

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Applications for Admission and First-Time Graduate Enrollment Increase in Fall 2021**

*First-time enrollment increases driven by international students; first-time domestic enrollment declines*

Washington, D.C. — Applications for admissions increased substantially by 8.7 percent and first-time enrollment increased by 8.9 percent between Fall 2020 to Fall 2021, according to new data from the [Graduate Enrollment and Degrees (GE&D) report](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sbwPghFflr9gZegrVDWlLnLKfnU1Y_-6/view) released by the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS).

CGS and the ETS GRE Program jointly sponsor the CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees, which provides a national view of graduate enrollment trends from the past five and ten years.

The rise in applications for admissions between Fall 2020 and Fall 2021 was driven by Doctoral Universities with Very High Research Activity (R1) (6.6 percent) and Doctoral Universities with High Research Activity (R2) (16.2 percent). Together, these two categories of institutions accounted for 81 percent of the increases in applications between Fall 2020 and Fall 2021. The overall first-time enrollment increase was driven by the 94.5 percent increase in international graduate students in Fall 2021, rebounding from the 37.4 percent decrease in Fall of 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic.

By contrast, domestic first-time graduate enrollment declined by 4 percent between Fall 2020 and Fall 2021, after a large increase of 12.9 percent between Fall 2019 and Fall 2020. The report also shows that first-time graduate enrollment among underrepresented minorities (URM) decreased 4.5 percent among American Indian/Alaska Native students, 4.1 percent among Black/African American students, and 0.9 percent among Latinx students between Fall 2020 and Fall 2021. The decline in domestic students also comes after five years of gradual increases. The proportion of domestic first-time enrollment increased to 87.4 percent in Fall 2020 from 78.9 percent in Fall 2016.

First-time enrollment among White students, which constitutes the largest proportion of first-time graduate enrollment at 57.5 percent in Fall 2021, declined by 5.7 percent. Over the past 10 years, White students experienced an average 1.2 percent increase annually between Fall 2011 and Fall 2021.

“While multiple factors may be contributing to the declines in domestic student groups over the past year, it is likely that the pandemic is affecting the decisions of domestic students,” Suzanne T. Ortega, President of CGS said. “Uncertainties created by the pandemic may have led to a ‘wait and see’ approach to long-term investments like graduate degrees.”

Despite the one-year decline in first-time enrollment of underrepresented students, the average change over the past five years remains positive for most groups. For example, between Fall 2016 and Fall 2021, first-time enrollment increased by 8.7 percent among Latinx, 3.7 percent among Black/African Americans, and 0.8 percent among American Indian/Alaska Natives.

Ortega noted that it is important to see one-year changes in the context of larger trends, but added, “The rate of growth for URM student enrollment was already too slow to begin with. We can’t allow the pandemic to reverse the modest gains in URM representation.”

While in Fall 2021 women comprised a larger share of overall first-time graduate enrollees at 58.5 percent, the report also shows that they were underrepresented at the master’s and certificate level in engineering (28.4 percent), mathematics and computer sciences (34.0 percent), and business (46.3 percent).

Please view the complete report with additional findings and trends.

This year’s survey was sent to a total of 759 colleges and universities, and useable responses were received from 545 institutions, for an overall response rate of 71.8 percent.

The 2021 CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees was launched in November 2021 and sent to U.S.-based institutions that were members of the Council of Graduate Schools or of one of the four regional graduate school associations—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).

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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 Graduate Enrollment and Degrees: 2011 to 2021 report**

*Conducted annually since 1986, the CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees survey is designed to provide information about applications for admission to graduate school, graduate student enrollment, and graduate degrees and certificates conferred. The survey is jointly sponsored by CGS and the ETS GRE Program and is the only national survey that collects data on first-time and total graduate enrollment across all fields of master’s and research doctorate programs in the United States.*