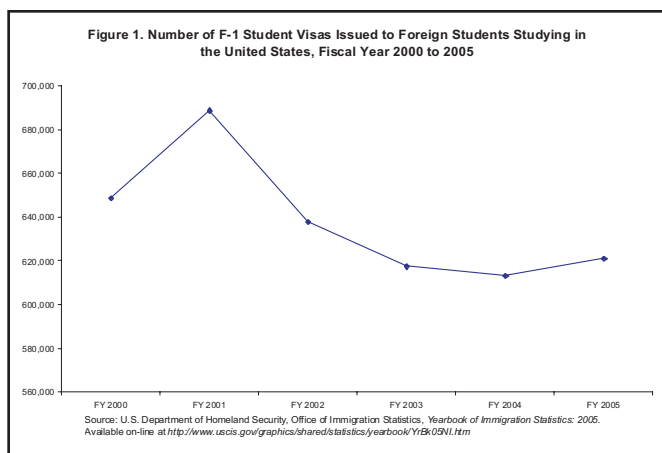


Data Sources: International Graduate Applications and Offers of Admission

Our country recently commemorated the fifth anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks. These attacks have had substantial effects on the US economy and national security. One of the most profound effects of the attacks has been on the enrollments of students from abroad seeking degrees from American colleges and universities, which declined sharply following these tragic events. The most recent data on graduate applications and admissions produced by CGS suggests that, at least among graduate programs, enrollments of international students may be improving. However, as other countries have begun to increase their educational capacities as well, the competition for graduate students between the US and its major trading partners may become even more intense in the years ahead.

After the September 11 attacks, Congress imposed two significant changes to the way foreign student visas were to be processed. One was a requirement to interview nearly 100% of visa applicants. The second was to use finger print scans and other “biometric checks” for applicants.¹ These new visa requirements have had adverse effects on the enrollments of foreign students. Between 2001 and 2005, the number of F-1 visas issued to foreign students fell from 688,970 to 621,178, according to the US Department of Homeland Security’s Office of Immigration Statistics (see Figure 1)². In roughly the same period, the Institute of



International Education’s (IIE) most recent report on student enrollments³ found that the number of foreign undergraduate and graduate students arriving on US college and university campuses declined from 586,323 in academic year 2002-2003 to 565,039 in 2004-2005. As a result, the United States’ share of total worldwide foreign student enrollment fell from about 25 percent in 2000 to 22 percent in 2004, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).⁴

CGS has recognized the potentially adverse effects declines in foreign student enrollments might have on graduate education and

	Change in Applications, 2004 to 2005	Change in Applications, 2005 to 2006	Change in Offers of Admission, 2004 to 2005	Change in Offers of Admission, 2005 to 2006
International	-5%	12%	3%	12%
Country of Origin				
China	-15%	19%	-5%	20%
India	-5%	26%	8%	28%
Korea	1%	4%	7%	4%
Middle East*	7%	10%	12%	-2%

*The Middle East includes the countries of Bahrain, Cyprus, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Palestinian Authority, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

Source: Findings from the 2006 CGS International Graduate Admissions Survey II: Final Applications and Offers of Admission, 2005 and 2006.

American economic competitiveness, and has tracked international graduate applications, offers of admissions, and enrollments since 2004. The most recent survey report, which shows the trends in international applications and offers of admissions for fall 2005 to 2006,

was released in August 2006 and posted on the CGS Web site at http://www.cgsnet.org/portals/0/pdf/R_intladm06_II.pdf. These results are based on a survey of international applications and offers of admission that CGS sent to member institutions in June. Over 150 members responded to the survey. However, over 90% of the institutions in the top 25 in terms of international graduate student enrollments, and 70% of those in the top 50, participated in the survey.

These latest results (see Table 1) show that total applications from foreign students to US graduate programs jumped 12% from 2005 to 2006, the first increase in three years. Increases in applications were led by students from India (26%) and China (19%). These increases are a sharp contrast from the 2004 to 2005 survey, which found that applications from these countries fell by 5% and 15%, respectively, and total applications fell 5%. Even more encouraging is the improving trend in offers of admissions to international students. From 2004-2005, offers of admissions to students from China fell 5%; in the 2005 to 2006 period, however, admission offers to students from this country grew 20%. Overall, the number of admission offers increased 12% after rising only 3% in the earlier year period. It is important to note that even with these gains, international applications are still down 23% since 2003. The enrollment increases have not been large enough to return the US to its pre-9/11 levels.

Any improvements in international student enrollments hold the prospect for both short- and long-term gains for the national economy. IIE has found

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Data Sources

that in 2004-2005, international students contributed \$13.3 billion to the US economy.⁵ If the increasing number of offers of admission leads to larger gains in student enrollments, the prospective gains the economy could be even better. More importantly, business and industry have become greatly dependent upon the talents of foreign-born students and employees, who often bring technical skills that our economy needs in order to remain prosperous in the increasingly competitive global economy.

It is also clear that a number of other countries have increased their capacity for educating more foreign students. At the same time that the US share of foreign student enrollments fell, enrollments for France, New Zealand, and South Africa grew by 1 percentage point or more.⁶ As these and other countries improve their educational capacities, they could be in a better position to recruit high-quality students for doctoral education. Later this fall, CGS will report on trends in international enrollments. The results from this survey will tell us if the changes in applications and admission offers have resulted in improvements in international student enrollments at the graduate level, but

the gains made by other countries for enrolling students should also be closely watched.

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