



Council of Graduate Schools

PRESS RELEASE

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International Graduate Admissions Decline for First Time in Five Years Growth in Applications and Admissions Stronger for U.S. than International Students

The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) is reporting that offers of admission from U.S. graduate schools to prospective international students decreased 3% from 2008 to 2009, the first decline since 2004.

The survey report on admissions trends, released today, shows that more than half of responding institutions reported a decrease in international offers of admission. There were 16% declines in offers to students from both India and South Korea, after offers to students in each country fell 2% last year.

Although the survey also found a final one-year 4% increase in international applications, the total number of international applications received in 2009 remains 5% below 2003 levels.

The report additionally includes findings on domestic student admissions trends. The change in domestic applications at responding graduate schools was a median 8% increase. Offers of admission to U.S. students grew by a median 2%.

Growth in U.S. applications was more widespread than growth in international applications. While 75% of graduate schools received more applications from prospective U.S. students in 2009 than 2008, just 55% received more international applications. Institutions were also more likely to report growth in offers of admission to domestic applicants than to international students.

“The decline in admissions of international students this year, after several years of slowing growth, is a concern for U.S. graduate education,” said Debra W. Stewart, CGS President. “For the past few years growth in first-time graduate enrollment has been driven by international students. However, the fact that so many schools reported strong growth in admissions to U.S. students this year may signal a reversal of that trend,” she added.

Admissions trends by country, field, and institution type

The changes in admissions of prospective international students vary by country of origin, field of study, and institution type. While the decline in offers was driven by the sharp

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decreases in India and South Korea, offers to students from China increased 13%, marking the fourth year in a row of double-digit growth. On the other hand, admissions in all three of the most popular fields of study for international students—engineering, physical sciences, and business—declined by at least 4%.

There was a 2% decrease in international offers at doctoral universities, compared to a 9% decline at master's-level institutions. Despite the overall decline, offers of admission increased by 4% at the institutions with the 10 largest international enrollments.

Domestic applications and offers of admissions varied by type of institution as well. Similar to international trends, 84% of doctoral universities reported an increase in U.S. applications, versus just 58% of master's-level institutions. Doctoral universities were also more likely than master's-level institutions to report an increase in offers to domestic students, 62% to 52%.

About the report

Findings from the 2009 CGS International Graduate Admissions Survey, Phase II: Final Applications and Initial Offers of Admission is based on the second phase of a three-part annual survey of international graduate student applications, admissions, and enrollment among CGS U.S. member institutions. The survey had a response rate of over 50%, including 86 of the 100 institutions with the largest international graduate student enrollments.

The report, and previous CGS international admissions surveys, is posted at www.cgsnet.org.

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The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) is an organization of over 500 institutions of higher education in the United States and Canada engaged in graduate education, research, and the preparation of candidates for advanced degrees. Among U.S. institutions, CGS members award 95% of the doctoral degrees and 84% of the master's 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.*

* Based on data from the 2007 CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees