

PRESS RELEASE

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U.S. Master's Degrees a Major Draw for International Graduate Students

77% of First-Time Graduate Students are Enrolled in Master's or Certificate Programs

Washington, DC —New data from the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) provide an unprecedented picture of the degree objectives of international graduate students studying in the United States. As the only report of its kind to offer data on the current fall term, *International Graduate Applications and Enrollment: Fall 2015* reports applications, admissions, and enrollments of international master's, certificate, and doctoral students at U.S. colleges and universities.

Based on an annual survey of graduate institutions, the data show that the degree objectives of international applicants and enrollees vary widely by country of origin and field of study. Overall, however, nearly four out of five first-time enrollees are pursuing master's or certificate programs. This finding contradicts a common assumption—that many if not most international graduate students come to the U.S. to pursue doctoral degrees.

Chinese and Indian students represented the largest share of first-time master's and certificate enrollment for Fall 2015, together representing more than 7 out of 10 first-time enrollees in these programs. Indian students, for whom first-time enrollment has seen double-digit increases over the past three admission cycles, demonstrated the strongest interest, with nine out of every ten first-time graduate students enrolling in master's degrees and certificates this fall semester.

By contrast, certain countries and regions demonstrated particularly strong first-time enrollment in doctoral programs: 47% of South Korean students, and 44% of students from the Middle East and North Africa enrolled in doctoral programs in Fall 2015. These groups not only diverge from the preferences of their peers of other nationalities, but also with trends in overall doctoral enrollment at U.S. institutions. According to the *CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees*, which captured data from the previous year (2014), first-time doctoral enrollment for both international and domestic students constituted only 16.8% of all graduate enrollment.

CGS President Suzanne T. Ortega observed that the report's findings demonstrate the strong reputation of U.S. master's degrees outside the United States. "While doctoral programs and institutions have long been viewed as a major draw from international students, it is clear that international students also recognize the value of U.S. master's education." She added, "Master's degrees are critical entry points for a wide variety of professions. International students are taking advantage of the skills and knowledge these programs offer in addition to the stellar doctoral training provided by U.S. institutions."

Additional report findings can be found in the attached page of highlights and infographics.

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. For the first time in 2015, institutions responding to the survey were asked to disaggregate their data for master's and certificate programs and doctoral programs, yielding

the only degree-level data currently available for graduate admissions and enrollments. Three hundred fifty U.S. graduate institutions who are members of CGS or its regional affiliates responded the 2015 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.

Highlights of the International Graduate Admissions Survey: Fall 2015

A large majority of first-time international graduate students are master's and certificate students.

- Over three-fourths (77%) of first-time international graduate students in Fall 2015 were enrolled in master's and certificate programs; however, shares vary by country/region of origin and field of study.
- First-time Indian (91%) and Saudi Arabian (80%) graduate students were most likely to pursue master's and certificate programs, while South Korean (47%) graduate students were most likely to pursue doctoral programs.

Chinese and Indian nationals continue to constitute large shares of international graduate applications and enrollment in the United States.

- Chinese and Indian nationals sent nearly eight out of ten (79%) international graduate applications in the Fall 2015 admission cycle.
- Chinese and Indian graduate students tied for first-time master's and certificate enrollment in Fall 2015, each accounting for 36% of total international first-time graduate enrollment in master's and certificate programs.
- Over one-third of international doctoral students enrolled for the first time in Fall 2015 were Chinese students, leading the next largest country of origin, India, by more than twenty percentage points.

Engineering remains the most popular broad field of study for international graduate students, but mathematics & computer sciences fields are growing fast.

- Engineering represented nearly one-third (32%) of final applications and over one-quarter (29%) of first-time international graduate enrollment in Fall 2015.
- Engineering fields accounted for the largest shares in both master's and certificate level applications and enrollments.
- However, engineering fields reported only a small increase this year for both final applications (2%) and first-time enrollment (1%), while mathematics & computer sciences fields—the second largest field for international graduate students— showed robust growth in both areas (9% and 11%, respectively).

The rate of growth for international graduate admissions has slowed.

- Final applications and first-time enrollment of international graduate students in the U.S. increased by 3% and 5% respectively between the Fall 2014 and Fall 2015 admission cycles, while in the prior cycle they rose by 10% and 8%.
- The rates of growth for international graduate students were greater than for domestic students.

A quick look at International Graduate Applications and Enrollment: Fall 2015



What Degree Do Students Pursue?

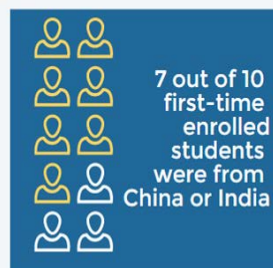
FIRST-TIME ENROLLMENT

3 out of **4** students are in master's & certificate programs



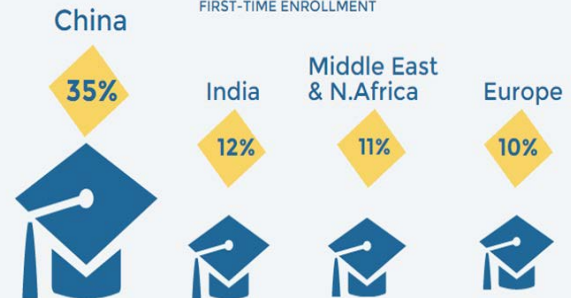
Where Do Master's & Certificate Students Come from?

FIRST-TIME ENROLLMENT



Where Do Doctoral Students Come From?

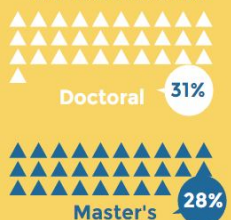
FIRST-TIME ENROLLMENT



Fields of Study

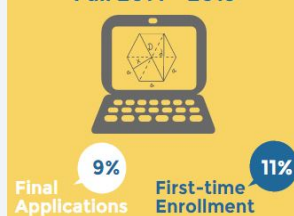
Engineering Remains Popular

FIRST-TIME ENROLLMENT



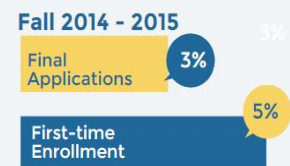
Mathematics & Computer Science Growing Fast

Fall 2014 - 2015



Rate of Growth

Changes International Graduate Applications & First-time Enrollment



Sources: Okahana, H., & Allum, J. (2015). *International graduate applications and enrollment: Fall 2015*. Washington, DC: Council of Graduate Schools.

Note: Country/Region of Origin data were captured by citizenship, and not by residence.