



# International Student Recruitment

A Report of the International Recruitment Committee

## Note from the Chair

While the general landscape for international student recruitment remains quite volatile, our incoming Fall 2019 international class rebounded from a downturn last year. We benefited from a strong applicant pool, especially in the undergraduate area.

Many of the concerns of our prospective international students remain the same as last year, but the competition for globally mobile students has never been more fierce. Other countries are ramping up coordinated efforts to draw these students to their institutions of higher education, while the U.S. is mired in anti-immigrant sentiments.

International students are still drawn to the University of Minnesota because of our respectable rankings and our broad academic offerings. Scholarships have helped us on the undergraduate front, and current international students report high satisfaction with their overall experience here.

Comprehensive internationalization relies in part on a strong international student body, bringing the world to our campus and enriching the academic experience of all students. The road ahead is uncertain, but we continue to strive toward our collective goal of maintaining strong international student enrollment at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities.

— Aimee Thostenson,  
Committee Chair

## Fall 2019 Enrollment and Trends

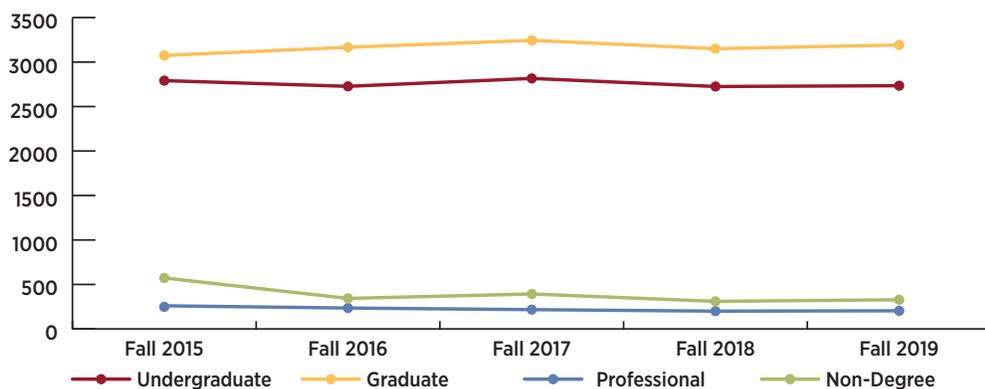
### Overall U.S. Enrollment

The number of enrolled international students at U.S. colleges and universities decreased at all levels in the 2018-19 academic year: undergrad (-2.4%), graduate (-1.3%), and nondegree (-5%). New international students also decreased for the third straight year, but the -0.9% decline was smaller than the declines of two years prior (-6.6% and -3.3%). Despite these drops, the total number of international students in the U.S. actually increased slightly, (0.05%), due to an increase in the number of students participating in optional practical training (OPT), which allows students to work in the U.S. for up to three years after graduating while staying on their student visas. (Source: "Open Doors" report, IIE)

### Fall 2019 UMTC Enrollment

International enrollment at the Twin Cities campus rebounded in Fall 2019 from last year's decline at the undergraduate level. The rebound was due largely to a planned increase in the number of new international freshman students enrolled.

	International Enrollment	% Change Over 2018	Total UMN Enrollment	% of UMN Enrollment
Undergraduate	2,734	0.3%	31,367	8.7%
Graduate	3,192	1.3%	12,100	26.4%
Professional	204	2.0%	3,858	5.3%
Non-Degree	328	5.8%	4,002	8.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,458</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>51,327</b>	<b>12.6%</b>



Source: UMN Office of Institutional Research website, 12/13/19

### Big 10 Undergraduate Benchmarking

International undergraduate enrollment fluctuated greatly across our Big 10 peers. Of those reporting results, about half reported decreases and half reported increases in new international freshmen (with a low of -51% and a high of 44%). Overall international undergraduate enrollment also varied widely (with a low of -39% and a high of 41%). Generally speaking, higher-ranked institutions were less likely to see declines.

# A Challenging Environment: Top Factors Affecting International Recruitment

## Gun Violence and Personal Safety Concerns

Frequent and widely reported episodes of gun violence have pushed personal safety concerns to the forefront for many international students and their parents, especially in China. A study by World Education Services found that a quarter of the students surveyed were concerned about the possibility of a shooting on their own campus. In a survey by Connect, a global student-recruitment firm, students and parents ranked the U.S. last in safety. The Chinese government has warned students and other travelers about the risks of going to the United States.

## Competition from Other Countries

While the U.S. basically remained flat in international student enrollment, other English-speaking countries continued to see double-digit growth.

