PRESS RELEASE

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Graduate Schools Report 3.5% increase in first-time enrollment

Washington, DC — The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) today reported a 3.5% one-year increase in first-time graduate enrollment between Fall 2013 and Fall 2014—the largest since 2009. Institutions responding to the CGE/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment & Degrees received more than 2.1 million applications for Fall 2014, extended over 850,000 offers of admission in Fall 2014, and enrolled nearly 480,000 incoming, first-time graduate students in fall 2014 graduate certificate, education specialist, master’s or doctoral programs—all new highs.

CGS President Suzanne T. Ortega emphasized that enrollment growth is critical to meeting the needs of the U.S. economy. “The increase in overall enrollments is good news, but the disparity between U.S. and international growth is a cause for concern.”

Ortega pointed to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics projecting employers to add nearly 2.4 million jobs requiring a graduate degree or higher between 2012 and 2022. At this rate, Ortega said, additional master’s and doctoral degree holders are needed to make that projected result possible. “Greater investments in graduate education and research—supporting both domestic and international students—will be required to keep up with the demand for graduate level talent in the future,” Ortega said.

The contributions of international graduate students are becoming increasingly important to the U.S. graduate education enterprise. From 2004 to 2014, international students accounted for over two-thirds of the growth in first-time enrollment headcounts at U.S. graduate institutions. Furthermore, international students are more likely than their domestic counterparts to study in STEM fields. In Fall 2014, 65.9% of all temporary resident graduate students were enrolled in biological and agricultural sciences, engineering, mathematics and computer sciences, physical and earth sciences, or social and behavioral sciences. In contrast, only 27.1% of U.S. citizen/permanent resident graduate students were enrolled in these fields.

Other report findings include:

Findings by field
- Applications to graduate programs in business increased 5.4% between Fall 2013 and Fall 2014.
- The largest one-year changes in graduate applications between Fall 2013 and Fall 2014 occurred in mathematics and computer sciences (22.0%) and engineering (10.5%).
- In terms of first-time enrollment, the fastest-growing fields were mathematics and computer science and engineering, growing at 21.3% and 10.7%, respectively, between Fall 2013 and Fall 2014.
- First-time enrollment in education programs decreased 1.3% for Fall 2014.
The largest fields by total enrollment were education and business, respectively accounting for 19% and 15% of total graduate enrollment at responding institutions in Fall 2014.

Findings by degree level

- Three-quarters (73.1%) of all graduate students in Fall 2014 were enrolled in programs leading to a master’s degree or a graduate certificate, according to survey respondents.
- Responding institutions awarded approximately 73,000 doctoral degrees, 526,000 master’s degrees, and 36,000 graduate certificates in 2013-14.
- Between Fall 2013 and Fall 2014, first-time enrollment increased by 1.9% at the doctoral-level and increased by 3.7% at the master’s-level.

Student demographics

- Nearly six in ten (57.9%) of all first-time graduate students in Fall 2014 were women, according to survey respondents.
- According to survey respondents, women earned nearly two-thirds (65.9%) of the graduate certificates, 59.0% of the master’s degrees, and 52.2% of the doctorates. Academic year 2013-14 marked the sixth straight year women earned a majority of doctoral degrees.
- Nearly one quarter (24.2%) of all first-time graduate students who were U.S. citizens and permanent residents were from racially/ethnically underrepresented populations. Although there were increases in first-time graduate enrollment between Fall 2013 and Fall 2014 among Hispanics/Latinos (6.8%) and Blacks/African Americans (2.0%), there was a 3.0% decline among American Indians/Alaska Natives.

About the report

Graduate Enrollment and Degrees: 2004 to 2014 presents the findings of an annual survey of U.S. graduate schools, cosponsored by CGS and the Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) Board. It is the only annual national survey that collects data on graduate enrollment by all fields of study and is the only source of national data on graduate applications by broad field of study. The report, which includes responses from 636 institutions, presents statistics on graduate applications and enrollment for fall 2014, degrees conferred in 2013-14, and trend data for one-, five- and ten-year periods.

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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. 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.