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Improving U.S. grad schools

GRADUATE school enrollment rates in this country have increased steadily for three decades; there are more students in grad schools here than anywhere else in the world

But if steps are not taken to attract more of them and improve grad school programs, this country could lose more ground to our international competitors.

U.S. graduate school programs are a victim of their own success. Other countries model their programs after ours, and as they get stronger, ours face new challenges. For instance, one of the dilemmas facing U.S. grad schools is that some academic disciplines have a high dropout rate. Also, there are not enough professors with doctorates in fields such as business, nursing, speech pathology, and communication science. That can be a problem for institutions seeking accreditation.

Higher education shuddered as international students returned to their homelands, many never to return, after 9/11. That was a loss on a number of levels. International students more often tend to seek graduate degrees in science and math disciplines, they add to a university's diverse environment, and they usually pay higher tuition rates.

Lately, there has been an increase in applications from international students. But the total is still fewer than before, and fewer foreign students remain in the United States after graduation.

The **Council of Graduate Schools** is also worried about the decline in American graduate students in the sciences. In 1980, U.S. citizens received 78 percent of the science and engineering graduate degrees awarded. Today, they only receive about half of those degrees.

American education is undergoing scrutiny and change at every level. Elementary and junior high schools are laying the foundation for students to take harder high school subjects. States like Ohio and Michigan are adopting tougher requirements for high school, and undergraduate schools are no longer coddling freshmen who didn't learn what they should have in high school.

All that will aid the **Council of Graduate Schools'** goal to attract, and keep, students at American grad schools and to trump international competition.

If America expects to remain a key player in the global economy, losing that battle is not an option.