

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **For First Time in over a Decade, International Graduate Applications and Enrollments Decline at U.S. Institutions**

#### **Majority of Decline in Master's and Certificate Programs**

Washington, DC —New data from the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) reveal that for the first time since Fall 2003, international graduate application and first-time enrollment rates declined at U.S. universities. For Fall 2017, the final application counts from prospective international students declined by 3%, while the first-time enrollment of international graduate students declined by 1%.

The overall decline is primarily in master's and certificate programs, with responding institutions reporting a 4.8% decrease in applications and a 2.8% decrease in first-time enrollment. In contrast, first-time international doctoral enrollment grew by 1.8%. Given that 77% of first-time international graduate enrollment was in master's and certificate programs and 23% was in doctoral programs, the discrepancy by degree objective is notable.

Recent changes in immigration policy, including the executive order barring entry or return of U.S. visa holders from specific countries, are being closely watched by members of the graduate education community. While students directly affected by the ban constitute a relatively small percentage of international graduate students, there has been significant concern that new immigration policies will tarnish the U.S.'s image as a welcoming destination for international students and scholars.

CGS President Suzanne Ortega noted, "While the declines we see this year are concerning, the good news is that the application acceptance rates and admission yield rates are comparable to last year. This suggests that prospective international graduate students remain highly likely to accept offers of admission to U.S. graduate schools. This may be due to increased efforts on the part of graduate schools and universities to assure international students that they will be welcomed and supported."

Application and enrollment numbers saw wide variations by sending country. The 2016-2017 admissions cycle marks the second year in a row that applications and first-time enrollment of international graduate students from the Middle East and North Africa declined. In aggregate, responding institutions reported a greater decline in applications between Fall 2016 and Fall 2017 (-17%) than was seen in the prior admission cycle (-5%). However, first-time graduate enrollment declined at a slower rate (-5%) compared to the prior year (-11%). Iran and Saudi Arabia historically represent the largest share of international graduate students from the Middle East and North Africa region, and applications from the two countries dropped by 18% and 21% respectively.

China and India continue to represent the largest shares of international graduate applications, first-time international graduate enrollment, and total international graduate enrollment. However, the final application and first-time graduate enrollment of Indian students decreased (-15%, -13% respectively) during the Fall 2016 to Fall 2017 admission cycle. This is the first decline in applications from India since Fall 2012.

Application counts for prospective European graduate students to U.S. institutions grew by 18%. However, first-time enrollment of European graduate students at U.S. institutions in Fall 2017 only increased by 1%. In Fall 2016, first-time enrollment rates for European graduate students rose by 8%.

(more)

The report also includes data trends by field of study. By total application and first-time enrollment counts, the most popular fields of study continue to be Business (15% and 19% respectively), Engineering (28% and 26% respectively), and Mathematics and Computer Sciences (22% and 19% respectively). By contrast, U.S. institutions that participated in the study reported a 10% decline in graduate applications and first-time enrollment to engineering programs.

As the only report of its kind to offer data on the current academic year, *International Graduate Applications and Enrollment: Fall 2017* reports applications, admissions, and enrollments of international master's, certificate, and doctoral students at U.S. colleges and universities.

### **About the survey and report**

Conducted since 2004, the CGS International Graduate Admissions Survey tracks the applications and enrollments of international students seeking U.S. master's and doctoral degrees. In Fall 2016 the survey was redesigned to collect data by degree objective (master's and graduate certificate vs. doctorate), and for all seven regions of origin, eight countries of origin, and all eleven broad fields of study, yielding the only degree-level data currently available for graduate admissions and enrollments. 377 U.S. graduate institutions who are members of CGS or its regional affiliates responded to the 2017 survey.

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*The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) is an organization of approximately 500 institutions of higher education in the United States and Canada engaged in graduate education, research, and the preparation of candidates for advanced degrees. The organization's mission is to improve and advance graduate education, which it accomplishes through advocacy in the federal policy arena, research, and the development and dissemination of best practices.*