



–a Ferris State international education newsletter

## **CIP Pillar 4: Ensuring the University is a Welcoming Place**

Greetings from the Office of International Education (OIE). Thank you for your continued interest in and support for our efforts in creating a Comprehensive Internationalization Plan (CIP). More than 80 individuals across the University have communicated their perspectives on international education and the CIP process.

In our first summer newsletter issue (Issue 1 Summer 2019), we shared a list of five key pillars for successful Comprehensive Internationalization Planning (CIP). In each of our subsequent issues, we have been articulating how each of the key pillars tie to our institutional core values and their relevance to our current challenges. In this issue, we focus on the fourth of the five pillars: ensuring the University is a welcoming place for students and scholars from around the world. As we plan for our future in a higher education landscape with increased competition and disruptive technology, creating a welcoming environment for international students and scholars (CIP Pillar 4) can be achieved through our core value of opportunity.

Ferris State University prides itself on being an opportunity university. Often international education is seen as offering an opportunity for international students. However, we need to view international education as an opportunity for seeking excellence, global civic engagement, advancement, and success for the university itself.

Small regional universities, including Ferris State, are facing declining domestic enrollment due to demographic changes. As a result, many institutions are redoubling their efforts to increase international student enrollment. These efforts are occurring amid increased competition for international students from other countries, a climate of rising nationalism, policies of protectionism, and bureaucratic barriers.

Where we are today is where our University founder, Woodbridge N. Ferris, found himself one hundred years ago during a time when nations and peoples similarly looked inward with louder voices cheering for protectionism, rising nationalism, and bureaucratic barriers to global engagement. This is what he had to say one hundred years ago: “The World is one big family. Time and distance have been annihilated. National isolation is a thing of the past.”

History tells us that these voices of wisdom were lost in the din of divisiveness and took decades to recover. What does this teach us today? How does this resonate with CIP Pillar 4? Do we have an obligation to be engaged with the world to live the vision of our founders? In these uncertain times, as we ramp up our efforts to increase international student enrollment, how do we ensure that we are a welcoming place for international students and scholars?

A welcoming place for international students and scholars communicates this: the plan and priorities within the University are in alignment with a collective commitment to enhancing the quality of the student and scholar experience. We believe this can be achieved if the University stakeholders have a common understanding of our challenges, the impending disruptive innovations in higher education, and opportunities through global engagement. More than 70% of individuals who responded to our CIP survey across the University communicated that enrollment and retention should be the two key goals of the University, and international enrollment should be a priority.

Plans and priorities at the institutional level do not translate well if the “last mile connectivity” to the individual student experience does not measure up to the quality needed to actualize the goal of making Ferris a welcoming and inclusive place for students. It requires a collective will to address bureaucratic barriers and sustain positive movement forward through collaboration. To achieve this, we need to collectively deliberate on the following questions: Is increasing international enrollment a short-term tactic? Is it a strategic goal? Is it a vision? Is it a response to and insurance against the uncertain higher education future, which is hard to predict?

Our common understanding of the answers to the above questions will help us to plan at a program and unit level and seek ways to collaborate to enhance the quality of experience for individual students. This will lead to success in achieving CIP Pillar 4.

In the next article, we articulate how CIP Pillar 4 allows us to address our current institutional challenges and expand on the need to look ahead at 2030 to develop a robust, sustainable internationalization plan. I invite you to join us in vigorously debating the many questions raised here and to shape our CIP process to be intentional, informed, and inclusive.

Dr. Piram Prakasam  
Executive Director, Office of International Education



## Environmental Scanning and the Choices Ahead

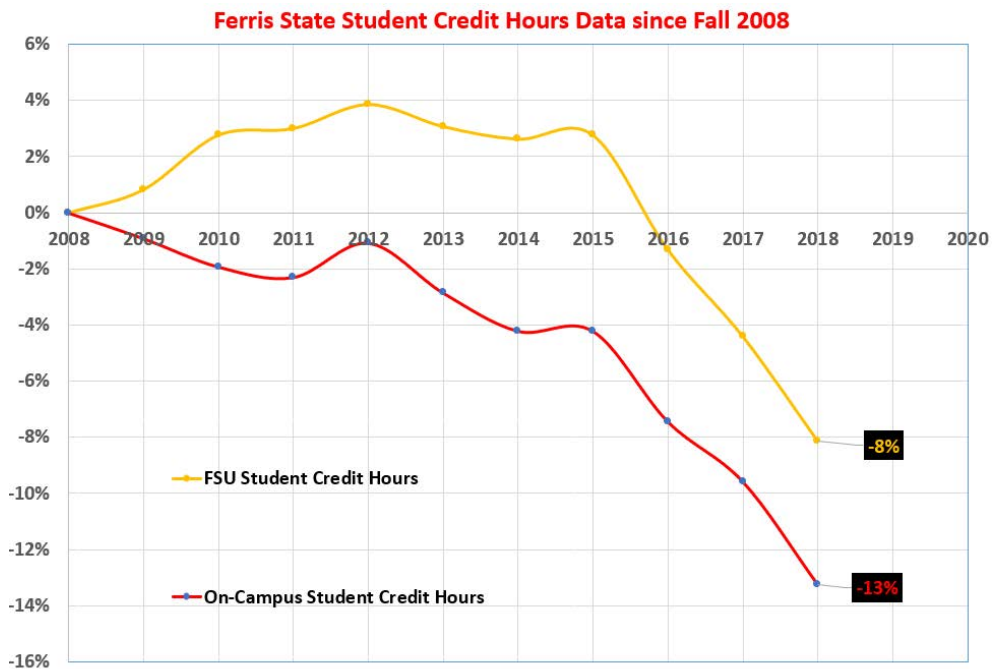
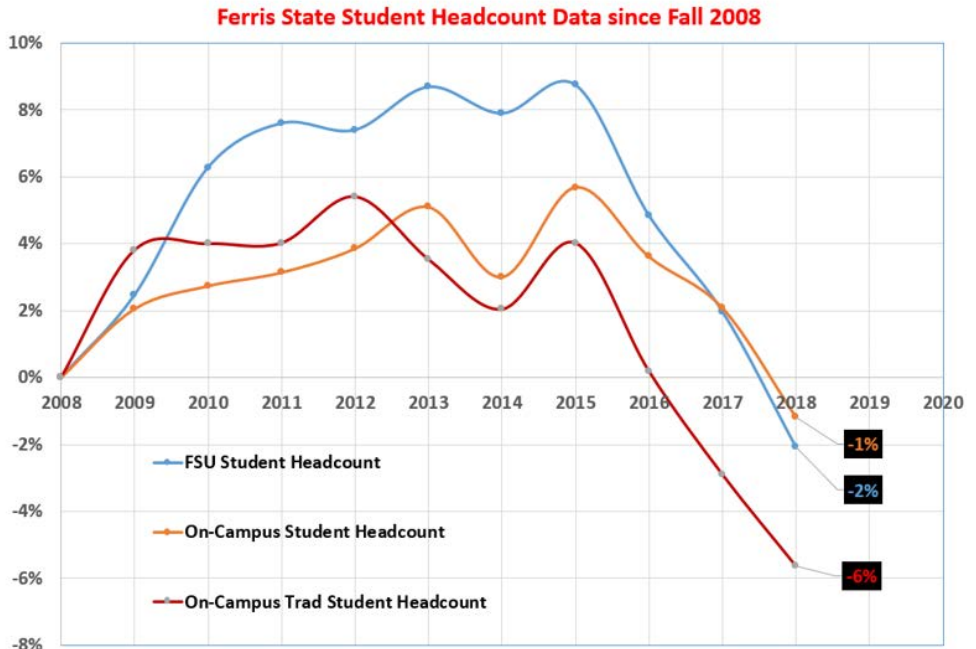
Greetings. As we look at the opportunities available to us by creating a welcoming environment for international students and scholars, enrollment is one key area to consider. Ferris State University enrollment has decreased from a high of 14,715 students in the fall of 2015 to 13,250 students last fall. It is anticipated that it will decrease further this coming academic year. Our current enrollment challenges and the collective response can provide opportunities for us to be nimble, innovative, and more collaborative to position ourselves competitively. It requires us all to have a common understanding our enrollment challenges ahead. This will provide a rationale for why CIP Pillar 4 is critical to balance our enrollment decline.

Ferris State University enrollment measured by Student Headcount (number of students enrolled) saw a steady increase from 2001 and peaked in the fall of 2015. From a budget perspective, the Student Credit Hours (SCH - number of credits students are enrolled in) peaked in the fall of 2012 and has dropped 12% since. Looking back, academic year 2008-09 appears to be a key point in time for Ferris enrollment. In terms of student credit hours (SCH) this was the year that state wide student enrollment reached its peak as well as Kendall College of Art and Design (KCAD). Since then SCHs have declined at our off campus locations and KCAD. Fall 2009 is the year that online student enrollment data appears in the Ferris enrollment picture. Using fall 2008 as a baseline, we can look at a ten-year picture of enrollment data.

The two graphs below (Figure 1 and Figure 2) show fall enrollment trends as a percentage increase since 2008 using fall 2008 as a baseline. Figure 1 shows Student Headcount and Figure 2 shows Student Credit Hours.

Figure 1 shows that for the first time since the fall of 2008, the system-wide headcount (-2%), main campus headcount (-1%) and the main campus traditional student headcount (-6%) is lower than fall 2008. So, we have reached a critical point in enrollment as main campus, off-campus, online enrollment have trended downward.

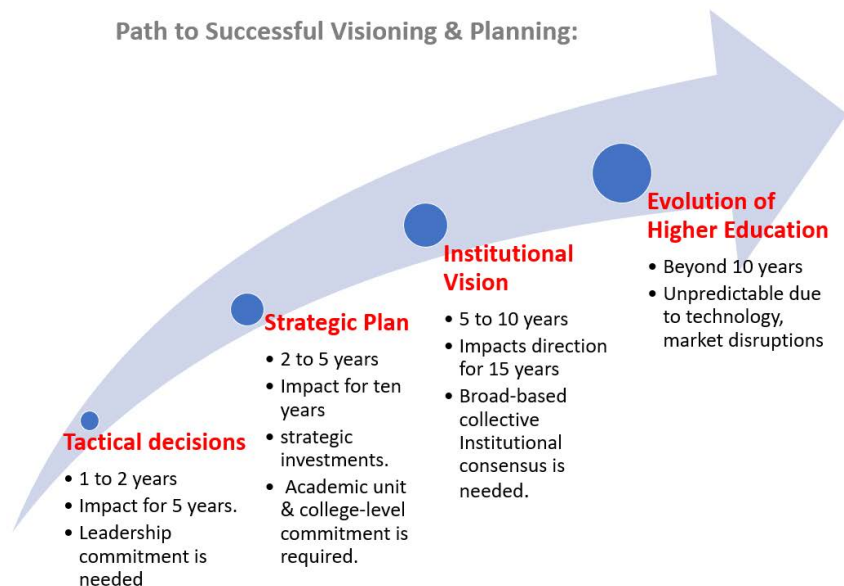
Figure 2 shows that for the first time since the fall of 2008, the system-wide Student Credit Hours (-8%) and the main campus Student Credit Hours (-13%) have also reached a critical point in enrollment.



The data points in the graphs demonstrate system-wide changes at Ferris in student enrollment. These changes having impacted our budget and created staffing challenges. We do not see an increase in student enrollment on the horizon, especially in domestic student enrollment due to demographic change in Michigan. In fact, further decreases are anticipated. Thus, we are faced with five

key challenges: enrollment decreases resulting in budget challenges, demographic changes to which we must adapt, the changing nature of higher education delivery models, disruptive technological changes, and legacy issues that hamper our ability to be responsive to these challenges. The Comprehensive Internationalization Plan (CIP) allows us to explore international student enrollment as one avenue to be responsive. It requires us to make Ferris a welcoming place for international students and scholars, in line with CIP Pillar 4.


The decisions we have to make in increasing international enrollment are shaped by the approach we take in the CIP and our collective response to the questions raised from the figure below:



Is increasing international enrollment a short-term tactic? Is it a strategic goal? Is it a vision? Is it a response to and insurance against the uncertain higher ed future, which is hard to predict? The response to each question impacts planning.

As we work together at the institutional level to understand and respond to the changes in our university system and the evolution of higher education, we need to have robust conversations on how international student enrollment fits into the overall vision of our university in the next ten years. Based on that, we need to determine our strategic initiatives in the next 5 years and our tactical decisions in the near term that will help us achieve our vision.

When we consider enrollment system-wide and assess potential opportunities for growth, some specific challenges come into focus. Growing domestic enrollment in our current professional and graduate programs will be challenging with increased competition. The role of dual/concurrent enrollment and the influence on our main campus gen ed curriculum and course enrollment needs to be considered



as we plan for the future. Will we be able to compete and keep up in the online space, especially as public/private partnerships and Online Program Management companies drive innovation? Our off-campus locations are integrally tied to our community college partners and are, therefore, impacted by their enrollment challenges and interest in offering 4-year degrees. Offering adult education and training will be shaped by industry needs and our ability to offer cutting edge programming to meet those demands. There are many uncertainties with these challenges, but there is a significant probability that we will be spending more to generate fewer credits.

International student enrollment should also be discussed and considered for a ten-year vision as it provides Ferris opportunities to cultivate a vibrant residential campus community of students and scholars. Even with the challenging national discourse, there is a large unmet demand for tertiary education around the world. The United States is still a popular destination, and many programs at Ferris are desirable to students from many different countries.

The student visa process in the US requires international students to enroll full-time during the academic year and also primarily take face-to-face classes in order to meet immigration requirements. Additionally, over a third of international students intend to take classes in the summer if courses are offered. They must also make academic progress to stay in good standing as a requirement of their student visas, so we retain and graduate them on time. As international students, they are charged a higher rate of tuition and are more likely to live on campus. They make use of on-campus commercial facilities and contribute to a vibrant residential campus community.

Therefore, through the CIP process, we can create a common understanding of our challenges and opportunities and collectively consider the roll that international student enrollment plays in our vision.

1. How can international student enrollment address budget challenges?
2. How do international students help create a vibrant residential campus?
3. How do we embrace our international students as we work to infuse international perspectives throughout the curriculum?
4. How do we position ourselves for the future by developing and communicating clear priorities and then aligning policies and practices accordingly?

We have many individuals and groups on our campus that seek to create a welcoming environment for international students and scholars. Through the CIP process, we can come to a collective decision about the role of international student enrollment in our ten-year vision. The strategies and tactics that are then developed can align with the scope of that vision. Short-term tactics and strategies to increase international student enrollment cannot be sustained without

a collective understanding and commitment to a longer-term vision that embraces comprehensive internationalization. This collective commitment is inherent in creating a welcoming environment for international students and scholars.

We look forward to your input in our CIP process. The OIE has been distributing surveys and sharing invitations to be part of deliberative dialogues on the CIP. Please contact us if need more information about how to join in the conversation.

Lisa vonReichbauer  
Assistant Director, Office of International Education



### In Context:

1. **Read and Explore:** NAFSA International Student Economic Value Tool – NAFSA.org - <https://www.nafsa.org/policy-and-advocacy/policy-resources/nafsa-international-student-economic-value-tool>



### Moment in Time:



Milan Stevanovich, Vice President of Global Strategy at Detroit Chinese Business Association, visited the Office of International Education last week to explore collaborations on strengthening our China Study Abroad Program and our Global Competency Collaborative Certificate Program. College of Business Professor Alex Cartwright, who helped coordinate the China Study Abroad Program, joined the conversation along with OIE faculty and staff and international students from China. Milan's daughter, Chanel, joined him for the visit.

# *Past OIE Newsletters*

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**Fall 2018**



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