



*—a Ferris State international education newsletter*

## **The Power of International Education:**

Greetings from the Office of International Education. Two weeks ago, I attended the Institute of International Education's (IIE's) 2019 IIE summit in NYC. This was a special summit as it was the 100-year celebration for IIE. It was also a special event for us as Ferris State University was recognized by IIE for our campus internationalization efforts. The collective effort of more than 200 individuals over the last ten years contributed to make this special moment a reality for our University.

Ferris State's BEYOND initiative was recognized as a best practice for campus internationalization efforts by Alan Goodman, President of IIE, in front of a large gathering of international educators from around the world. The stage had the IIE tagline in bold font: "The Power of International Education." For the last two weeks, I have been asking myself this question: What is the Power of International Education?

Looking back and looking ahead, I realize the power of International Education lies in the transformative ability of experiences that lead to humanizing our collective global identity. The power of international education is manifested through the work of inspired lives. In the next few pages, we share the work of a staff member, faculty, and an alumna who have worked on the BEYOND project.

We share the message of these individuals to remind ourselves of the work ahead! Ten years ago, as a university, we committed to transforming our students' lives through international education.

The wise Dumbledore once said, "It is our choices, Harry, that show us who we truly are, far more than our abilities."

The choice we made reflected our commitment to an inclusive future for our students and society. We are now recognized internationally for our efforts. I see the IIE recognition we received not as an award but as a calling and reminder to continue this important work of transforming our students' lives.

In the next few pages, you will read about how we can achieve this. You will also read an article on how inspired lives of a faculty and an alumna demonstrate the power of international education. I can't wait for you to read it.

Dr. Piram Prakasam  
Executive Director, Office of International Education



## Thriving in a Dynamic Global Society

Through my work in the Office of International Education, I have had the opportunity to collaborate with many members of our campus community on the annual BEYOND Initiative since it began in 2012. This initiative has truly been a grassroots project linking people, programs, and curriculum together through shared goals and passion to internationalize our campus. It is wonderful that such a large group of people have been recognized by IIE. The BEYOND Initiative germinated and flourished in an ecosystem that supports our campus internationalization efforts. In addition to the BEYOND Initiative, other projects, such as the Lighthouse Summer Symposiums, Summer Micro Campuses, international student enrollment, and the Ubuntu and Study Abroad Endowments, have grown out of and also strengthened this ecosystem.

The metaphor of a biological ecosystem is often used to describe organizations, whose members are linked together through the flow of information and resources. Higher education is a dynamic ecosystem that has existed for centuries. Ferris State itself has a history of more than 130 years. However, a geopolitical shift is gradually taking place in higher education around our world. We have to sensitize ourselves to these changes so that we can thrive in this changing landscape. Looking at the information below, we need to reflect on the challenges and opportunities ahead.

- In 1990, there were 1,255 higher education students per 100,000 inhabitants worldwide. By 2000 this increased to 1,625 and to 2,900 by 2015.
- From 2007 to 2016, South and West Asia experienced the greatest growth increasing by 83% from 1,247 to 2,288 per 100,000 inhabitants.
- From 2007 to 2016, East Asia and the Pacific increased by 41%, from 2,162 to 3,053 per 100,000 inhabitants.
- Although North America and Western Europe have higher proportions of the population who access higher education with more than 4,000 students per 100,000 inhabitants in 2016, they have decreased as a percentage of worldwide enrollment. This decrease will continue.
- As centers of knowledge change and grow, research and application will profoundly impact institutions around the world.
- In 1950, 29.6% of the population worldwide lived in urban centers. By 2000, this rose to 46.65%. By 2050 this percentage is expected to increase to 66.4%
- Automation, artificial intelligence and new technological development will impact our global society and labor market.
- Education will become more accessible and affordable to those who seek it and less costly for providers.
- Geopolitical shifts are changing the balance of power such as trade dynamics, mobility, and social norms along with the rise of newer economic powers and nationalism and populism in some countries.

Although this changing landscape creates uncertainty for regional and rural institutions such as Ferris, I am enthusiastic about the many opportunities on the horizon. This past year, I have had the opportunity to work alongside my colleagues on a committee to facilitate a review of the University's Mission, Vision, and Core Values. Through an inclusive campus-wide process, our committee collected data and feedback. This process revealed palpable uncertainty about the path forward. But more importantly, it revealed palpable enthusiasm across campus to prepare our students for the world of tomorrow. The committee worked for several months to develop this proposed Vision Statement for Ferris State University:

“Building on the vision of our founders, Ferris State University will be an agile and transformational university. By integrating theory and practice, we will foster opportunity, discovery, and professional preparation for a dynamic global society.”

