



Council of Graduate Schools

PRESS RELEASE

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Total International Graduate Enrollment Shows Solid Growth; Increases Slow for First-time Enrollment

Graduate deans are traveling overseas to recruit students

The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) is reporting that total enrollment of international students at U.S. graduate schools increased 7% from 2006 to 2007, after rising just 1% last year. It is the largest gain since 2002.

The report on fall 2007 enrollment, released today, also shows that first-time enrollment of international graduate students increased 4%, the third consecutive year of growth, following three years of declines. However, the rate of increase slowed from last year's 12% gain. (Changes in total enrollment generally differ from changes in first-time enrollment, due to the varying length of time required to complete graduate degrees, particularly doctorates.)

Graduate deans travel internationally to recruit students

The CGS survey asked U.S. graduate deans about their international recruitment and outreach activities. The overwhelming majority, 87%, have participated in some type of international outreach during the last two years, and a substantial number have traveled overseas to do it. 36% of survey respondents, including 67% of those from the ten schools with the largest international enrollments, reported attending international student recruitment fairs. And almost half, 48%, have visited foreign universities to build program partnerships, with the number rising to 65% for the largest 50 institutions in terms of international graduate enrollment.

“While the continuing rebound in international student enrollment is a positive sign, the significant decline in the rate of increase is a serious issue that deserves attention,” remarked CGS President Debra W. Stewart. “It is thus encouraging to see graduate school deans taking such an active role to recruit highly qualified international students. Continuing to attract the best and brightest students from around the globe to U.S. graduate programs is an essential part of maintaining our nation’s global economic leadership,” she added.

Enrollment trends by country of origin and field of study

Total enrollment of students from China and India, the two countries that send the most students to the U.S., rose by 15% and 14%, respectively. First-time enrollment of students from China grew 19%, but was up only 8% for students from India, after a 32% surge last year.

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In terms of field of study, the largest gains were in two of the three most popular disciplines for international students. First-time enrollment was up 12% in business and 8% in engineering, compared to increases of 10% and 22%, respectively, in 2006. Total international enrollment gains in these fields also exceeded the overall increase, up 10% in business and 8% in engineering.

Trends by enrollment size

The survey additionally reports changes by the size of respondents' international graduate enrollment. Overall, the institutions with the most international students had smaller gains, while the institutions with the smallest enrollments had the largest increases, especially in first-time enrollment. This is the opposite pattern than the one CGS reported last spring for applications. At the 25 largest universities, first-time enrollment was up only 1% and total enrollment up 3%, compared to gains of 4% and 6%, respectively, for those institutions below the largest 50 in terms of international graduate enrollments.

The trend generally held true for enrollment by country/region of origin and field of study. Smaller schools experienced the fastest enrollment growth in students from South Korea, up 13%, compared with a 3% gain overall and no growth at the largest 25 institutions. First-time enrollment in business was up 19% at schools below the largest 50, but only 4% at the largest 25, while engineering first-time enrollment was up 9% at the smaller institutions but only 3% at the 25 largest.

About the report

Findings from the 2007 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. 172 schools responded, including 76% of the 25 institutions with the largest international student enrollments. The full report is available at www.cgsnet.org.

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The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) is an organization of 485 institutions of higher education in the United States and Canada engaged in graduate education, research and the preparation of candidates for advanced degrees. CGS member institutions award more than 90% of the doctoral degrees and over 75% of the master's degrees in the U.S. 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.