



Council of Graduate Schools

PRESS RELEASE

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Graduate Enrollment Continues Strong Growth in 2009

Increases higher for men, reversing long-term trend

The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) is reporting today that enrollment of new students at U.S. graduate schools grew 5.5% from 2008 to 2009, compared to 4.5% the previous year. Total enrollment grew 4.7% in 2009 after gaining 3.0% in 2008.

CGS's annual comprehensive report on trends in graduate education shows that growth in both first-time and total graduate enrollment in 2009 was higher for men than for women, reversing a long-term trend. First-time enrollment of men increased 6.7%, compared to 4.7% for women. In contrast, over the past 10 years first-time enrollment of women grew by an annual average of 5.2%, compared to 4.2% for men.

For the first time since 2004, the enrollment of new international graduate students declined in 2009, by 1.7%, compared to 6.0% growth for U.S. students. From 1999 to 2009, the average annual growth in first-time enrollment was 4.9% for U.S. students and 3.3% for international students.

"The strong growth in first-time graduate enrollment is an indication of the continued high value of graduate education," said CGS President Debra W. Stewart. "In particular, the 6.0% gain in first-time U.S. enrollment reflects the increasing necessity of a graduate degree to successfully compete in a 21st-century knowledge-based economy," she added.

Another reversal of a long-term trend occurred among doctoral degrees. While women have long earned the majority of master's degrees awarded in the U.S., the 2008-09 academic year was the first year ever that women earned the majority (50.4%) of doctorates as well. The one-year increase in doctorates was substantially stronger for women than for men, 6.3% vs. 1.0%.

The report also shows that enrollment trends differed by ethnicity as well as by gender and citizenship. First-time enrollment growth for U.S. minority groups ranged from 6.2% for American Indian/Alaskan Natives to 9.3% for Asian/Pacific Islanders, compared to 5.3% for White, non-Hispanic students.

The report presents statistics on graduate applications and enrollment for fall 2009, degrees conferred in 2008-09, and trend data for one-, five- and ten-year periods. Data are disaggregated for a number of student demographic and institutional characteristics. Other findings include:

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- Applications for admission to U.S. graduate schools grew 8.3% from 2008 to 2009. The most popular fields were business, engineering, and social & behavioral sciences. However, the fastest one-year growth occurred in health sciences, up 14.6%.
- The three fastest-growing broad fields for first-time enrollment were public administration & services, health sciences, and biological & agricultural sciences. The field with the largest enrollment, education, grew the slowest: just 0.1%, in contrast to an average of 5.7% annually over the last 10 years.
- Between 2008 and 2009, first-time graduate enrollment increased faster at the doctoral level than at the master's level: 6.3% vs. 5.1%.
- The representation of minority groups in U.S. graduate schools continued to increase in 2009, rising from 28.3% to 29.1% of first-time domestic enrollment.
- The proportion of international students in first-time enrollment fell from 18.0% to 16.5%.
- The proportion of women graduate students remained constant, at about 6 out of 10.
- However, the share of women students varied by citizenship and race/ethnicity: women comprised almost 71% of Black/African American first-time enrollment, compared to just over 42% of international students.
- Similar to the trend in first-time enrollment, growth in total enrollment of men outpaced that of women in 2009, 5.2% to 4.4%, in contrast to the long-term trend. Over the past 10 years, the average annual growth was 4.2% for women, compared to 3.0% for men.
- About three-fourths of all graduate students were enrolled at the master's level, and almost 90% of graduate degrees conferred in 2008-09 were master's degrees.
- The number of master's degrees awarded increased 4.3% and the number of doctoral degrees conferred grew 3.9% between 2007-08 and 2008-09.

[Graduate Enrollment and Degrees: 1999 to 2009](#) presents the findings of an annual survey of U.S. graduate schools, co-sponsored by CGS and the Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) Board. It is the only annual national survey that covers enrollment in all fields of graduate study and is the only source of national data on graduate applications. The report includes responses from almost 700 institutions, which collectively confer about 80% of the master's degrees and 90% of the doctorates awarded each year.

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The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) is an organization of over 500 institutions of higher education in the United States and Canada engaged in graduate education, research, and the preparation of candidates for advanced degrees. Among U.S. institutions, CGS members award 93% of the doctoral degrees and 76% of the master's 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.*

* Based on data from the 2009 CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees