



–a Ferris State international education newsletter

BEYOND: Conflict Resolution

Greetings from the Office of International Education (OIE). Happy New Year!!

As we look ahead to making this new year successful, 2018 has passed reminding us that we live in interesting times. Our world in many measures became much more interconnected in 2018. For example, the numbers of mobile phone users worldwide and airline passengers reached the highest ever. Extreme poverty worldwide is the lowest in history. The world has become wealthier and healthier. The interconnectedness has also opened up some old chasms. Year 2018 left our world more divisive, national and local discourses less civil, and some communities less tolerant of others than before. Are these passing clouds or signs of a gathering storm ahead? How do we respond collectively to these challenges?

Teaching institutions like Ferris State have an obligation to engage their communities in addressing these global/national issues that manifest as local challenges.

Consider this: the number of international students in universities like ours has decreased significantly. Immigrants feel less welcomed. Our collective response has been one of indifference or indolence. We avoid difficult dialogues, which clouds our ability to envision an inclusive future.

International educators and advocates for inclusion need to encourage the larger community to engage in these difficult dialogues.

For the last six years, the OIE has collaborated with faculty and staff across the university to host and coordinate the BEYOND initiative (BI). We select an annual theme, and this year's theme is Conflict Resolution. We plan to use the BI platform to engage the campus in these difficult dialogues.

Our BI programming for spring will focus on international education and immigration through the Conflict Resolution theme, in keeping with the wisdom of Hillel:

Hillel said, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for myself, who am I? If not now, when?" Ethics of the Fathers, 1:14

Dr. Piram Prakasam
Executive Director, Office of International Education



Environmental Scanning: Student Enrollment

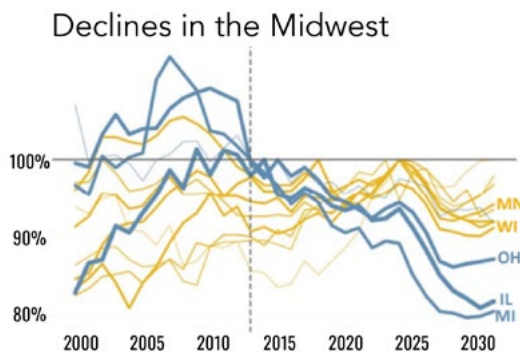
Higher education is changing rapidly, and smaller regional institutions, especially in the Midwest, are facing an uncertain future. Delivery modes, demographics, and decreasing student bodies are putting significant pressure, most acutely financial pressure, on universities like Ferris State. In this climate of decreasing enrollment and resources, what role does international education play at Ferris?

The decrease in international student enrollment over the last three years has exacerbated the financial challenges that we are facing due to the domestic enrollment decline. The OIE has been advocating for a comprehensive internationalization plan to help address these challenges that we will face in the next decade. This spring, we are planning to engage the campus in deliberative dialogues to create a common understanding of the challenges we face and the opportunities international engagement brings. To create this common understanding, the first step is to analyze data to understand the challenges.

Common Understanding of our Challenges:

1. Ferris is a different institution than it was 20 years ago. In 2001, 82% of Ferris students studied on the main Big Rapids campus as post-secondary students. In Fall 2018, this has dropped to 67%.
2. One third of our students today are not enrolled on the Big Rapids residential campus as post-secondary students. They are enrolled through dual/concurrent enrollment, off-campus locations, Kendall and online.
3. In the last ten years, we have also become a smaller institution. Compared to 2008, our system-wide student body is smaller by 1634 students. Our main campus enrollment is smaller by 1881 post-secondary students.
4. The decline in main campus post-secondary students impacts the sustainability of a thriving residential campus. This further compounds the challenges of recruiting and retaining students.

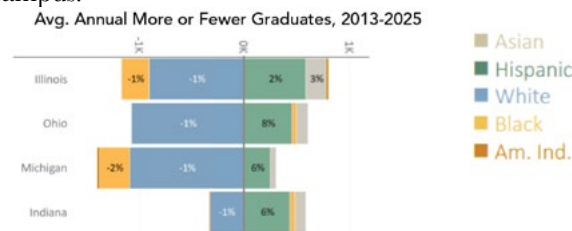
What engines do we have available to help us grow out of our enrollment challenges? As we know, the Midwest is expected to have fewer high school graduates for at least the next decade. As shown in the graph, Michigan will face the steepest declines followed by our closest neighboring states.



Knocking at the College Door

Additionally, demographic changes will compound our challenges as a regional public university in a more rural setting. Along with fewer high school graduates overall, it is projected that the number of Caucasian and African American students is declining in Michigan and in our neighboring states as shown in the graph below.

Ferris has made significant progress in increasing the enrollment of Hispanic students, which is projected to remain a growing population. The increase in the Hispanic student population can serve as one engine for growth; however, it cannot fully compensate for the steeper decrease in high school graduates overall. Another engine for growth could be a strategic move to provide more programs and options to serve adult learners. With our online offerings and our off-campus locations, we have delivery modes that are attractive to this population. But, growth in this area provides limited benefits to our main residential campus.



Midwest: White declines in the Big 3 drive declines, despite swift increase of minorities.

Knocking at the College Door

International Opportunities:

International Education could serve as an engine for growth with a common understanding of challenges and opportunities and a strategic University-wide commitment. International student enrollment was 360 in 2001 and decreased to 163 in 2008. The OIE reversed the decrease by Fall 2015 to reach the highest enrollment of 530 international students with renewed university commitment. But, in 2018, our international student enrollment has declined to 238. This needs to be reversed again as the decrease of 300 students in the last 3 years has contributed to the financial challenges that we are facing. Since international students pay a 60% higher rate of tuition, the annual tuition generated by 300 international students would be more than \$5 million. This is in addition to revenue generated through housing and dining services.

Reversing this trend requires a comprehensive internationalization plan and university-wide commitment. The demand for tertiary education is increasing around the world, especially in developing countries. Hence the population of international students seeking opportunities abroad will continue to increase.

Hosting international students at Ferris will help with our enrollment challenges and enrich the residential campus experience for our entire campus community. Engaging internationally provides Ferris with opportunities to benchmark globally, develop our brand worldwide, and broaden our access to resources. In upcoming issues, we will provide further data on international education and the higher ed environment to better inform our deliberative dialogues.



In Context

1. **Watch or Listen:** [How Diversity Makes Teams More Innovative - Rocio Lorenzo at TedX BCG](#)
2. **Read:** [One of America's Most Vital Exports, Education, Never Goes Abroad, but It Still Faces Threats - Brook Larmer - New York Times Magazine](#)
3. **Read:** [Research Shows Immigrants Help Businesses Grow, Here's Why. - Nataly Kelly - Harvard Business Review](#)



A Moment In Time:



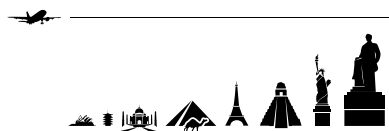
COB study abroad student, Ike (pictured second from the left) was invited to celebrate American Thanksgiving in November at the home of a Saxion University of Applied Sciences student in the Netherlands. He was joined by several Dutch and German exchange students who studied at Ferris in the past. Ferris State University's partnership with Saxion University of Applied Sciences is more than 25 years old. In our next newsletter, you can read about this relationship in an article by Dr. Greg Gogolin, COB.



Upcoming Events:

1. January 20 – Field trip to the Holocaust Memorial Center and the Arab American National Museum (open to international and domestic students)
2. January 17 (Thursday) – International Potluck 11:00 am-1:00 pm in IRC 104 open to faculty and staff
3. Fridays at 1:00 pm in IRC 104 – Weekly Study Abroad Workshops (open to all students)

Imagine more...



Past OIE Newsletters



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