



Council of Graduate Schools

PRESS RELEASE

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International Graduate Application Trends Vary by Country and Field

Overall 4% increase; slowdown continues for third consecutive year

The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) is reporting that changes in the number of applications from prospective international students to U.S. graduate schools in 2009 varied dramatically by sending countries and fields of study.

The initial snapshot of applications for fall 2009, released today, shows continued strong growth in applications from China, up 16% from 2008. However, applications from India and South Korea declined by 9% and 7%, respectively, after both experienced 2% gains last year. These three countries annually send the most graduate students to the U.S.

The overall rate of increase for international graduate applications slowed for the third year in a row, to 4%, following increases of 6% last year, 9% in 2007, and 12% in 2006. Moreover, this year's growth was concentrated at institutions with the largest international enrollments; almost half of respondents to the CGS survey reported either no growth or a decline.

“As growth in international applications slows for the third consecutive year, with absolute declines from India and South Korea, we must be concerned about what we will see in the future,” remarked CGS President Debra W. Stewart. “While it is good news that international applications continue to increase overall, amid the current economic crisis we cannot predict whether this will yield a similar increase in first-time enrollment in the fall,” she added.

Application trends by country and field of study

In addition to the growth from China, there was a 20% increase in applications to CGS U.S. member institutions from prospective graduate students in the Middle East. Both of these countries/regions have seen four straight years of double-digit growth. Of the eight broad fields of study analyzed, there was a decline only in life sciences, down 2%, compared to a 3% gain last year. Only the two smallest fields for international graduate students, arts & humanities and education, had faster growth this year than in 2008.

Application trends by type of institution

CGS also analyzed changes in international applications by institutional characteristics, several of which demonstrate notable differences. For example, applications to doctoral-granting universities rose 5%, but declined 17% at master's-level institutions. There was a 7%

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increase among the 10 schools with the largest international graduate student enrollments, but a 4% decline among those outside the 100 largest; this trend was even more pronounced for certain countries of origin and fields of study. For example, there was a 15-point difference in applications from China between the largest and smallest institutions, and a 20-point variance between these groups in arts & humanities. On the other hand, institutions outside the 100 largest had the largest increases in applications from the Middle East and in business.

About the report

Findings from the 2009 CGS International Graduate Admissions Survey, Phase I: Applications is based on the first phase of a three-part annual survey of international graduate student applications, admissions, and enrollment among CGS U.S. member institutions. The analysis includes responses from 245 schools, including 88% of the 100 institutions with the largest international graduate student enrollments.

The full report is available at the CGS website 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