



Council of Graduate Schools

PRESS RELEASE

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Growth in Graduate Enrollment in 2008 Driven by U.S. Students

Largest one-year increase since 2002

The enrollment of new students at U.S. graduate schools grew faster for domestic than for international students in 2008, the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) is reporting today. One-year increases in first-time enrollment had been higher for international students since 2004.

CGS's annual comprehensive report on graduate education trends shows that first-time enrollment of U.S. students increased 4.7% from fall 2007 to fall 2008, compared to 3.3% for international students. The domestic increase was the largest since an 11% spike in 2002.

However, over the past 10 years, the average annual growth rate in first-time enrollment of domestic graduate students, 3.4%, was smaller than the average 5.5% growth for international students. Overall, first-time enrollment increased 4.5% in 2008, slightly higher than the 3.9% average annual growth over the ten-year period.

Ten-year enrollment trends differed by gender and ethnicity as well as citizenship. Total enrollment grew faster for women than for men, with average annual increases of 3.8% and 2.3%, respectively. Total enrollment increased by at least 4.5% annually on average for all U.S. minority groups, compared to 1.5% for White, non-Hispanic students.

"The growth in the number of U.S. graduate students demonstrates that they understand the value of a graduate degree in a knowledge-based global economy," said CGS President Debra W. Stewart. "Our future depends on developing highly-trained professionals who have the knowledge and skills required to solve the complex challenges our country faces," she added.

The report also shows that the number of doctoral degrees awarded to women in 2008 grew by 5.7%, compared to a 3.5% increase for men. Between 1998 and 2008, the average annual growth rate in doctorates for women was almost triple that for men, 3.9% vs. 1.4%.

Additionally, the report shows that applications for admission to U.S. graduate schools increased 4.8% between 2007 and 2008; the average annual increase over the past 10 years was 3.8%.

The report presents statistics on applications and enrollment for fall 2008, degrees conferred in 2007-08, and trend data for one-, five- and ten-year periods. Data are disaggregated for a number of student demographic and institutional characteristics. Other findings include:

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- The most popular fields of study for graduate applications in 2008 were business, engineering, and social and behavioral sciences. Over the past decade, growth in applications has been strongest in physical sciences, engineering, and health sciences.
- While historically applications to graduate schools have increased during economic recessions, the 4.8% growth in 2008 was smaller than the 8% increase in 2007.
- Just three fields—education, business, and health sciences—accounted for nearly half of first-time enrollment in fall 2008.
- The representation of minority groups in U.S. graduate schools increased slightly in 2008, rising to 28.3% of first-time domestic enrollment, from 27% in 2007.
- Growth in first-time enrollment from 2007 to 2008 was greater for students from all racial/ethnic minority groups than for White students: 10.6% for Hispanics/Latinos, 8.8% for American Indians/Alaskan Natives, 6.7% for Asians/Pacific Islanders, and 6.5% for Blacks/African Americans, compared to 3.5% for Whites.
- The vast majority of first-time graduate students, 85%, were pursuing either a master's degree or a certificate.
- Women received just over 49% of doctorates awarded in 2007-08, up from 48% the previous year. The proportion varied by field, from 22% in engineering to almost 70% in health sciences.
- In contrast, women earned about two-thirds of the graduate certificates and 60% of the master's degrees conferred in 2007-08.

About the report

[*Graduate Enrollment and Degrees: 1998 to 2008*](#) presents the findings of an annual survey of U.S. graduate schools, co-sponsored by CGS and the Graduate Record Examinations Board (GRE). It is the only annual national survey that covers all fields of graduate study and is the only source of national data on graduate applications. The 2008 report includes responses from over 700 institutions, and is the most substantially revised and expanded edition since the survey began in 1986.

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The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) is an organization of over 500 institutions of higher education in the United States and Canada engaged in graduate education, research, and the preparation of candidates for advanced degrees. Among U.S. institutions, CGS members award 95% of the doctoral degrees and 78% of the master's degrees. The organization's mission is to improve and advance graduate education, which it accomplishes through advocacy in the federal policy arena, research, and the development and dissemination of best practices.*

* Based on data from the 2008 CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees