



Council of Graduate Schools

PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Stuart Heiser

(202) 223-3791 / sheiser@cgs.nche.edu

International Graduate Applications Rise 7%

Continued strong growth from China; India and South Korea stabilize

The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) is reporting that the number of applications from prospective international students to U.S. graduate schools in 2010 increased for the fifth consecutive year. The 7% growth is the largest since a 9% gain in 2007.

The initial snapshot of graduate applications for fall 2010, released today, shows a fifth successive year of double-digit growth in applications from China, up 19%, after a 14% gain in 2009. Applications from India and South Korea appear to have stabilized after significant declines last year: there was a 2% decline from India and a 0% change from South Korea this year. China, India, and South Korea are the three largest countries of origin for international graduate students in the U.S.

Additionally, for the first time in seven years, the number of international applications appears to be above its 2003 level, finally reversing large declines that occurred in 2004 and 2005. However, despite the overall growth, 39% of all institutions responding this year reported a decline in applications for 2010, averaging 10%.

“The continued recovery in international graduate applications has been a positive trend,” said CGS President Debra W. Stewart. “However, we must not be overconfident. The lack of growth from India and South Korea is an ongoing concern, and as we saw in 2009, an increase in applications does not necessarily result in equivalent enrollment growth,” she added.

Application trends by country and field of study

In addition to the growth in China, applications from prospective graduate students from the Middle East & Turkey also rose by double-digits for the fifth consecutive year, by 18%. In terms of field of study, applications increased in all broad fields. There was also less variation in growth between fields than in previous years.

Applications increased in the three most popular fields for international students: engineering, physical & earth sciences, and business, which collectively enroll 62% of all international graduate students. Physical sciences applications rose 10%, compared to 2% last year. The only field to have smaller growth this year was “other fields”, up 8% after an 11% gain in 2009.

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One Dupont Circle NW, Suite 230 • Washington, DC 20036

(202) 223-3791 • www.cgsnct.org

Application trends by institutional characteristics

CGS also analyzes changes in international applications by various institutional characteristics. Similar to last year's trend, growth was concentrated at institutions with the largest international graduate enrollments. There was a 10% increase among the 25 schools with most international graduate students, but only 4% growth among those outside the 100 largest. Applications from India rose 6% at the 10 largest schools, but fell 14% at those outside the 100 largest. This trend was reversed in applications from South Korea, where the volume declined 4% at the 10 largest but rose 14% at the smallest institutions.

Differences also emerged between private and public institutions. Applications increased 12% at private, not-for-profit schools, but only 5% at public graduate schools; last year, application growth was slightly higher at public than private institutions.

About the report

Findings from the 2010 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 240 schools, including 88% of the 50 institutions with the largest international graduate student enrollments; respondents enroll almost two-thirds of all international graduate students in the U.S.

The report is available 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 78% 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 2008 CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees