

NATIONAL DESK

In Reversal, Graduate School Applications From Foreigners Rise

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The number of foreign students who applied to graduate programs in American universities during the current academic year increased by 11 percent from the year before, according to a survey to be released today. That growth reverses two years of decline that occurred in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 attacks.

The survey, by the Council of Graduate Schools, which represents more than 450 universities, found that despite the increase, the number of applications remained lower than in the years before 2003. The number of foreign students applying declined by 28 percent in 2003-4, a previous survey by the group showed, and by an additional 5 percent in the following academic year.

No absolute number of these international applications for the current year could be provided, because only about a third of the member universities responded to the survey. Still, more than 80 percent of the 25 universities with the largest number of foreign graduate students did respond, and the council said this gave it confidence in the findings.

The council suggested that there were several reasons for the turnaround. After the attacks of 2001, foreign students, particularly those in scientific and technical fields, experienced trouble obtaining visas. But recent changes in government policy, though continuing to emphasize security, have made it considerably easier.

"There's no question that both Homeland Security and the Department of State do play a role in this turnaround," Debra W. Stewart, the council's president, said in a telephone interview yesterday.

Graduate schools have also worked to improve the efficiency and timeliness of their admissions efforts, the council said. These and other initiatives, it said, have been undertaken to help the United States become "a more hospitable destination and maintain our global innovation leadership."

India and China have been sending the largest number of graduate students to American universities for a number of years, and a huge increase in applications from Indian and Chinese students fueled the overall increase this academic year. Applications from India increased by 23 percent, and those from China by 21 percent, the survey showed.