

Wednesday, August 9, 2006

Rebound Continues in Foreign Admissions to American Graduate Programs, Survey Finds

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The number of foreign students admitted to American graduate schools rose in 2006 for the second straight year, according to the results of a survey scheduled for release today by the Council of Graduate Schools. The 12-percent increase for the coming academic year is consistent with the rise in applications that the council reported in March, and could herald a significant growth in graduate foreign enrollments this fall.

The survey found that admissions for the 2006-7 academic year were up in most fields of study, with engineering seeing the sharpest increase, up 26 percent over 2005-6. Business also experienced a double-digit percentage increase, up 12 percent. Those two fields, along with the physical sciences, which saw a 5-percent increase in admissions, rely heavily on foreign students to fill enrollments.

This year also saw many more students admitted from India and China, the two countries that send the most students to the United States. Admissions from India increased by 28 percent over last year, while admissions from China increased by 20 percent. Last year admissions from India increased by 8 percent, while admissions from China declined by 5 percent.

Most of the admission increases or decreases in the individual categories corresponded closely to the percentage changes seen in the number of applications for those categories. Less consistency was found last year, when total foreign applications were down by 5 percent, but admissions still increased by 3 percent.

That 3-percent increase preceded a 1-percent rise in first-time enrollments, and because offers of admissions are historically a good predictor of first-time enrollments, this year's 12-percent increase is likely to signal more substantial growth.

The survey, which uses data from more than 150 of the council's members, including more than 90 percent of those in the top 25 in terms of international student enrollments, also asked respondents to answer two questions.

In response to the first question, more than 99 percent of respondents said that the quality of applicants they had admitted was the same or higher than the quality of those they admitted last year.

In response to the second question, two-thirds of graduate schools said they had made at least one change in resources to improve outreach to foreign students. Such changes included hiring new staff members or devoting more staff time, creating new international programs or collaborations, increasing funds for marketing and promotion of graduate programs, and increasing funds for international recruitment trips. One-third of respondents reported undertaking more than one of those actions.

chronicle.com/daily/2006/08/2006080901n.htm