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https://www.bgdailynews.com/news/wku-enrollment-report-shows-steady-international-student-decline/article_e62e9cf5-c921-535a-8cbf-b4fbaa91d053.html

WKU enrollment report shows steady international student decline

By AARON MUDD amudd@bgdailynews.com Nov 17, 2018

Western Kentucky University's fall enrollment report shows sharp drops for both in-state students and international students, the latter of which WKU is trying to recapture by stepping up and diversifying its international recruitment.

Between fall 2017 and this fall, WKU has seen a drop from 832 international students to 594. The 238 fewer international students on campus this fall is a decline of roughly 28 percent in just one year.

John Sunnygard, who became WKU's new associate provost for global learning and international affairs in August, said the cycling out of Saudi Arabian students is the biggest contributor to the decline. That population peaked on campus four years ago, he said.

“Those students are making their way through and they’re graduating,” he said. “The big issue is that we haven’t been replacing those students at the same rate that they had come in (at), which was very high.”

According to the report, WKU saw 128 fewer Saudi students on campus this fall, down from 353 last fall. Sunnygard puts the current enrollment of Saudi students at 239. The university saw other, smaller declines in students from China and India.

When it comes to what’s driving the decline in Saudi students, Sunnygard pointed to changes with the King Abdullah Scholarship Program, which helps those students study abroad. The program is now more focused on supporting students who are more academically prepared to study in the U.S. and who have a greater chance of success, he said.

As a result, WKU is trying to diversify its international student body. That means investing more in China, India, Southeast Asia and other countries in the Middle East.

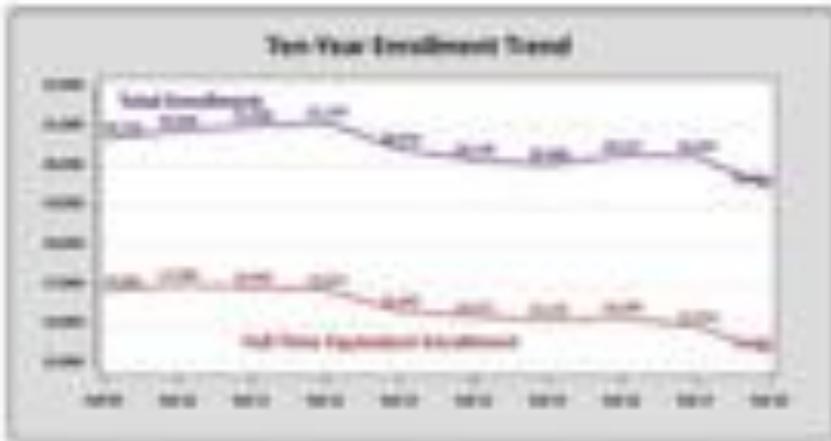
“Frankly, the most important thing we can do is provide students with a welcoming, high-quality academic experience when they’re in the United States, when they’re in Bowling Green,” Sunnygard said. “Because word of mouth accounts for about 90 percent of our students here.”

The university has a significant financial incentive for stepping up those efforts. The total cost of attending WKU for international students in a year is about \$39,000, Sunnygard said.

Along with international students, WKU also saw declines in first-time, first-year students this year. That number fell from 3,116 last fall to 2,943 this fall.

While WKU did see some gains in out-of-state students, it lost ground on in-state enrollments with a drop from 15,928 last fall to 15,186 this fall. Overall students are down too. Total enrollment fell from 20,267 last fall to 19,461 this fall.

The complete fall 2018 enrollment report is available at bgdailynews.com.



	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Diff	% Diff
Enrollment				
Total Enrollment	15,267	15,401	134	1 (0.9%)
All First Time, First Year: Undergraduate				
Undergraduate	1,118	1,094	-24	-2 (0.2%)
Average ACT	23	23	0	0%
Average SAT	1,011	1,019	8	1%
Ethnicity				
Underrepresented Minority*	3,284	3,207	-77	-2 (0.2%)
Not Underrepresented Minority	11,983	12,194	111	1 (0.9%)
New Resident Only	898	898	0	0 (0.0%)
Continued	1,386	1,309	-77	-6 (0.5%)

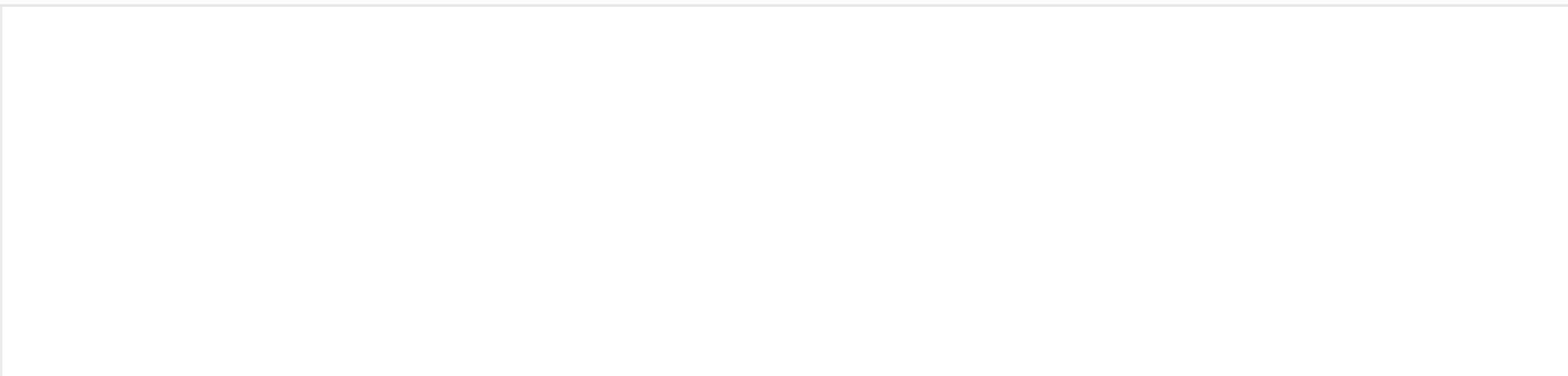
	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Diff	% Diff
Gender				
Male	8,188	8,176	-12	-0 (0.0%)
Female	7,079	7,225	146	2 (0.2%)
Level				
Undergraduate	11,288	11,208	-80	-0 (0.0%)
Graduate	3,979	4,193	214	5 (0.5%)
Status				
Full Time	13,798	13,228	-570	-4 (0.4%)
Part Time	1,469	2,173	704	5 (0.5%)
Classification				
Transfer	2,858	2,848	-10	-0 (0.0%)
Not Transfer or Non-Resident	2,426	2,359	-67	-3 (0.1%)
Graduate	1,331	1,793	462	3 (0.3%)
Male	1,214	1,218	4	0%
Female	1,117	1,575	458	4 (0.4%)
High School Grad, Grad Credit	1,882	1,797	-85	-0 (0.0%)
Academy Student	101	101	0	0 (0.0%)
Other Undergraduate	101	101	0	0%
Region				
Not From West Virginia	498	483	-15	-3 (0.3%)
West Virginia	11	18	7	6 (55%)
Transfer	101	101	0	0 (0.0%)
Graduate Non Degree	101	101	0	0 (0.0%)

*Underrepresented Minority includes Black, Hispanic, Native American, Multi-race/ethnicity, or Pacific Islander.



WKU fall 2018 enrollment report
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Aaron Mudd

Education reporter. Covers education and related issues, focusing primarily on the Bowling Green and Warren County public school districts and Western Kentucky University.