



PRESS RELEASE

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Applications from International Graduate Students Increase for Third Year in a Row *Rebound partly due to surge in Indian students; Chinese students returning more slowly*

Washington, DC — Two years after the COVID-19 pandemic began, the flow of international students to United States universities continues to rebound, according to the newly released **International Graduate Applications and Enrollment: Fall 2021** report from the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS).

The annual report highlights data from the CGS *International Graduate Admissions Survey*. According to survey data, between Fall 2020 and Fall 2021, the total number of international graduate applications received by U.S. degree-granting institutions increased by 12 percent, marking its third year of increases. **The number of applications for master's and certificate programs for Fall 2021 exceeded that of Fall 2018, the prior record high.**

Between Fall 2020 and Fall 2021, the number of international students enrolled for the first-time in U.S.-based graduate programs increased by 92%. This stands in contrast to the 39% decline in first-time international graduate enrollment between Fall 2019 and Fall 2020. After the decline during the pandemic, this increase brings first-time international graduate enrollment in Fall 2021 on the rebound back to Fall 2018 levels.

"These findings are a strong sign that, despite changes brought on by the pandemic, the United States remains a destination of choice for international graduate students," Suzanne T. Ortega, president of CGS said. "This is good news for U.S. universities and local communities, which benefit enormously from the contributions of master's and doctoral degree students to research and learning environments."

A variety of factors may impact the mobility of students from different countries. For the first time in five years, the rate of increase of applications from India surpassed that of China. Graduate applications from Chinese nationals decreased by 16% between Fall 2020 and Fall 2021, while applications from Indian nationals increased by 36%. First-time enrollment among Chinese nationals increased by 35 percent, **while first-time enrollment of Indian nationals increased by 430 percent.** Overall, China and India continue to send the largest numbers of international students to the United States.

"While the substantial increase in Indian students is striking, we believe this increase is due in large part to the higher deferments of Indian graduate admissions in Fall of 2020," said Enyu Zhou, CGS senior analyst, who authored the report. "Basically, Fall of 2021 saw Indian students from two consecutive application years matriculating at the same time."

Other Major Report Highlights:

- Public Administration and Services (43%), Education (25%), Health Sciences (22%), and Business (17%) all saw increases in the total number of applications from international students.
- First-time enrollment in the fields of Mathematics & Computer Sciences and Engineering, both of which traditionally enroll large numbers of international students, increased substantially between Fall 2020 and Fall 2021, at 189% and 129% respectively.
- Deferrals among Indian master's and certificate and doctoral admissions fell to 5% and 4% respectively. In Fall of 2020, 21% of Indian master's and certificate admissions, and 12% of Indian doctoral admissions were deferred.
- A region to watch would be Sub-Saharan Africa. First-time graduate enrollment increased by 103% and their final applications increased by 64%, both substantial numbers.

The 2021 *CGS International Graduate Admissions Survey* was sent to 744 U.S. colleges and universities, which included CGS members as of January 2021 and institutions that are members of CGS's affiliates, the Conference of Southern Graduate Schools (CSGS), the Midwestern Association of Graduate Schools (MAGS), the Northeastern Association of Graduate Schools (NAGS), and the Western Association of Graduate Schools (WAGS). Institutions were asked to report the number of final applications from, and offers of admission to, prospective international graduate students, as well as first-time and total international graduate enrollments for Fall 2021. The 2021 survey was administered between September and November 2021. A total of 361 institutions, or 48.5%, responded to the survey.

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About CGS

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.

About the CGS International Graduate Admissions Survey

In 2004, CGS launched *International Graduate Admissions Survey*, an annual empirical examination of international graduate application, admission, and enrollment trends, in response to member institutions' interest in changes in the enrollment of international students seeking master's and doctoral degrees from U.S. colleges and universities. The survey is designed to capture information about application counts and offers of admission, as well as first-time and total graduate enrollment of international students for each fall admission cycle.