



Council of Graduate Schools

PRESS RELEASE

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First-Time International Graduate Student Enrollment up 3%

Declines slow for students from South Korea and India

The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) is reporting today that there was an increase of 3% in first-time enrollment of international students at U.S. graduate schools from 2009 to 2010. This increase is a positive trend following the lack of growth in first-time international enrollment last year.

Over half of the institutions that responded in both 2009 and 2010 reported an increase in international first-time enrollment, with an average increase of 14%; for those institutions reporting a decrease, the average decline was 11%. Total enrollment of international graduate students rose 1%, compared to 2% in 2009 and 3% in 2008. This year's increase is the smallest since 2006. (First-time and total enrollment trends differ due to the varying length of time required to complete graduate degrees, particularly doctorates.)

Changes in first-time enrollment vary widely by country of origin. First-time enrollment of students from China, one of the two countries that send the most graduate students to the U.S., increased by 20% and the Middle East also saw 7% growth. However, there was a 3% decline from India, the other largest sending country, though far less than last year's 16% drop. South Korea also experienced a smaller decline this year than last year, 3% in 2010 vs. 13% in 2009.

"After leveling off last year, it is encouraging to see this year's growth in first-time international graduate enrollment," said Debra W. Stewart, CGS President. "As international students consider a world of options, this increase shows they continue to perceive a graduate degree from a U.S. institution as a good value," she added.

Enrollment trends by field of study and institution type

The changes in international first-time graduate enrollment vary by field of study and institution type as well. International first-time graduate enrollment increased in all broad fields except education (down 7%) and life sciences (flat). Physical and Earth Sciences, the second most popular field of study for international graduate students, saw a 9% gain in first-time enrollment, after last year's 4% decline. Arts and Humanities saw a similar rebound from a 3% decline last year to a 5% gain this year.

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The survey also reports changes based on the number of graduate degrees granted to international students by institutions. Overall, the largest increases in first-time international enrollment were at institutions that award the largest number of degrees to international students. There was 5% growth at the institutions granting the largest number of degrees, compared to no increase at the schools outside the 100 largest.

The increase in first-time international enrollment this year was driven primarily by doctoral institutions which enroll more international students than master's-focused institutions. Doctoral institutions saw first-time enrollment growth of 4% while master's-focused institutions saw a drop of 7% after a 5% decline last year.

There are differences in first-time graduate enrollment of international students by geographic region as well; the Northeast saw a 10% increase, the South grew 3% and the West increased 1% while the Midwest saw no growth.

The survey also included questions on a specific issue in graduate education; this year's respondents were asked to report on their admissions policies regarding applications from international students with three-year bachelor's degrees. Such policies vary widely but comparing these results to those from similar questions asked in the past show that acceptance of three-year degrees seems to be increasing. For 3-year bachelor's degrees from *European* countries, only 13% of respondents said they do not accept such degrees. However, for 3-year bachelor's degrees from *non-European* countries, twice as many institutions (26%), say they do not accept such degrees.

About the report

Findings from the 2010 CGS International Graduate Admissions Survey, Phase III: Final Offers of Admissions and Enrollment is based on the final 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 47%, including 74 of the 100 institutions that grant the largest numbers of graduate degrees to international students.

The report is available at http://www.cgsnet.org/portals/0/pdf/R_IntlEnrl10_III.pdf.

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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 93% of the doctoral degrees and 76% 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 2009 CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees