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## WKU enrollment report shows steady international student decline

By AARON MUDD [amudd@bgdailynews.com](mailto: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.

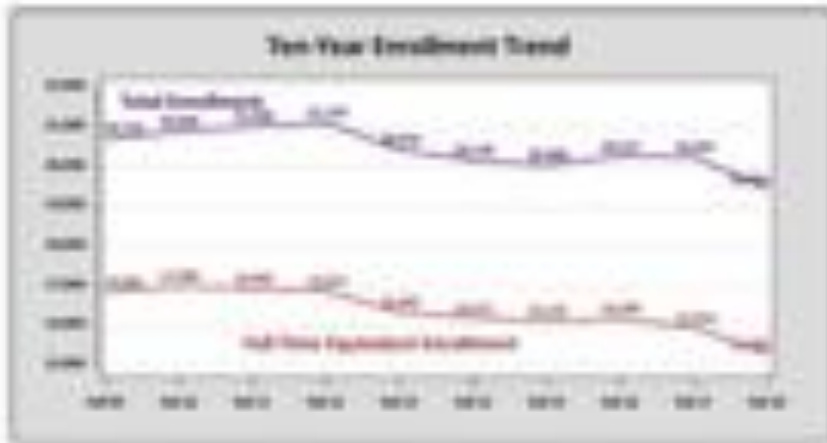
“Frankly, the most important thing we can do is provide students with a welcoming, high-quality academic experience when they’re in the United States, when they’re in Bowling Green,” Sunnygard said. “Because word of mouth accounts for about 90 percent of our students here.”

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](http://bgdailynews.com).



	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Diff	% Diff
<b>Enrollment</b>				
<b>Total Enrollment</b>	15,267	14,401	-866	-5.6%
<b>All First Time, First Year: Undergraduate</b>				
Undergraduate	1,118	1,044	-74	-6.6%
Average ACT	23	23	0	0%
Average GPA	3.11	3.09	-0.02	-0.6%
<b>Ethnicity</b>				
Underrepresented Minority*	3,284	3,007	-277	-8.4%
Not Underrepresented Minority	11,983	11,394	-589	-4.9%
New Resident Only	898	848	-50	-5.6%
Continued	138	156	18	13.0%

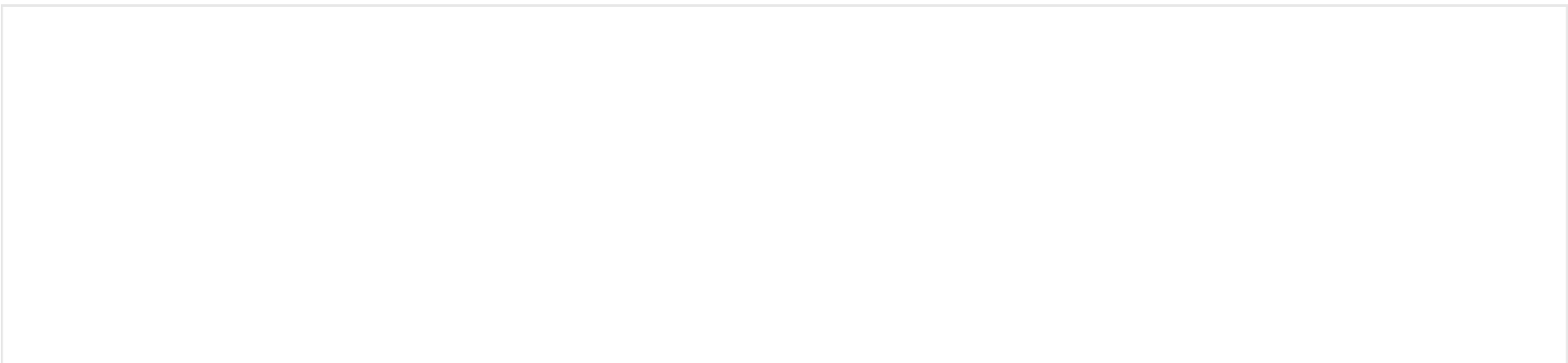
	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Diff	% Diff
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	6,185	5,716	-469	-7.6%
Female	9,082	8,685	-397	-4.4%
<b>Level</b>				
Undergraduate	11,284	10,709	-575	-5.1%
Graduate	3,983	3,692	-291	-7.3%
<b>Status</b>				
Full Time	13,796	13,228	-568	-4.1%
Part Time	1,471	1,173	-298	-20.3%
<b>Classification</b>				
Freshman	3,008	2,848	-160	-5.3%
Not Freshman Undergraduate	8,276	7,861	-415	-5.0%
Sophomore	3,021	2,758	-263	-8.7%
Junior	2,754	2,518	-236	-8.6%
Senior	4,089	3,785	-304	-7.4%
High School Grad, Grad Credit	1,882	1,707	-175	-9.3%
Academy Student	101	100	-1	-1.0%
Other Undergraduate	101	101	0	0%
<b>Master's</b>				
Not First-Year Student	494	483	-11	-2.2%
Graduate	15	14	-1	-6.7%
Transfer	101	107	6	6.0%
Graduate Non-Degree	100	100	0	0.0%

\*All races combined, excluding Black, Hispanic, Asian American, Multi-race, or Two or More Races.



WKU fall 2018 enrollment report  
 AARON MUDD amudd@bgdailynews.com Nov 17, 2018

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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.