To achieve this vision, the proposed Mission Statement focuses on building the necessary links through the flow of information and resources. Embracing comprehensive international education will help develop the links that are vital for Ferris and our students to thrive in a dynamic global society. As we strategically connect ourselves globally, we have the opportunity to benchmark in the shifting landscape and identify best practices in our endeavors.



The Beyond Initiative was developed to enhance our curriculum and promote experiential learning. We identified best practices in the field of international education and set a goal to become nationally recognized as a path to measure how well we have aligned with best practices. Following on from our success with the Beyond Initiative, through which we promote global experiential learning, we are working on aligning our institutional approach to study abroad with best practices as well.

The links we have made in the international education community provide us networks and frameworks to support a thriving ecosystem. Within the mature field of study abroad, information and resources flow easily with respect to curriculum design, cohesive experiential learning, assessment, health and safety, and cost and value to students. We have been strengthening these links and have set a new goal of receiving national recognition for study abroad programs and models by 2023. We will achieve this by benchmarking ourselves against standards of excellence.

The power of international education will drive the ecosystem for higher education in the years to come. As an institution, we have the opportunity to strategically position ourselves to thrive in this ecosystem. Links are created and strengthened through a ground up process in the same way the Beyond Initiative was developed. And as we will see from the stories of our faculty and alumna, individuals emerge from this ecosystem with the ability to transform themselves and their communities and humanize our collective global identity. This is the true “Power of International Education.”

Lisa vonReichbauer  
Assistant Director, Office of International Education



## Humanizing Discoveries and Inspired Lives

Saying “yes” to a 3-week trip to Syria in 2010 was the first of several international education opportunities that shaped the trajectory of my life. The trip rocked my worldview, sparked my interest in global history and current events, motivated me to work with international students and faculty at Ferris, and ultimately gave me the courage and experience I needed to join the Peace Corps. Opportunities like these — big and small — have yielded challenging conversations that have been the catalyst for making the biggest discoveries about our world and myself.

I traveled to Syria with a group of students from across the US seven months before the conflict that continues to decimate the Syria first broke out. Signs of the oppressive dictatorship were omnipresent in the way our Syrian counterparts censored their speech and the close watch of our government-appointed guide. Despite that presence, I was overwhelmed by the generosity and hospitality of our hosts, the beauty of the country, and how strikingly similar my life was to the students we spoke with.

Whether you’re traveling to California or Colombia or simply meeting someone new, one of the most basic and humanizing discoveries is realizing that at the core everyone has the same desires for love and safety.

With my trip to Syria in the back of my mind, and with the encouragement of my nonprofit marketing professor, Paul Jackson, I applied to serve in the Peace Corps to flex my design skills to support international development at the grassroots level. Nine months later, my placement letter arrived telling me I would be serving as

a technology educator in the Republic of Vanuatu, a small South Pacific island nation. The islands are so remote it took the staff of the OIE at least five minutes of scrambling before we found it on the office's world map.

If you do a quick Google image search, you'll get the tourist perspective of Vanuatu: sandy beaches, and a diet rich in tropical fruits and fresh seafood cooked on an open fire. As a developing country with an economy based on subsistence farming, you might also read about its limited access to electricity, internet, healthcare, education, and running water. What I saw after living there for two years was entirely more complex, challenging, and human.

One of the most uncomfortable lessons I needed to repeatedly learn was that I was so entirely dependent on my community to survive, let alone make anything of myself. I was naively determined to always be the giver, not the recipient of help, but let's face it, despite the 3 months of Peace Corps training, I didn't know the first thing about thriving in my new community. My host family and school community had to teach me everything from how to feed and clothe myself to how to navigate difficult interpersonal conflicts in culturally appropriate ways. Eating regular doses of humble pie allowed me to get over my mistakes and ignorance and lean into the knowledge and generosity of my community.



Now, as the Design Manager for DonorsChoose.org in New York City, I leverage my design and marketing savvy to help public school teachers bring enriching experiences to their students. We've helped fund over 1 million classroom requests that bring essential supplies and mind-opening experiences to over 32 million students. Ms. F's students had a profound experience connecting with their history on a field trip to the African American Museum in Philadelphia. Ms. Hammereister got books to help her Big Rapids students overcome their learning disabilities — bringing joy

to their present. Ms. Hanel helped her students from Wolverine, Michigan envision their futures on a tour of FSU and Art Prize.

We don't have to send students around the world in order for them to discover a new one, but it certainly helps. It's essential that students have equitable access to life-changing international experiences. Every time we are intentional about decolonizing our curriculum, elevating underrepresented voices and advocating for global resources for our classrooms, we can ensure that our students are competitive in a global economy and live inspired lives.

Lynn Overmyer  
Graphic Design Alumna, 2012




**“BEYOND” General Education:** *Equitable access to International Education*

When I came to Ferris to teach 12-years ago, in many ways I was coming home. Our students, many of whom are from small towns, reminded me of myself. Just like them, I had a rural childhood and few opportunities to meet people from different cultures. My curiosity was easily outmatched by my inexperience.

In retrospect, it was the basic history, English, and language classes, as well as the opportunity to study abroad that prepared me for the wider world. My general education classes taught me to read carefully, write critically, and think across disciplines. This training prepared me for discovering the wider world, helped me win a fellowship to go to Russia after college, and served as an excellent foundation for doing international work in D.C. for thirteen years.





Since arriving at Ferris, I have become involved with a number of groundbreaking initiatives, under the auspices of the Office of International Education (OIE) that have given our students the opportunity to expand their horizons outside the classroom. The most ambitious of all of our projects was the award-winning BEYOND initiative, which re-envisioned the study abroad fair as a journey along the Silk Road. I collaborated with students, OIE staff, and professors to write didactics and find artifacts to put on display. Students volunteered to play the historical characters of Xuanzhang, Chinggis Khan, Marco Polo, and other travelers, while professors integrated BEYOND activities into their classrooms. The metaphor of college as a journey became apparent to us all.

Our inaugural effort was followed by BEYOND: Mythology, BEYOND: Diversity, BEYOND: Globalization, BEYOND: Conflict, and BEYOND: Conflict Resolution. The last two BEYONDS, have given us the chance to showcase our access to the Shoah Archive, which was gifted to Ferris by our alumnus, Mickey Shapiro, the son of a Holocaust survivor and a new “Deliberative Dialogue” effort that allows students to explore “hot button” topics, such as immigration, from multiple perspectives.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that the General Education classes, in conjunction with co-curricular activities, such as the BEYOND exhibit, Minds Aflame, and the Deliberative Dialogue model, are doing the important work of connecting curricular learning to co-curricular experiences. Not everyone has the opportunity to study abroad. Having a vibrant international community on campus provides an excellent opportunity for local students to experience the world beyond the immediate through interactions with international students and international faculty. These opportunities need to be expanded to give equitable access to all students. BEYOND does that by connecting resources to learning and integrating class room learning with co-curricular engagement.

Connecting General Education to BEYOND prepares our students for the global realities that await them upon commencement. The intentional embedding of experiences with course outcomes is critical. Nurturing an ecosystem that allows opportunities to thrive is necessary for preparing our students for the global economy and society. More importantly, a well-rounded liberal arts education prepares one to humanize the collective global identity. General Education courses provide a framework to makes sense of the international experiences such as BEYOND and study abroad to harness the “Power of International Education.”

Dr. Tracy Busch  
Associate Professor of History



## In Context

1. **Read:** 2019 IIE Andrew Heiskell Awards for Innovation in International Education – The IIE Networker Magazine
2. **Watch or Listen:** What does it mean to be a citizen of the world? Hugh Evans TED2016
3. **Read:** IIE Summit Highlights Importance of Study Abroad– Diverse: Issues in Higher education – Melanie Eversley



## A Moment In Time:



A group picture of faculty staff, and students who collaborated on the Beyond: Diversity Exhibit in 2015.



## Upcoming Events:

1. March 12 at 12:00 pm in IRC 104 –World Affairs Council Great Decisions Speaker Series Telecast. “What are the Consequences from the Crisis in Ukraine?” – Matthew Rojansky, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.
2. March 14 (Friday) - International Potluck 11:00 am-1:00 pm in IRC 104 open to faculty and staff

Imagine more...





# *Past OIE Newsletters*

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