



Council of Graduate Schools

Data Sources:

Small Increase in Domestic First-Time Graduate Enrollment in Fall 2010

(Reprinted from the December 2010 issue of the *CGS Communicator*)

In addition to collecting data on international students in U.S. graduate schools, the 2010 CGS *International Graduate Admissions Survey, Phase III: Final Offers of Admission and Enrollment* included a question that asked respondents to provide the number of U.S. citizen and permanent resident first-time graduate students in fall 2009 and fall 2010. This article presents an analysis of the findings from that question.

Data and Methods

The survey population for the 2010 CGS *International Graduate Admissions Survey, Phase III: Final Offers of Admission and Enrollment* consisted of all 494 U.S. colleges and universities that were members of CGS as of August 2010. A link to the survey instrument was e-mailed to the graduate dean (or equivalent) at each member institution on September 9, 2010, and responses were collected electronically through October 22, 2010.

A total of 225 institutions provided first-time graduate enrollment data for U.S. citizens and permanent residents for both fall 2009 and fall 2010, for a response rate of 46% on this question. Of these 225 respondents, 161 (72%) were public institutions, 63 (28%) were private, not-for-profit institutions, and one was a private, for-profit institution. By basic Carnegie classification, 152 (68%) of the respondents were doctoral institutions, 58 (26%) were master's-focused institutions, and 15 (7%) were classified as specialized or baccalaureate institutions. By geographic region, 56 (25%) of the responding institutions are located in the Midwest, 46 (20%) in the Northeast, 40 (18%) in the West, and 83 (37%) in the South. Respondents to the question included 60 of the 100 largest institutions in terms of the number of graduate degrees awarded to U.S. citizens and permanent residents (National Science Foundation, 2010). The 225 responding institutions conferred about 38% of all graduate degrees awarded to U.S. citizens and permanent residents in the United States in 2007-08. Given this diverse set of survey respondents, it is likely that the findings below accurately reflect the current trends in first-time enrollment of U.S. citizens and permanent residents in graduate schools across the United States.

Findings

Overall, first-time graduate enrollment of U.S. citizens and permanent residents increased 2% between fall 2009 and fall 2010 (see Table 1). The majority of the respondents (137, or 61%) reported an increase in first-time enrollment of U.S. citizens and permanent residents in 2010, with an average increase of 8% at these institutions. At the 88 institutions (39%) reporting a decrease, the average decline was 7%.

Public institutions and private, not-for-profit institutions both experienced a 2% increase in U.S. citizen and permanent resident first-time graduate enrollment between fall 2009 and fall 2010. By basic Carnegie classification, the number of U.S. citizen and permanent resident first-time enrollees increased 2% at doctoral institutions, but remained flat at master's-focused institutions.

U.S. citizen and permanent resident first-time graduate enrollment increased in only two of the four major regions of the United States in 2010. In the West, the numbers of U.S. citizens and permanent residents enrolling in graduate school for the first time increased by 4%, and in the South the increase was 3%, but U.S. citizen and permanent resident first-time graduate enrollment remained flat in the Northeast in 2010 and fell 1% in the Midwest.

Larger institutions in terms of the number of graduate degrees awarded to U.S. citizens and permanent residents were more likely to see an increase in first-time enrollment than smaller institutions. In fall 2010, U.S. citizen and permanent resident first-time graduate enrollment increased 2% at the responding institutions that are among the 100 largest in terms the number of graduate degrees awarded to U.S. citizens and permanent residents, and rose 1% at the institutions outside the largest 100.

Discussion

This year's 2% increase in U.S. citizen and permanent resident first-time graduate enrollment follows a 6% gain in fall 2009 (Bell, 2010b). While this indicates a year-to-year slowdown in the rate of increase, it is important to note that growth in U.S. citizen and permanent resident first-time graduate enrollment continued this year even after last year's significant gain.

First-time graduate enrollment gains were similar for U.S. citizens and permanent residents and international students in fall 2010. The 2% increase between fall 2009 and fall 2010 in U.S. citizen and permanent resident first-time graduate enrollment compares with a slightly larger 3% increase in first-time graduate enrollment among international students over the same time period (Bell, 2010a). Over the past decade, first-time graduate enrollment of U.S. citizens and permanent residents has increased about 5% annually on average, meaning that this year's increase is less than the average gain (Bell, 2010b). In contrast, international first-time graduate enrollment increased about 3% annually on average for international students over the past decade, which is identical to the increase for international students in fall 2010.

While the figures on U.S. citizen and permanent resident first-time graduate enrollment presented in this article are based on a relatively small number of institutions responding to the *CGS International Graduate Admissions Survey*, the results of last year's *Phase III* survey suggest that these figures accurately reflect the current trends. In 2009, the *Phase III* survey found a 6% increase in U.S. citizen and permanent resident first-time graduate enrollment, and the much larger, more robust 2009 *CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees* later found the same 6% gain. The results of the 2010 *CGS/GRE* survey, to be released in fall 2011, will provide a definitive answer, but the findings of this year's *Phase III* survey suggest that U.S. citizen and permanent resident first-time graduate enrollment

Table 1. Changes in U.S. Citizen and Permanent Resident First-Time Graduate Enrollment, Fall 2009 to Fall 2010

	Percent Change
Total	2%
<i>Institutional Control</i>	
Public	2%
Private, not-for-profit	2%
<i>Carnegie Classification</i>	
Doctoral	2%
Master's-Focused	0%
<i>Geographic Region</i>	
Midwest	-1%
Northeast	0%
West	4%
South	3%
Source: 2010 CGS International Graduate Admissions Survey, Phase III: Final Offers of Admission and Enrollment	

likely increased by about 2% in fall 2010. While not a large gain, it is still growth, and it reflects the recognition by students of the importance of graduate education, particularly in difficult economic times.

By Nathan E. Bell, Director, Research and Policy Analysis

References:

Bell, N. 2010a. *Findings from the 2010 CGS International Graduate Admissions Survey, Phase III: Final Offers of Admission and Enrollment*. Washington, DC: Council of Graduate Schools.

Bell, N. 2010b. *Graduate Enrollment and Degrees: 1999 to 2009*. Washington, DC: Council of Graduate Schools.

Council of Graduate Schools. 2010. 2010 CGS International Graduate Admissions Survey, Phase III: Final Offers of Admission and Enrollment. Dataset.

National Science Foundation. 2010. WebCASPAR Integrated Science and Engineering Resources Data System. Accessed November 5, 2010.