

Data Sources: 2006 International Applications

Overview

This article presents findings from the February 2006 International Graduate Admissions Survey I. The survey questionnaire asked CGS members to compare the volume of graduate applications from international students for fall 2006 with those for fall 2005. We thank all of the respondents for the time and effort it took to complete the survey and submit the results to CGS.

The primary finding of the report is an 11% increase in international graduate applications for fall 2006 compared to fall 2005. Large increases were also found in applications from China and India, and in the fields of engineering and the life sciences. These findings suggest a notable turnaround in applications this year, but not a full recovery following the considerable declines of the prior two years.

Policy Context

Since the downturn in applications and enrollment documented by CGS and others, major policy changes have been initiated at the federal and institutional levels. Within institutions, CGS members have been active in changing their admissions processes to be more efficient and timely. They have incorporated information technologies to a greater extent than in the past, instituted call centers, and dedicated new staff and resources to international graduate admissions. Many graduate schools have also increased their direct recruitment of international students and grown more aware of major global trends such as the Bologna Process.

Changes have also been initiated by the Departments of Homeland Security and State. Recent policy initiatives announced by the president and by members of the Senate and Congress aim to improve the atmosphere for international students and visitors through new programs and changed regulations. All of these initiatives have been described in the weekly CGS Government Relations Update and in previous *Communicator* articles.

International Graduate Admissions

Previous Findings

The impetus for this research came from growing concerns among CGS members about changing global trends in international student flows and new regulations on international student visas. In response to these concerns,

CGS has been engaged in a multi-year survey research project to investigate the international graduate admissions process. The survey program is broken into an application phase (February), an admissions phase (June), and an enrollment phase (September).

Previously, CGS has reported a 28% decline in international graduate applications in 2004 and a 5% decline in 2005. Additionally, following three consecutive years of declines in first-time international enrollments between 2002-2004, we reported a 1% increase in first-time international enrollment in fall 2005.

Response Rate

For the February survey, more than 150 institutions responded, including over 80% of those institutions in the top 25 in terms of international student enrollment. The survey asked institutions to report 2005 and 2006 application data by broad categories such as country-of-origin and field-of-study. It also contained questions regarding pressing issues on the desks of graduate deans across the country (detailed findings from that section of the survey will be reported in the May *Communicator*).

Applications

We asked the graduate school to report the number of graduate applications for fall 2005 and fall 2006. Given that some graduate schools have not received or processed all of the applications for fall 2006, we asked respondents to report their applications figures "as of the same date each year" in order to produce an accurate comparison. In cases where

such a comparison is not possible, we have excluded those respondents from the analysis.

Overall

Comparing international graduate applications for fall 2006 to fall 2005, there was an 11% increase overall (See Table 1). Over 65% of respondents reported increases greater than 5%, 15% had decreases of greater than 5%, and 20% had approximately no change from last year. For institutions in the top 25 in terms of international enrollment, the increases were even somewhat larger.

Graduate applications to those institutions grew 12% between 2005 and 2006.

Despite this one-year increase, due to the significant decreases in 2004 and 2005, the overall pool of international applications is still down compared to 2003. For a subset of institutions that have responded consistently over the last three years, *continued on page 6*

Table 1: Percent Change of International Graduate Applications

	Change in Applications 2003-2004	Change in Applications 2004-2005	Change in Applications 2005-2006
International Overall	-28%	-5%	+11%
Country of Origin			
China	-45%	-15%	+21%
India	-28%	-5%	+23%
Korea	-14%	+1%	+3%
Middle East *	+4%	+7%	+4%
Field of Study			
Business	-24%	0%	+7%
Education	-21%	-3%	+3%
Engineering	-36%	-7%	+17%
Humanities and Arts	-17%	0%	+4%
Life Sciences	-24%	-2%	+16%
Physical Sciences	-22%	-2%	+10%
Social Sciences	-20%	-2%	+10%

Source: Findings from 2006 CGS International Graduate Admissions Survey Phase I: Applications
 * Middle East: Bahrain, Cyprus, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestinian Authority, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Yemen

The Clear Choice for Student Recruitment Services



At Thomson Peterson's, we're not just a dotcom. For 40 years, we've worked closely with the graduate community in delivering the qualified applicants and unparalleled outreach you've come to expect. And as a longtime supporter of the Council of Graduate Schools, Thomson Peterson's gives back in other ways, too. When you look for a recruiting partner, look for an organization you can trust.

Learn more about Thomson Peterson's graduate recruitment services. Call 800-338-3282 today!

CGS0306

www.petersons.com

CGS Welcomes New Institutional Members: Baker College and Concordia University, St. Paul

continued from page 4

Data Sources

we find that, while they are similarly up 11% this year, they remain down (-23%) since 2003.

Country-of-Origin

For the first time in three years, graduate applications from China and India grew. Applications from China increased 21% and from India increased 23%. Given that China and India are the two largest sending countries of international students, the overall increases are driven by the upward trend from these two countries. Illustrative of that relationship, only five institutions reported increases in their overall international applications but decreases from China. The vast majority of institutions reported increases from China as well as overall. There is a similar relationship with applications from India, although it is not as strong.

Applications from Korea (+3%) continued to grow following last year's increases, and the upward trend from the Middle East (+4%) continued this year.

Field-of-Study

The largest increases in applications by field-of-study came in engineering, where we find a 17% increase over last year, and life sciences, with a 16% increase. In each case, this

reverses the two-year trend of decreases in applications. The physical sciences and social sciences also posted substantial increases of approximately 10% in each field. Applications to graduate programs in education (+3%) and humanities and arts (+4%), fields with relatively few international students, also saw increases, but of much smaller magnitudes.

Conclusion and Implications

The primary finding of this report of an 11% increase in graduate applications this year is a positive sign following two consecutive years of decline. However, given the magnitude of the declines in previous years (-28% in 2004 and -5% in 2005) the number of graduate applications received has not rebounded to the 2003 levels.

In the next several weeks graduate schools which submitted the survey questionnaire will receive an individualized report comparing their application figures to the national results. We will also be continuing this year's international research with a follow-up survey on admissions in May and finally enrollment in September. The on-going participation of CGS members makes this research possible and we thank all CGS members for their support.

by Heath Brown, Director of Research and Policy
Analysis and Emily Neubig, Program Assistant for Best
Practices