



One Dupont Circle NW, Suite 430 • Washington, DC 20036
(202) 223-3791 • www.cgsnet.org

PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Stuart Heiser
sheiser@cgs.nche.edu • (202) 223-3791 x21

Graduate Applications from International Students Increase Significantly But Numbers Remain Below 2003 Levels

The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) is reporting that graduate applications from international students increased 11% from 2005 to 2006. This growth follows a two-year cumulative decline of 32%.

The report on applications for fall 2006, being released today, shows large gains in the volume of graduate applications from China (+21%) and India (+23%) to CGS U.S. member institutions. Annually, China and India are the two largest sending countries of students to the U.S. CGS also reports notable application increases in the sciences and engineering, fields critical to maintaining U.S. economic competitiveness in the 21st century global economy. Overall, despite these increases, the number of international applications is still down 23% since 2003 for institutions that have responded each of the last three years.

“This increase in applications from international students is good news, and is a result of sustained efforts by both the federal government and graduate schools,” CGS President Debra W. Stewart remarked. “The federal government has made considerable progress in reducing delays in visa processing, and graduate institutions continue to improve their admissions systems and enhance efforts to attract international applicants. But the lower volume compared to three years ago bears watching.”

Global competition on the rise

The global competition for talent is increasing rapidly. Just two weeks ago, the United Kingdom announced a new immigration policy to attract international students and highly-skilled workers. The European Union, China, India and other countries are enhancing their higher education systems to attract talented students to their universities.

“At this time, the relationship between the quantity and quality of applications is unclear,” added Dr. Stewart. The issue of quality will be addressed in the next phase of CGS’ international graduate admissions survey, to be released in July.

Dr. Stewart further noted that “the change in these numbers demonstrates the fluidity in international applications. It would be a mistake to presume that things are back to normal. We must be vigilant in adopting policies that encourage international students to

pursue graduate study in the U.S. in order to strengthen our competitiveness and security in the global marketplace. Continuing to attract a highly-qualified pool of applicants from around the globe may be our next frontier.”

Increases from key countries/regions and in all fields of study

The report notes increases in applications from China (+21%), India (+23%), Korea (+3%), and the Middle East (+4%). Applications increased across all broad fields of study, including the critical fields of engineering (+17%), life sciences (+16%), physical sciences (+10%), and social sciences (+10%).

While 65% of responding institutions reported increases greater than 5%, 35% reported either no significant increase or a decline.

About the report

Findings from 2006 CGS International Graduate Admissions Survey, Phase I: Applications is based on the first phase of a three-part annual survey of international graduate student admissions among CGS U.S. member institutions. Over 150 schools responded, including over 80% of the 25 institutions with the largest international student enrollments. Last year, CGS reported a 3% increase in international graduate admissions followed by a 1% increase in international first-time enrollment for fall 2005. The full report is available at the CGS website www.cgsnet.org.

The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) is an organization of over 450 institutions of higher education engaged in graduate education, research and the preparation of candidates for advanced degrees. CGS member institutions award 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.

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