- In Canada, the number of international students rose 16.25% in 2018, marking a third consecutive year of double-digit growth and an overall increase of 73% in the five years since 2014 in total enrollment.
- Australia is on its way to double-digit growth in international students for 2019, with 720,150 students enrolled across various sectors as of September 2019, a 11% increase over the same time the previous year.

Much of the growth in enrollment in other countries can be attributed to greater work opportunities (see below).  
(Source: ICEF Monitor)

## Lack of Work Opportunities

In choosing where to study, many international students consider opportunities for post-graduation work and eventual permanent residency. While these types of opportunities are under attack in the U.S. (proposals have been made to reduce or eliminate OPT, for example), other countries are improving and increasing their options. Not surprisingly, major destination countries with rapidly expanding international student populations offer more generous post-graduation work rights. Examples of recent changes include:

- UK: Reintroduction of a 2-year post study-work visa in September 2019 (Source: THE PIE News)
- Canada: Extended amount of time for students to apply for post-graduate work permits from 90 to 180 days, including an option to apply from their home country (Source: ICEF Monitor)

- China: Allowed international students to take part-time jobs or internships during their studies (Source: China Daily)
- Russia: Proposed enabling students to work up to four hours per day or 20 hours per week outside the university; allowing students to work after graduation in their specialized field; making it easier for students to gain Russian citizenship (Source: THE PIE News)

## Rankings

Rankings continue to be one of the most important metrics for international students and parents in choosing where to study. While the University continues to rank respectably in notable world rankings, we lag most of our Big 10 peers and have faced continued declines for the past decade. Here are examples from three of the most popular rankings that international students consider:

### U.S. News & World Report National University Rankings:

- UMN: 70
- Big 10 peers: Northwestern (9), Michigan (25), Wisconsin (46), Illinois (48), Ohio State (54), Penn State (57), Purdue (57), Rutgers (62), Maryland (64)

### Q.S. World University Rankings:

- UMN: 156
- Big 10 peers: Michigan (20), Northwestern (34), Wisconsin (53), Illinois (71), Ohio State (89), Penn State (95), Purdue (100), Maryland (126), Michigan State (141)

### Times Higher Education World University Ranking

- UMN: 79
- Big 10 peers: Michigan (21), Northwestern (22), Illinois (48), Wisconsin (51), Ohio State (70), Penn State (78)

## Other Factors

- Our “yield,” or the number of admitted students who ultimately enroll, continues to decline at the undergraduate level. This is a problem faced nationally as students accept and even confirm at multiple institutions. To enroll the same number of undergraduate international students, we have had to generate many more applications. This means increased pressure on our recruitment and admissions staff. We should note the application pool has, for now, remained strong with enough quality applicants.

- Affordability is still a major factor for students and parents. Recent tuition increases coupled with declining rankings lower the value proposition of the University of Minnesota.
- Anti-immigration policies in the U.S. continue to impact international recruitment, both in direct impacts on students and in more general climate. Major issues include rumors of increasing visa denials, threats to eliminate OPT and H-1B work opportunities, enhanced screening in visa applications and at the border, unlawful presence changes, travel ban, and the U.S.-China trade war.

## Enrollment Decision-Making Factors for UMTC Students

Decision-making factors reported by UMTC international students in the International Barometer Survey mirror the top factors affecting recruitment, especially in the areas of university reputation/rankings, affordability, work and career opportunities, and safety. It is important to note the sharp rise of "personal safety," which had not been a top issue until 2019.

### Undergraduate Students

1. Personal safety
2. Cost of study
3. Opportunities for further study
4. University reputation
5. Earning potential
6. Research quality
7. Cost of living
8. University scholarship
9. Opportunities to work while studying
10. Specific program or area of study

### Graduate Students

1. Research quality
2. University reputation
3. Specific program or area of study
4. Personal safety
5. University scholarship
6. Cost of study
7. Earning potential
8. Teacher reputation
9. Work opportunities
10. Cost of living

## 2018-19 UMN Recruitment Initiatives

Ongoing international recruitment tactics included in-country visits (by staff, alumni, and students), U.S. recruitment fairs, and remote methods including web, social media, and webinars. The following are new approaches taken in 2018-19.

### *International Undergraduate Recruitment*

- Developed a pilot project for need-aware awarding for our largest Global Excellence Scholarships
- Created new student development-based recruitment modules for larger markets; added proposal to include faculty travel
- Explored new markets: South Africa and Ethiopia (travel), Spain (conference), Canada (marketing)
- Led team approach to China recruitment in Fall 2019 to cover staff turnover in China Office
- Updated communication around housing sign-up process to ensure international students received their desired housing placement
- Collaborated with colleges to encourage admitted students to submit confirmation deposits
- Added outreach to admitted international students in the U.S., including hand-written postcards from an International Student Ambassador.

