

PRESS RELEASE

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International Graduate Applications and Enrollments Continue to Decline at U.S. Institutions

Master's and Certificate Programs Remain Most Affected

Washington, DC —New data from the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) reveal that for the second consecutive year, international graduate application and first-time enrollment rates declined at U.S. universities. For Fall 2018, the final application counts from prospective international students declined by 4%, while the first-time enrollment of international graduate students declined by 1%.

The overall decline is primarily driven by a 6% decrease in applications and a 2% decrease in first-time enrollment to master's and certificate programs. In contrast, first-time international doctoral enrollment grew by 3%. The discrepancy by degree objective is notable given the proportion of first-time international graduate enrollment in master's and certificate programs (77%) vs. doctoral programs (23%).

"This is the first time we've seen declines across two consecutive years, and while we think it's too soon to consider this a trend, it is troubling," said CGS President Suzanne Ortega. "We continue to monitor issues, including changes in immigration and visa policy, with growing concern over the possible negative impact to the U.S.'s image as a welcoming destination for international students and scholars."

Highlights by Country of Origin

China and India continue to represent the largest shares of international graduate applications, first-time international graduate enrollment, and total international graduate enrollment. However, the final application and first-time graduate enrollment of Indian students experienced large decreases again (-12%, -2% respectively) during the Fall 2017 to Fall 2018 admission cycle. This is the second consecutive year the number of applications and first-time enrollment from India has declined.

Graduate applications from Middle Eastern & North African students to U.S. graduate schools fell by 14% between the Fall 2017 and Fall 2018 admission cycles. Graduate applications and first-time enrollment of Iranian (-27%, -8%) and Saudi Arabian (-6%, -21%) graduate students also decreased. Conversely, applications and first-time enrollment of Sub-Saharan African graduate students increased by 28% and 5% respectively.

Ortega noted that overall, admission yield rates are comparable to last year. "This suggests that prospective international graduate students remain highly likely to accept offers of admission to U.S. graduate schools."

Highlights by Field of Study

Across broad fields of study, international graduate applications increased in health sciences (5%), mathematics and computer sciences (6%), and other fields (8%) between Fall 2017 to Fall 2018. By contrast, engineering (-16%), physical & earth sciences (-9%), and business (-8%) experienced decreases in international graduate applications during this period. Business (95%), public administration & services (86%), and mathematics & computer sciences (85%) had high concentrations of first-time international students in master's and certificate programs in Fall 2018, while first-time doctoral students accounted for 77% of international graduate students in physical & earth sciences and 50% in biological & agricultural sciences.

About the survey and report

Conducted since 2004, the CGS International Graduate Admissions Survey tracks the applications and enrollments of international students seeking U.S. master's and doctoral degrees. As the only report of its kind to offer data on the current academic year, *International Graduate Applications and Enrollment: Fall 2018* reports applications, admissions, and enrollments of international master's, certificate, and doctoral students at U.S. colleges and universities. In Fall 2016 the survey was redesigned to collect data by degree objective (master's and graduate certificate vs. doctorate), and for all seven regions of origin, eight countries of origin, and all eleven broad fields of study, yielding the only degree-level data currently available for graduate admissions and enrollments. 369 U.S. graduate institutions who are members of CGS or its regional affiliates responded to the 2018 survey.

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The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) is an organization of approximately 500 institutions of higher education in the United States and Canada engaged in graduate education, research, and the preparation of candidates for advanced 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.