

## Proposal:

Optional Practical Training (OPT) Fee for F-1 International Graduate Students



Academic Affairs Spring 2024

# **OUTLINE**

#### 1. UNPRECEDENTED GROWTH

number of international students

in

Volume of student traffic and OPT-participation has spiked in the last three years.

#### 2. WORKLOAD INCREASE

associated with growth

absorbs the time of OIE staff, creating pressure to keep up with federal compliance requirements and routine office administrative tasks

# 3. OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT) FEE proposal

to support our students and the effective operation of the OIE, which are central to our institutional mission.



### **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

To promote International Engagement, Global Citizenship, and Diversity

### University Mission:

Our comprehensive public university prepares students to lead, serve, and succeed by fostering lifelong learning and <u>civic and global responsibility</u>.

#### Core Value:

...Offering equitable access to high-quality programs and services to people of <u>varying cultural</u> <u>backgrounds</u> living within and beyond our diverse community of North Central Massachusetts.

### Academic Plan:

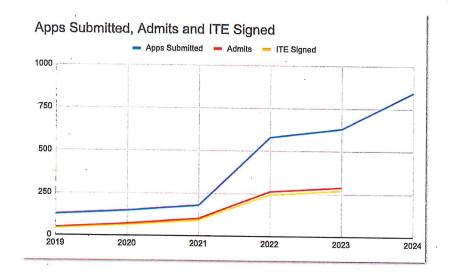
<u>Internationalizing the curriculum</u>... [through] exchange programs and international student recruitment.

International
Students
on campus
contribute to global
learning
experiences for all
students & help to
influence civic and
global diversity.

## 1. UNPRECEDENTED GROWTH

International students at Fitchburg State by number

-deptisely	GRADUATE APPLICATION S SUBMITTED	ADMITS	ITES SIGNED (Intent to Enroll)	% Yield
2019 (FA & SP)	126 45 41 3		32%	
2020 (FA & SP)	148	68	61	41%
2021 (FA & SP)	180	99	89	49%
2022 (FA & SP)	581	261	343	59%
2023 (FA & SP)	631	288 270		42%
2024	844	IN PROGR	Avg. 45%	



# 1. UNPRECEDENTED GROWTH

Financial Snapshot: Tuition

YEAR	INT'L STUDENT ENROLLMENT	AVERAGE COURSE LOAD PER TERM	AVERAGE TERMS TO DEGREE	AVERAGE TERM TUITION COST	REVENUE GENERATED FOR 3 TERMS
AY 2021-2022 Spring, Summer, Fall	> 120	3 courses (9 credits)	3	\$3123/student (\$1041/course)	~ \$1.1 million
AY 2022-2023 Spring, Summer, Fall	> 200	3 courses (9 credits)	3	\$3123/student (\$1041/course)	~ \$1.9 million





# 2. WORKLOAD Associated with Building an International Student Body

### SGOCE: OIE

#### Student Recruitment & Admission

Recruitment and communication with prospective international students

 All admissions inquiries
 Applicants
 Application management, transcript and English-language proficiency evaluation

 Arranging placement examinations

 Managing deposits and payment

 Assisting with course enrollment & management of retention efforts throughout academic program

### Immigration, Federal Compliance & Matriculation

- Communication with prospective students on visa-related questions and questions about living in the U.S.
- Management of immigration process for admitted students, including I-20 documentation, federal reporting, and preparing for F-1 visa process
- Ensuring federal compliance in SEVIS system, including tracking successful visa outcomes, students' courses of study, enrollment, employer information
- Advising and providing requisite reporting on OPT and STEM OPT, including I-765 application form and I-983 training plan
- Manage transition of students sponsored for H-1B visas, including work with USCIS and terminating SEVIS record, when appropriate
- Coordination of Orientation & other cultural events for current students

