IDH 1931

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White Paper

**Worlds Ahead:**

**Leaving Students Behind?**

Website: [Idh1931.wix.com/group1](Idh1931.wix.com/group1)

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Executive Summary

Florida International University is a public research university located in Miami, Florida. It offers degrees starting from an Associates’ degree to as high as a Doctoral degree, and offers such degrees in a variety of fields. With such a high enrollment and acceptance rate ranging from 43% to 48%, over fifty thousand students can take advantage of this opportunity. With such a number of students admitted, however, it seems almost inevitable that a fair percentage ends up dropping out of FIU. The dropout rate correlates with the high acceptance rate; if one goes up, so does the other. Despite this reality FIU has, in recent years, advocated for the expansion of their central campus: Modesto Madique in Miami’s southwestern region. The two ideas have struck many as contradictory, in large part because to expand would mean to accept more tuition paying students.

Within this paper, we explain this correlation, as well as discuss the university’s current enrollment strategy and its consequences, and compare it to the strategies of other colleges. We also address new approaches that can be taken to benefit FIU, as well as its students, and student-specific surveys that depict the student body’s view on expansion.

Introduction

-Enrollment: The act of registering (enrolling) or entering in a list, catalog, or roll; the number of people enrolled (registered), typically at a school or college

-Retention: “The annual return rate of students as they progress through a program is directly related to their degree/certificate completion, the concept of retention usually includes year-by-year retention or persistence rates as well as graduation rates. Together, these statistics represent student success.”
Financial Aid: Financial Aid is any grant or scholarship, loan, or paid employment offered to help a student meet his/her college expenses. Such aid is usually provided by various sources such as federal and state agencies, colleges, high schools, foundations, and corporations.

Student Faculty Ratio: Student–teacher ratio or student-faculty ratio is the number of students who attend a school or university divided by the number of teachers in the institution. For example, a student–teacher ratio of 10:1 indicates that there are 10 students for every one teacher.

Our goal is to find a reasonable enrollment strategy that compliments the university's expansion rate and positively impacts that retention and graduation rates. This will be achieved by analyzing the financial and academic effects of the quickly growing enrollment rates.

Previous Approaches

While FIU may be expanding or improving as a university, such rapid growth may not positively impact the university as a whole.

Case Study:

An example of the possible negative effects of rapid expansion can be seen in the case study of Tarleton State University. Tarleton State University is located in Stephenville, Texas and is a community college that currently offers undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs to a very small student body consisting of about 9,000 undergraduate students. In 2012, the university decided to begin implementing a new process to increase enrollment and expand the university known as the “2020 Plan: Expand University by building and increasing Enrollment.” This plan involved rapidly growing enrollment rates, which would be achieved by making the application process simpler and less complicated, purchasing real estate in the area, and
destroying and constructing new building throughout the campus. Within the first few years of the plan’s implementation, the students have already noticed very large setbacks to plan. The university decided that in order to fund their growth they would need to cut many fields of study, including engineering and physics, which were two of their highest grossing and popular degree programs. It has also resulted in lower graduation rates, due to the lack of student retention once the students are enrolled. By cultivating this kind of rapid expansion, Tarleton is undermining their future academic success. They will have a beautiful campus and large student body, but will be left with “too many students and not enough resources”

Although the appearance and atmosphere of a university campus is a large contributor to a potential student’s decision to attend a particular institution, an even larger factor is the quality of the education being given. The students voicing their concern about the new expansion plan share our concern with the rapid expansion of FIU and, similarly, believe that expansion is not a bad thing as a whole, but the rate of it should be checked to ensure the proper growth and allocation of resources for the student body. Quality should never have to be sacrificed for the sake of quantity when it comes to higher education.

- [http://www.texannews.net/tarletons-expansion-too-big-too-fast](http://www.texannews.net/tarletons-expansion-too-big-too-fast)
- [http://www.tarleton.edu/about/Overview.html](http://www.tarleton.edu/about/Overview.html)

**New Findings**

A survey was conducted to determine if Florida International University students favored an increase in enrollment, flooding the classrooms, in order to increase GPA and graduation rates. Not surprisingly, FIU students were not in favor of the expansion. Most FIU students intuitively figured out how increasing enrollment would increase student retention if students
would be overlooked even more than they already are. For instance, sophomore Pierre Alvarez, Finance major, mentioned that the students in the math lab in which he leads, complain “there are too many students.” Indeed, if there will not be an increase in the faculty and classrooms, then there will be an overloading of students in classrooms, and the students in-need will be overlooked.

