed the opportunities and challenges of the interconnected world and the need to help our students prepare for it. We talked about preparing our University for the world of 2020.

The Office of International Education (OIE) was created in 2010, and we invested significant resources and effort to engage the world and create opportunities for our students. We rapidly grew our international student enrollment and developed high quality global experiences. In the last ten years, with support from faculty and staff across the University, we were able to create a thriving ecosystem for international education, including three new endowments, an international symposium series, high quality study abroad programs, and the BEYOND Initiative to name a few. Our efforts were recognized by the Institute of International Education (IIE) for our Campus Internationalization efforts in 2018 during the Andrew Heiskell Award and centennial celebration in NYC. The IIE recognized Ferris State under the category of Faculty as Drivers of Innovation.

As we were building a strong global ecosystem here at Ferris, we also saw our national discourse moving away from the language of hope and an inclusive future to one of division. The national discourse on immigration, inclusion, and identity politics has impacted international education in significant ways. The COVID-19 global pandemic and travel restrictions have exacerbated the impact even further. We had a significant drop in student enrollment across the University in the Fall of 2020. Despite the many challenges due to the COVID -19 global pandemic and the resulting significant budget cuts in summer 2020, the staff in the OIE worked hard to increase our international student enrollment. Our international student enrollment increased by 7.4% for Fall 2021 compared to the previous year. This is a testament to the strong, dedicated team of professionals in the OIE and their commitment to excellence.

This fall, the system-wide decrease in enrollment required us to make further deep budget cuts. To continue our current international efforts and to ensure that our current staffing is maintained to get us through these challenging times, I requested to return to my faculty position. I will return to the classroom as a Chemistry faculty in Spring 2022. I am thankful for the opportunity to serve and work with great colleagues across the University and represent Ferris around the world. I am especially thankful to President Eisler and Dr. Pilgrim for their support over the last 13 years to help build the global ecosystem at Ferris State. I am blessed to have had the opportunity to help students from around the world and their families achieve their dreams.

Starting Monday, our Assistant Director, Lisa vonReichbauer, will be leading our efforts to move international education forward. With her extensive experience, commitment to student success, a supportive strong international team, the OIE is in great hands. I am looking forward to supporting Lisa's leadership and working towards Dr. Fleischman's vision and direction for International Education.

**Looking ahead**, continued challenges with enrollment and digital disruption will require transformational changes for small, regional universities to remain relevant. The COVID-19 global pandemic has accelerated the disruption to higher education in significant ways. Our vision is to be an agile and transformational university. The wise Dumbledore once said, "It is our choices, Harry, that show us who we truly are, far more than our abilities." Since the days of the founders, we have been a welcoming institution for international students. Mr. Ferris valued the idea of making the world a better place. The rationale for sustained commitment to International Education and the need for embracing the opportunities that it brings is truer now than ever before.

In an interconnected world, sustained commitment to international education is critical to serve our rapidly changing global economy and society. I am looking forward to supporting international education in my faculty role and I encourage you to do the same. Happy International Education Week!!

Dr. Piram Prakasam,  
Executive Director,  
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*Ferris Forward*

