

PRESS RELEASE

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International Graduate Application and Enrollment Rates Increase at U.S. Institutions After Two Consecutive Years of Decline

While overall rates are up, some universities continue to see declines

Washington, DC —The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) has published new data showing that international graduate application and first-time enrollment rates have increased at U.S. universities for the first time since Fall 2016. For Fall 2019, the final application counts from prospective international students increased by 3%, and the first-time enrollment of international graduate students increased by 4%. The proportion of first-time international graduate enrollment in master's and certificate programs (75%) vs. doctoral programs (25%) has remained roughly the same.

The growth is driven primarily by increases in applications (3%) and first-time enrollment (4%) to master's and certificate programs. While the overall increases are welcome news, some institutions did not see more student interest. For Doctoral Universities with Highest Research Activity (R1) and Master's Colleges and Universities and Other Institutions (M1-3), applications and first-time enrollment increased across the board. However, for Doctoral Universities with Higher or Moderate Research Activity (R2 & R3), first-time enrollment declined in doctoral programs (-6%) and stagnated in master's and certificate programs (-1%).

"We are pleased to see that the overall application and first-time enrollment numbers for international graduate students are on the rise. Our member universities work hard to ensure a welcoming environment for students and scholars from across the globe," said CGS President Suzanne Ortega. "We remain vigilant, however, in monitoring obstacles, including the latest Executive Order "travel ban" and other changes in immigration and visa policy, that may negatively impact our ability to attract talented students from around the world."

Highlights by Country of Origin

China and India continue to represent the largest shares of international graduate applications, first-time international graduate enrollments, and total international graduate enrollments. Between Fall 2018 and Fall 2019, the number of graduate applications and first-time graduate enrollments for Chinese nationals increased by 3%.

This is the second consecutive year of strong growth in graduate applications (11%) and first-time enrollments (22%) from sub-Saharan African students to U.S. graduate schools. While after two years of decline, applications (4%) and first-time enrollments (10%) from Mexican nationals rose.

Highlights by Field of Study

Across broad fields of study, international graduate applications increased in arts and humanities (6%), health sciences (7%), mathematics and computer sciences (7%), and biological and agricultural sciences (14%) between Fall 2018 and Fall 2019. By contrast, applications in engineering (-2%) and business (-3%), two of the largest broad fields of study, decreased. The largest one-year increases in first-time international graduate enrollment by broad field of study were in mathematics and computer sciences (11%), social and behavioral sciences (11%), and biological and agricultural sciences (10%).

About the survey and report

Conducted since 2004, the CGS International Graduate Admissions Survey tracks the applications and enrollments of international students seeking U.S. master's and doctoral degrees. As the only report of its kind to offer data on the current academic year, *International Graduate Applications and Enrollment: Fall 2019* reports applications, admissions, and enrollments of international master's, certificate, and doctoral students at U.S. colleges and universities. In Fall 2016 the survey was redesigned to collect data by degree objective (master's and graduate certificate vs. doctorate), and for all seven regions of origin, eight countries of origin, and all eleven broad fields of study, yielding the only degree-level data currently available for graduate admissions and enrollments. 403 U.S. graduate institutions who are members of CGS or its regional affiliates responded to the 2019 survey.

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The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) is an organization of approximately 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.