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Leading Data Inventory for International Student Enrollment and Retention Data For the Haenicke Institute for Global Education

An ongoing project by Rebecca Solomon, Director of Administration and International Student Advocate, Haenicke Institute for Global Education with special thanks to Teresa Schrimpf, Business Intelligence Specialist, Institutional Research and Jennifer Farland, Operations Manager, Haenicke Institute for Global Education.



Purpose

The International Student population is a numerically smaller, yet a vital segment of the student population at WMU. According to the 2011-2012 WMU Fact Book, of 23,068 total students on the University's main campus 1,262 were International Students in Fall of 2010. Reports readily available in Cognos, the system used by the University to analyze student data, are developed to meet a wide variety of data needs for the University. While many of these general reports can be tailored to extract data describing the International Student population, others do not provide that option. It is possible, that gaps in the accessible data exist or that valuable reports can be too cumbersome to execute in their current state. Therefore, a systematic inventory and review of reports on student data is being conducted by staff working with of International Students at WMU through the Haenicke Institute. As a result, we hope to identify data needs for Institute so that it can serve the International Student population as well as improve reporting capabilities on International Student enrollment, retention, and graduation.

Context and Considerations

WMU places emphasis on the quality of University culture that is enhanced by the presence of International Students. For example, the third pillar of the University Strategic Plan is that WMU be globally engaged. Exchanges between the domestic and international students at WMU is one way in which global engagement is supported.

As they are facing an even greater transition to campus life than domestic students, International Students require programming efforts specific to their needs. Often it is possible that simple and cost effective programmatic interventions, such as the International Student Orientation and Registration Program or the WMU Buddy Abroad Program can generate results for enrollment, retention, and degree completion.

Statistical significance for the purposes of studying International Student trends is difficult to achieve at the university level. The impulse to observe the International Student population by country can limit our ability to make inferences. Most populations by country compose a group of less than 30 individuals. (See Table at right). This renders many of the statistical methods that quantitative research has come to rely upon powerless for making inferences. Perhaps we can learn more by looking at the International Student population at WMU in aggregate then examining characteristics other than country of origin, especially for targeting services aimed at retention.

How is the data used?

External reports such as Open Doors aggregating national level data from a cooperative of universities.



Internally, data describing International Students is used by the International Admissions Office, to support international recruiting and retention efforts, to bill students, and to track whether academic and documentation requirements are being met.

In accordance with the Haenicke Institute mission statement, the focus of this needs assessment is identifying and observing International Student trends on campus. By learning from these trends, the Institute can facilitate planning while continuing to improve support to our valued International Student population.

Haenicke Institute Mission Statement

Western Michigan University will attain premier global status as a university when it regularly and continually generates and disseminates knowledge of the world outside the United States such that all of its graduates are competent and empathetic participants in the world, wherever they may find themselves while students and for the remainder of their lives. The Diether H. Haenicke Institute for Global Education will provide leadership as well as academic, professional, managerial and, when appropriate, financial support to the University—its faculty, staff and students—toward the attainment of this goal.

Through collaborative engagement with the global community, the Haenicke Institute seeks to advance mutual respect within and across cultures and to promote human well-being throughout the world.

Which data can be easily accessed?

An inventory of pre-written reports provided by the Office of Institutional Research through Cognos is currently being conducted and all reports with the option to select International Students are being organized in a shortcuts folder. They will be shared with all Cognos users within the Haenicke Institute. An inventory of meaningful fields and characteristics is also being conducted.

Can new relationships can be explored?

At present, there are relationships on which we neither report nor explore. However, curiosity or the results of academic research prompt us to pose new questions to existing data. Such questions include:

- Are TOEFL scores a factor in admissions, enrollment, GPA, retention, or graduation?
- Do International Students who come to WMU from a school with which we have an international exchange agreement perform similarly or different than International Students who attend WMU and but have not entered through an international exchange agreement?
- Do students who have co-nationals at WMU perform the similarly or different from students who attend WMU as the only student enrolled from their country of origin?
- Do transfer students perform similarly or different from First Time in Any College (FTIAC) students?
- Is additional coursework in report writing or English for academics correlated to differences in International Student GPAs?
- Which reporting processes exist, but are overly cumbersome? Some reports containing over 1000 student records can be sorted for duplicates but require a still require a trained eye to determine which record is the most accurate.

Future Work

Many questions will remain after the data and report inventory are completed. Creating a firm base of documentation on existing data is only a first step to developing a more meaningful reporting environment. Some issues to be addressed in future work include:

- What are the best possible uses of the data?
- Which reports offer the best solutions? How frequently must they be run to be of use?
- Are there important inferences that cannot be supported with the existing data?
- How can we access the data to address those needs?

Example Report from International Student Data courtesy of the WMU Office of Institutional Research

Transfer Retention and Graduation Rates by Country													
	Cohort	1st Semester Retention	% 1st Semester Retention	Cont to 2nd Year	% Cont to 2nd Year	Grad in 2 Years	% Grad in 2 Years	Cont to 3rd Year	% Cont to 3rd Year	Grad in 3 Years	% Grad in 3 Years	Cont to 4th Year	% Cont to 4th Year
Fall 2008													
ARGENTINA	1	1	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	1	100.0%	0	0.0%
BAHRAIN	2	2	100.0%	1	50.0%	0	0.0%	1	50.0%	0	0.0%	2	100.0%
CANADA	1	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
CHINA	3	3	100.0%	3	100.0%	0	0.0%	3	100.0%	2	66.7%	1	33.3%
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	9	9	100.0%	9	100.0%	0	0.0%	9	100.0%	2	22.2%	7	77.8%
HONG KONG	7	7	100.0%	7	100.0%	6	85.7%	1	14.3%	7	100.0%	0	0.0%
INDIA	19	18	94.7%	16	84.2%	6	31.6%	10	52.6%	14	73.7%	2	10.5%
INDONESIA	2	2	100.0%	1	50.0%	0	0.0%	2	100.0%	1	50.0%	1	50.0%
JAPAN	1	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
KENYA	20	13	65.0%	6	30.0%	0	0.0%	6	30.0%	3	15.0%	2	10.0%
KOREA, SOUTH	3	2	66.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
LEBANON	1	1	100.0%	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	1	100.0%
MALAYSIA	14	14	100.0%	14	100.0%	2	14.3%	12	85.7%	10	71.4%	4	28.6%
MEXICO	1	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
MOLDOVA	1	1	100.0%	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	1	100.0%	1	100.0%	0	0.0%
NAMIBIA	1	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
NETHERLANDS	1	1	100.0%	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	100.0%	0	0.0%
NIGERIA	1	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
NORWAY	1	1	100.0%	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	1	100.0%
SAUDI ARABIA	6	6	100.0%	6	100.0%	1	16.7%	5	83.3%	1	16.7%	5	83.3%
TAIWAN	1	1	100.0%	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	1	100.0%	1	100.0%	0	0.0%
UNITED KINGDOM	1	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%