



Council of Graduate Schools

PRESS RELEASE

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Minimal Growth in International Graduate Enrollment in 2008 Declines in first-time enrollment from two key sending countries

The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) is reporting that total enrollment of international students at U.S. graduate schools increased 3% from 2007 to 2008, after rising 7% last year.

The report on Fall 2008 enrollment, released today, also shows that first-time enrollment of international graduate students rose 3%, the second consecutive year of a slowdown in the rate of growth; following a 12% gain in 2006, first-time enrollment increased only 4% last year. (Trends in total enrollment differ from those in first-time enrollment due to the varying length of time required to complete graduate degrees, particularly doctorates.)

First-time enrollment of students from India, one of the two countries that sends the most students to the U.S., *declined* 2%, after growing 8% in 2007. South Korea also fell, by 4%, after a 3% increase last year.

There was little growth in individual fields of study. Exceptions were physical sciences and business, where first-time enrollment increased by 5% and 4% respectively, in 2008.

Efforts to recruit and enroll international students

The CGS survey asked U.S. graduate deans to report on the specific mechanisms they have employed over the past two years to recruit international students; overall, 81% responded that they had undertaken one or more efforts. Over half, 54%, reported that they had worked with foreign institutions or consortia to identify potential students, and 31% said that they had devoted more funding for overseas recruitment trips.

“While the slowdown in the growth of international graduate enrollment continues, the very high proportion of deans initiating efforts to recruit international students signals that our graduate schools hope to sustain the country’s role as a leading destination for international graduate students,” said CGS President Debra W. Stewart.

Enrollment trends by country of origin and field of study

Growth of both first-time enrollment and total enrollment of students from China, the other top sending country, remained strong with double digit increases in both categories for the second year in a row. First-time enrollment of Chinese students increased 14% in 2008 compared to 19% in 2007, and total enrollment rose 10% in 2008 following 15% growth in 2007. India experienced a sharp slowdown in total enrollment, with 3% growth following a 14% gain last

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year. Of the four sending countries/regions included in the survey, only the Middle East saw accelerating growth in total enrollment: up 7%, vs. 5% last year.

In terms of field of study, only physical sciences saw a higher growth rate in first-time enrollment this year, 5%, compared to 2% last year. Engineering slowed from 8% last year for both first-time and total enrollment, to 1% and 3%, respectively.

Trends by institutional enrollment size

The survey also reports changes by the size of respondents' international graduate student enrollment. Overall, the largest increase in first-time enrollment, 5%, occurred at the 25 institutions with the most international students. This trend generally held true for enrollment by country/region of origin and by field of study. First-time enrollment from India was up 7% at the 25 largest, but down 5% at the smallest institutions. Engineering saw 10% growth in first-time enrollment at the 25 largest, compared to a 3% decline at the institutions below the largest 50.

However, the reverse was true for first-time enrollment of students from China and in physical sciences, where the smaller schools, in terms of international graduate enrollments, experienced faster growth than did the 25 largest and 50 largest institutions.

Finally, 43% of institutions reported that they still have fewer international graduate students than they did in 2003. At these schools, total enrollment is 16% below what it was five years ago.

About the report

Findings from the 2008 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 admissions](#) among CGS U.S. member institutions; earlier this year CGS reported a 6% increase in applications. The current report analyzes responses from 181 graduate schools, including all ten of the institutions with the largest international graduate enrollments and 86% of the 50 largest.

The full report is available on the CGS website at www.cgsnet.org

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The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) is an organization of 500 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 94% of the doctoral degrees and 80% 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.*

* *Graduate Enrollment and Degrees: 1996-2006* (Council of Graduate Schools, 2007)