



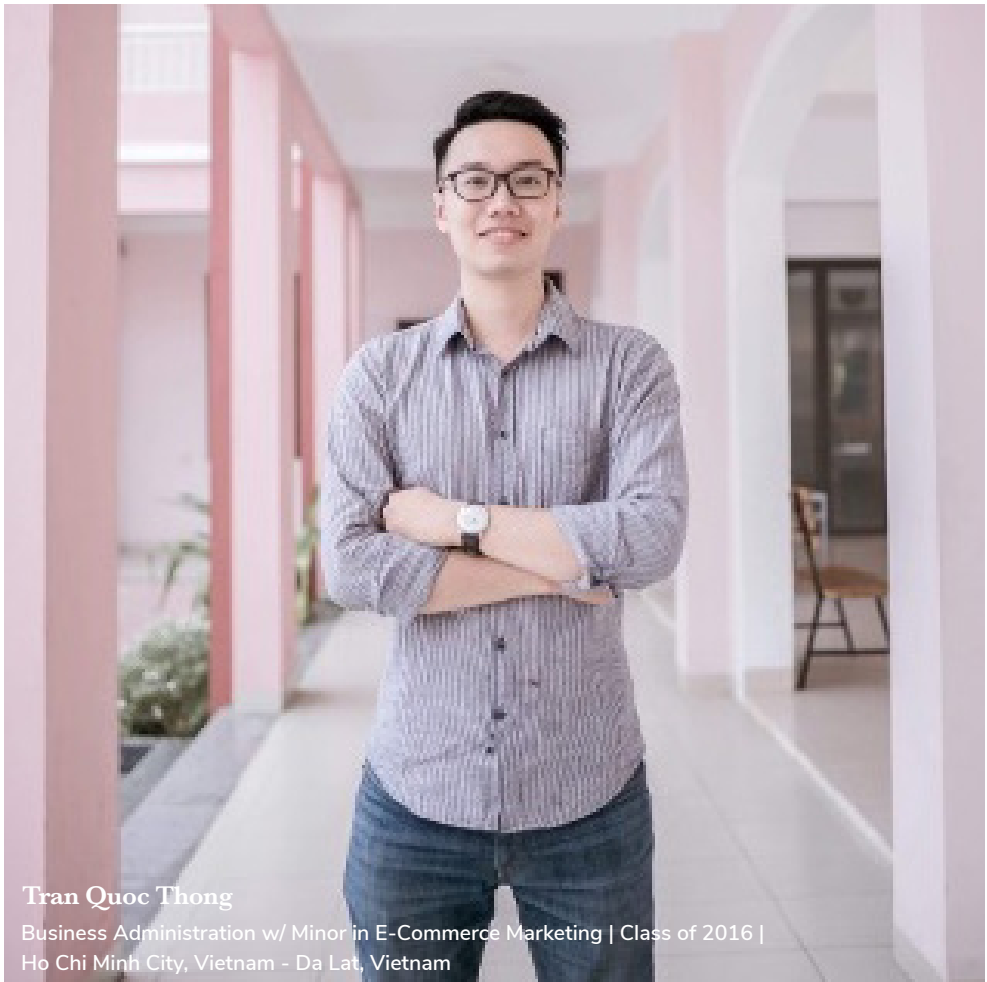
—a Ferris State international education newsletter

The International Breakfast Club

Greetings from the Office of International Education. I may be dating myself here, but I grew up on the Brat Pack and John Hughes movies of the 1980s. As we look back on some of the problematic nostalgia of many of these films in the context of today's cultural standards, there are some underlying themes that continue to resonate with me. The Breakfast Club is one of the iconic movies of my generation in which the angst of coming of age plays out. Through our teenage years, we develop many friendships, and sometimes these friendships are based on shared experiences. However, it could be said that often they are based on shared stereotypes. Cultural pressure can make us feel that society assigns us an identity, and usually friends along with it. In *The Breakfast Club*, students who would otherwise not interact with each other spend an entire Saturday together in detention and come to realize that they have more in common than they thought. Through this experience, the foundation of friendship shifts for them. By discovering their own shared identity among a diverse community, they come to understand that they are free to develop friendships with anyone. In a university community, which is much more vibrant than detention, the opportunities to engage with people from around the world and participate in activities such as study abroad, bring us together with people that we may never have had the opportunity to meet. The friendships and networks that develop through this experience can serve us in our professional endeavors. More importantly though, they enhance our personal lives as we learn to understand our shared humanity. In this issue, we are sharing the stories of four alumni who have been positively impacted by the power of international education. During their time at Ferris, Thong, Mikaeli, Ranjith, and Kennedy took advantage of the many academic and student life opportunities available on campus. They participated in organizations, events, and activities. They also worked together in the Office of International Education as student staff. These experiences brought them together with people from diverse backgrounds, and they found a shared identity. They have carried their experiences and friendships into their professional and personal lives. We hope you enjoy reading about some of our wonderful Global Bulldogs!

Lisa vonReichbauer

Assistant Director, Office of International Education



Tran Quoc Thong

Business Administration w/ Minor in E-Commerce Marketing | Class of 2016 |
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam - Da Lat, Vietnam

My Ferris State Story

Growing up in Vietnam, Thong had always wanted to have a study abroad experience. At the age of 15, he took a placement test for an exchange program in the US and was placed in Michigan. He attend Crossroads Charter Academy in Big Rapids for one year of high school and then enrolled at Ferris for his bachelor degree program. During his time at Ferris, Thong was a very active student. He joined student organizations and became the President of the International Student Organization to develop his leadership skills. He credits his extracurricular experiences and the friendships that he formed for helping him step out of his comfort zone and succeed in his college career. After graduating from Ferris, Thong earned a full scholarship to complete a Master's degree in Economics in Shanghai, China. With his experience studying and living in three different countries, Thong has entered the hospitality industry in Vietnam. He has journeyed with a hospitality startup in Da Nang and is now managing a boutique hotel in Da Lat.





Mikaeli Campbell

Business Administration | Class of 2016 | Mt. Pleasant, Michigan - Mt. Pleasant, Michigan

My Ferris State Story

Mikaeli grew up in the Midwest and was an active and ambitious student. She was involved in sports, organizations, her church, and volunteer efforts. When it came time to decide where to go to college, Mikaeli set a goal for herself - to graduate from college debt free. Mikaeli was awarded a scholarship to earn an associate degree at Mid Michigan College in Mt. Pleasant. This scholarship covered her tuition and allowed her to live at home. She learned about the transfer agreement between MMC and Ferris from her advisor. Through this agreement, Mikaeli was able to live at home for 3 years while she worked toward a bachelor degree in Business Administration. She then moved to Big Rapids to complete her final coursework and spend one year gaining the residential campus experience, which was important to her. During her year on campus, she joined the dance team and became involved in campus organizations and activities. She also worked in the Office of International Education, where she developed deep and lasting friendships with students from around the world. Mikaeli credits her campus experience for the opportunity to build relationships with people she would never have had a chance to meet. This helped her learn about other cultures and cross-cultural communication. This experience has enhanced her professional success at Isabella Bank in Mount Pleasant. She also maintains strong friendships across borders and time zones. The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted her plans to travel to Vietnam to visit Thong this past March, but she has plans to visit next May.





Ranjith Katukojwala

Information Security & Intelligence | Class of 2016 | Hyderabad, India - Seattle, Washington

My Ferris State Story

After completing his undergraduate degree in India, Ranjith considered his professional prospects and decided that he wanted pursue a master's degree. He also decided that he wanted to pursue his degree and develop a career in the US. There were many unknowns for him. He knew that he was taking on significant challenges to make his dream come true, but he was ready! Ranjith joined the MISI program at Ferris to gain the academic and technical skills that he would need to pursue a career in the tech industry, but to be successful in this industry, he knew he had to gain cultural skills to navigate personal and professional environments in the US. Like many students, he took advantage of on-campus organizations, activities, and employment opportunities to gain experience and soft skills. Ranjith worked in several areas on campus including the Office of International Education, where he had opportunities to lead both small and large projects. He attributes this experience to helping understand his own strengths and gain confidence. He also established lifelong friendships that he has carried with him. After graduation, Ranjith entered the tech industry. He has advanced in his career and was recently hired in a permanent position with Microsoft in Seattle. His vision for his professional future has been realized, and he is ready to take on the new challenges of settling into a life far away from his home.





Kennedy Schafer

Psychology w/ Minor in Communication and Human Resource Management | Class of 2018 |
Traverse City, Michigan - Mt. Pleasant, Michigan

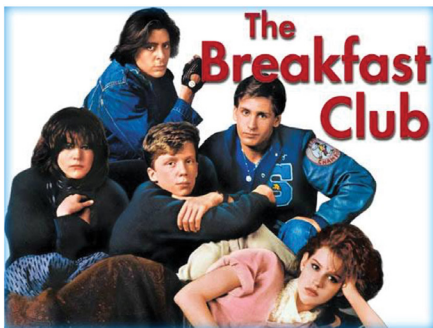
My Ferris State Story

Kennedy grew up in Northern Michigan and joined Ferris out of high school. She was interested in finding a part-time job on campus and found a job posting in the Office of International Education. When Kennedy came to the interview, she seemed a bit reserved and perhaps a bit shy. But she had a quiet confidence. Kennedy was hired to assist the International Enrollment Team with processing international student applications and transfer credit. In the first few months that Kennedy worked in the office, she didn't talk a lot, but she was skilled and efficient in her work. As she got to know international students and other student staff in the office, we began to see her more social side. Kennedy studied abroad in Germany in the summer after her junior year. She supplemented her major coursework with German language and management classes. During her time working in the OIE, Kennedy learned a lot about the field of International Education and developed technical skills and soft skills that helped her enter the field professionally. She currently works in international enrollment down the road at CMU. Kennedy also continues to maintain her friendships with her colleagues in the OIE and with students from around the world. She plans to travel to Vietnam with Mikaeli to visit Thong next May.





Moment In Time:



The friendships that develop and the ties that bind are deep and lasting. Members of the “International Breakfast Club” are pictured left to right: Kennedy Schafer, Thong Tran, Taylor Pike, Ranjith Kotukojwala, and Mikaeli Campbell. Together they have participated in student organizations to develop their skills and networks, spent time enjoying each other’s company, whether near or far, and successfully graduated from their degree programs.



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