## 2. WORKLOAD INCREASE

### Current Staff Dedicated to International Student Enrollment & Matriculation

SGOCE			
Name	Title	Role	
Mary Gowdy	International Coordinator / Associate Director of Graduate Admissions	Coordinator for international recruitment, applications & admissions	
Peter August	Assistant Director of Graduate Admissions	Manages graduate admissions, including the MS in Computer Science and the on-campus MBA	

Office of International Education			
Name	Title	Role	
Nelly Wadsworth	Director	Primary Designated School Official (PDSO)	
Sandy Yu	International Student Coordinator	Designated School Official (DSO)	
NhuPhuong Trieu-Hindle	Part-Time Assistant	12.5 hours/week	



### 2. WORKLOAD INCREASE

F-1 Visa Students: Optional Professional Training (OPT) Requirements

Eligible students can apply for up to 12 months of OPT before or after completing their academic studies

Students who earn a degree in certain STEM fields can apply for a 24-month extension of post-completion OPT, called STEM OPT.



F1-issuing institution is required to <u>advise</u>, <u>provide services for</u>, <u>and submit SEVIS tracking</u> on international students engaged in OPT/ STEM OPT for <u>up to 3 years after graduation</u>.



# 2. WORKLOAD INCREASE

Campus comparisons of OPT Enrollment

Institution	Fall 2023: # of International students	# of OPT Registrations
Framingham State	72	17
Worcester State	100	15
Salem State	181	23
Bridgewater State	115	25
Fitchburg State	220	187*
Westfield State	67	14
Mass Art	117	31

<sup>\*</sup> Majority Computer Science students pursuing professional training

# 3. INTERNATIONAL STUDENT FEE Proposal

Introduce a \$250.00/semester International Student fee in for all international graduate students.

International student fees are a common practice across institutions of higher education.

Fees offset cost of processing, tracking & assisting students in federal documentation required for OPT and STEM OPT, including I-20, I-983 and SEVIS documentation, reporting changes, updates, job tasks, and H-1B preparation.

### Campus comparisons

Institution	Fee	Fee Term	Student Population
Framingham State	\$1,355	Semester	All international graduate Students
Managatan State	\$250	Semester	All international students
Worcester State	\$125	Summer	All International students
Westfield State	\$500	Semester	All International students
UMass-Lowell	\$500	Semester	All international students
Southern New Hampshire Campus-based Programs	\$500	Semester	All international students
Fitchburg State	\$250	Semester	All international graduate students

Support FT Administrative Assistance in the OIE

## Proposal

IINTERNATIONAL GRADUATE STUDENTS	PROPOSED FEE
> 200	\$250/semester
Total	> \$50,000

CURRENT	CURRENTLY BUDGETED COST	PROPOSED
12.5 hours/week at \$26/hour	\$16,900	Full-time Administrative Assistant to support processing and tracking students in federal documentation required for OPT and STEM OPT, including I-20, I-983 and SEVIS documentation, reporting changes, updates, job tasks, and H-1B preparation.

How will a full-time Administrative Assistant benefit students?

Will allow the OIE to absorb growth in I-20 processing, track missing SEVIS documentation, enter updates to SEVIS, and verify federal record accuracy in a more timely manner.

Will allow the OIE to respond to increased telephone, email & in-person inquiries and keep up with critical tasks delayed by workload increase associated with int'l enrollment growth.

Will enhance overall responsiveness and excellence of service, critical for this growing population of students for whom interpersonal influence has long been noted as a primary motivator for studying abroad (Mourali et al, 2005).

Risk of not funding a FT Administrative Assistant in the OIE?

Loss of int' student enrollment due to processing delays of essential documents such as I-20s, which could result in missed deadlines, enrollment disruptions, and decreased participation.

Compliance Issues with immigration regulations for international students, which could result in penalties and legal complications.

Loss of revenue

associated with lost tuition & course fees.

Student Dis-satisfact Inadequate Support Services could hinder visa application support, orientation programs, academic advising, and risking reputational damage to the institution.