### *Non-Degree Student Recruitment*

- Advocated for reduced summer credit requirement for non-degree visiting international students from 12 to 6 to attract more students to the GO Minnesota Summer Session program
- Expanded programs to include four colleges/schools now accepting visiting graduate students through GO Minnesota: CFANS, CLA, CSE, and Humphrey; GO Minnesota continues to meet with other colleges to expand graduate course offerings
- Hosted a cohort from Seoul National University that included 16 students, 3 teaching assistants, and a faculty member for a two-week experience in Minnesota; GO Minnesota provided all logistical support, academic programming, and cultural events (The program will take place again in February 2020.)
- Joined forces with Michigan State and Wisconsin to offer a "Big 10 Roadshow" to European agency partners in Fall 2018

### *Sponsored Student Recruitment*

- Attended Saudi Aramco Fair, September 2019
- Connected with sponsoring agencies to maintain relationships

## Cutting-Edge Initiatives on Student Engagement

Several recent, cutting-edge initiatives at the University of Minnesota provide excellent opportunities to engage with international students, strengthen the campus climate, and position the institution as a leader in international education exchange. International Student and Scholar Services and the Office for Student Affairs jointly formed an International Student Advisory board of graduate, undergraduate, and non-degree international students in a variety of fields to serve as an ongoing focus group for the campus throughout the academic year. The board, facilitated by students, meets bi-weekly to provide feedback to units across the campus and to take on issues board members identify as a priority for all international students. The board members connect with their networks and student organizations to provide in-depth perspectives to a wide range of campus units, including Boyton, Orientation and Transition Experiences, the Bias Response Referral Network, communications at OSA and ISSS, campus safety initiatives, and the Minnesota Daily.

The University's research on the educational impact of international students has identified the benefits of cross-national interactions in the classroom (connections made between U.S. and international students). The research also highlighted that students look to faculty to create opportunities for interaction, and faculty themselves seek teaching methods to increase such interactions. One new initiative, the International Student Academic Integration project, works with several departments with high enrollments of international students and faculty who are motivated to increase interactions between international and U.S. students. A pilot project has also begun to train students to be "ambassadors" in the classrooms who will role model cross-national interaction and support intercultural communication in their classes.

## Financial Impact of International Students

In the 2018-19 academic year, international student enrollment generated **more than \$124 million in tuition revenue\*** for the Twin Cities campus:

- Undergraduate Students: \$63,982,736
- Graduate Students: \$50,214,303
- Professional Degree Students: \$8,861,619
- MELP Intensive English Program: \$994,154
- GO Minnesota: \$844,910

*\*tuition and program fees only; does not include student fees, housing, health insurance, etc.*

In 2018, international students on the Twin Cities campus **contributed \$227.8 million to the Minnesota state economy** and supported 2,879 jobs. Source: NAFSA: Association of International Educators.

## High Student Satisfaction

Results from the International Student Barometer (ISB) provide a positive counterpoint to the many challenges we face in recruiting students. Results show that once we get students to campus, their experience is a good one.

A large percentage of current students indicated they are satisfied or very satisfied with their experience at UMN:

- Overall experience: 91%
- Learning experience: 90%
- Living experience: 88%
- Support services: 93%

In addition, 85% indicated they would recommend the University of Minnesota.

## About the International Recruitment Committee

### Mission

The International Recruitment Committee provides expertise, shares information, and brings constituents together to ensure the Twin Cities campus enrolls a diverse and academically strong international student body. Under the auspices of the Global Programs and Strategy Alliance, the International Recruitment Committee includes key representatives from across the Twin Cities campus to provide visibility and ensure a collaborative recruitment strategy.

### Committee Members

- **College of Continuing and Professional Studies:** Michael Anderson
- **GPS Alliance:** Jennifer Schulz, Sandra Boone
- **GO Minnesota (GPS):** Leah Brink, Cathy Huber
- **International Student & Scholar Services (GPS):** Aimee Thostenson (chair), Barbara Kappler, Chelsea Keeney, Sarah Krueger
- **Office of Admissions:** Jenny Mealey
- **Graduate School:** Jim Rowan, Dean Tsantir
- **China Center (GPS):** Fran Liu, Haiyan Wang
- **Law School:** Kara Galvin

### Contact the Committee

The International Recruitment Committee invites opportunities to engage with the campus community. Please contact Aimee Thostenson with inquiries or requests at [thos0005@umn.edu](mailto:thos0005@umn.edu).

[global.umn.edu/about/irc.html](http://global.umn.edu/about/irc.html)