



Council of Graduate Schools

PRESS RELEASE

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International Graduate Student Enrollment Increases

One percent rise reverses three-year decline in total enrollment numbers

The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) is reporting that total enrollment of international graduate students at its U.S. member institutions increased 1% from 2005 to 2006, after three consecutive years of declines.

The report on fall 2006 enrollment, being released today, also shows that first-time enrollment of international graduate students increased significantly this year, by 12%, driving the upswing in total enrollment. There are notable increases in first-time enrollment of students from India (32%) and China (20%), the countries that annually send the most students to the U.S. Additionally, the survey found increases in first-time international enrollment in the key fields of Engineering (22%) and Physical Sciences (5%).

A similar CGS survey last year reported that while first-time enrollment grew 1% from 2004 to 2005, total enrollment decreased by 3%. Changes in total enrollment lag behind changes in first-time enrollment, due to the length of time required to complete graduate degrees, particularly doctorates.

“These findings confirm that there has been a recovery in international graduate student flows to the U.S., and I am optimistic that this encouraging trend will continue,” remarked CGS President Debra W. Stewart. “The increases reflect positively on both U.S. government policy changes and the outreach efforts of graduate schools themselves. Maintaining our leadership in research and innovation rests in part on welcoming the most highly qualified international students to U.S. graduate programs.”

Numbers vary by country and field of study

Paralleling changes in first-time enrollment, total enrollment of students from India rose by 8%, the largest increase among the countries and regions included in the survey. While first-time Chinese enrollment increased, total Chinese enrollment fell by 2% at responding institutions. There were also mixed results for Korean enrollment (first-time up 5%; total down 3%) and from students from the Middle East, where first-time enrollment declined by 1%, but total enrollment increased 1%.

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Additionally, the report shows a range in enrollment changes among fields of study. Increases were highest in Engineering in both first-time (22%) and total enrollment (3%), followed by Business (first-time up 10%, total up 1%). Physical Sciences declined in total enrollment, by 4%, and Humanities and Arts was the only field to decline in both first-time and total enrollment (6% and 7%, respectively).

Greater acceptance of three-year undergraduate degrees

The CGS survey also revisited questions first posed to graduate schools last year about their policies regarding acceptance of European three-year undergraduate degrees, which are becoming the standard as part of the “Bologna Process”. The survey reveals that the degrees have become less of an issue, and more likely to be considered, than they were just one year ago. A majority (56%) of respondents report that the degrees are not an issue on their campus (last year, only 41% so indicated), and only 18% do not accept any Bologna three-year degrees, down from 29% last year.

About the report

Findings from 2006 CGS International Graduate Admissions Survey, Phase III: Admissions and Enrollment is based on the final phase of a three-part annual survey of international graduate student applications, admissions, and enrollment among CGS U.S. member institutions. Over 175 schools responded, including 80% of the 25 institutions with the largest international student enrollments. The full report is available at the CGS website www.cgsnet.org.

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The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) is an organization of 475 institutions of higher education in the United States and Canada engaged in graduate education, research and the preparation of candidates for advanced degrees. CGS member institutions award more than 90% of the doctoral degrees and over 75% of the master's degrees in the U.S. 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.