A sample of the student population was collected comprising of 50 students. Two people from our group went around campus, prompting students with the question: “By 2020, there will be an increase of 65,000 students, which is about a 10,000 student increase from our current population. Do you think the enrollment increase will result in higher GPAs, graduation rates, and student retention?” The answer choices were YES, NO, or STAY THE SAME. Students were allowed to give an explanation for their answer. 76 percent (38/50) of the students said NO. Their reply usually followed by something like, “there’s already too many students and we have a 48% graduation rate.” 6 percent (3/50) of the students answered it would STAY THE SAME. Two of these three students argued that simply because the two occur coincidently, does not mean one causes the other. This contention is true, however, they asked if there would be an increase in faculty and classrooms. We responded that the faculty and room sizes would not be expanded significantly, so they later decided NO, making the 76 percent (38/50) virtually become 80 percent (40/50). However, we kept their original answer. Lastly, 18 percent (9/50) of the students responded YES. These “World’s Ahead” students assumed the incoming 10,000 students would be better qualified and brighter students. This is a blind assumption, because the admission process would have to become more selective, and after selecting brighter students, the students must enroll into the university. Nevertheless, these brighter students would not enroll since few scholarships will be given out due to the cutting of funding. In addition, the
reasons why prestigious universities such as Harvard, Dartmouth, University of Virginia, etc. are appealing to bright students is partly due to the small class size and small student population. The bright students will seem significant and valued in a small-class setting. Hence, the motive of World’s Ahead will leave students behind.

**Conclusion**

Perhaps the biggest question facing FIU right now as an institution is the question of expansion. The more research was done the more it seemed FIU viewed the question as a “non-question,” it was inevitable and necessary. This is understandable, all large institutions must grow eventually and it is true that FIU is smaller than UCF, FSU, and UF. Concern first arose among the group when we viewed the rate by which FIU planned to expand. Additionally the group was concerned at the significant lack of material expressing student views on expansion. With this information we set out to find the information you see throughout our website.

Our research and polling of the student body have alerted and enlightened us. We found that over 80% of the student body did not think that increasing the student body by 10,000 students as rapidly as FIU wanted to do so would be a good idea. They cited current class sizes and class availability as factors that made it difficult for them to envision such a dramatic increase in the student body. Indeed, students were greatly concerned about a decline in the quality of their academics. Undisclosed to the students was FIU’s already documented attempts at increasing the student body by lowering entrance criteria.

The last admitted class was overall less qualified than the one before it despite FIU’s growth of popularity within the community. Lowering standards may be a good strategy to bring
in tuition dollars needed for expansion however it is not a good strategy for increasing student satisfaction, graduation rates, or advancing academically
Sources/Bibliography


<http://facilities.fiu.edu/Documents/Construction/FacilitiesProjectMasterlist.PDF>.


Questions for the Enrollment Office

1. How selective is FIU in comparison to most universities?
   - Heavy focus on SAT scores and GPA. No consideration for admission if SAT and GPA not met.
     Appeal process. Alternatives suggested: community college, appeal, dual-admission
     Is the admissions office becoming more selective?
   - No longer becoming second hand due to growth, offering of 200 majors, majority have high rankings.

2. What kind of impact will expansion have on enrollment?
   - People look forward to it, room for programs and enrollment growth; 4th largest university in nation.

3. How many students are we planning to admit in the fall semester in comparison to last fall semester?
   - 2000-3000 students per semester transfers and freshman

4. Who is in charge of making the application that we have to fill out (relatively simple)?
   - N/A (go deeper)

5. Are there any future modifications to the application currently in development to increase selectivity?
   - Rarely changes.

6. Is FIU actively attempting to recruit competitive students?
   - Consistently test scores, scholarships bring in the competitive aspect

7. What kind of processes are being used to recruit these students?
   - Financial aid office
Additional Questions:

1. Will there be a significant increase in faculty to balance the 10,000 student enrollment increase in the next 5 years?
   ● Inevitable, no numbers

2. Will any tuition pay for the expansion (definitive answer)?
   ● Student Government

Questions for Financial Aid Office

1. How does the increase in acceptance rates affect the distribution of financial aid?

2. How does university expansion affect financial aid?

3. Why have the number of available scholarships decreased during this academic year?

4. What are the predicted benefits of expansion on financial aid? Setbacks?

5. Would retention be better for financial aid, or simply the number of students enrolled?

6. Does tuition amount have any impact on financial aid distribution?