

# The Geography of Foreign Students in U.S. Higher Education: Origins and Destinations

A world map with a dark blue background. Numerous yellow pins are scattered across the map, representing the origins of foreign students in U.S. higher education. The pins are most densely clustered in North America, Europe, and East Asia, with more sparse distribution in South America, Africa, and Australia.

The U.S. is the global hub for higher education,  
receiving 21 percent of all students studying abroad







5+ million

approvals for F-1 visas in 2001-2012

500,000

OPT approvals in 2008-2012



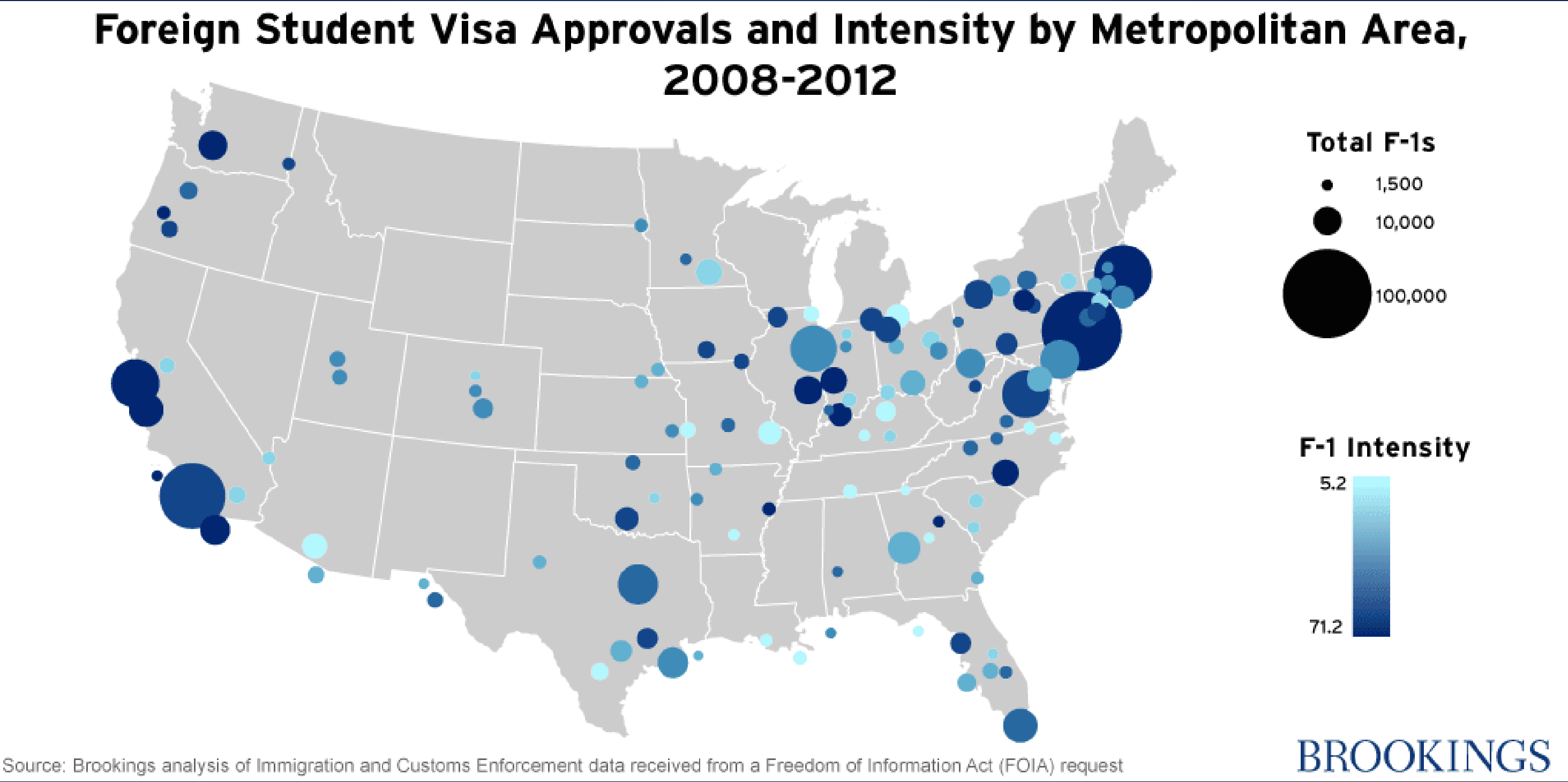
# Messages

1. Metros are home to foreign students
2. Foreign students connection metros to global markets
3. Metros can leverage foreign student global connections and retain them after they graduate

Metros are home to  
foreign students



85 percent of foreign students pursuing BMD degrees are in 118 metros



# Top 10 Graduate School Metro Destinations for Foreign Students on F-1 Visas

## Top 10 Grad School F-1s (total)

1. New York, NY	62,700
2. Los Angeles, CA	37,765
3. Boston, MA	32,341
4. Washington, DC	26,239
5. Chicago, IL	25,125
6. San Francisco, CA	21,373
7. Dallas, TX	17,241
8. San Jose, CA	16,565
9. Philadelphia, PA	14,893
10. Pittsburgh, PA	9,588

## Top 10 Grad School F-1 Metros (% Grad)

1. Gainesville, FL	90.7%
2. San Jose, CA	87.1%
3. Anderson, SC	85.1%
4. College Station, TX	85.1%
5. Beaumont, TX	80.8%
6. Athens, GA	80.2%
7. Durham-Chapel Hill, NC	79.8%
8. Bridgeport, CT	79.4%
9. Louisville, KY	77.7%
10. Lubbock, TX	75.4%



# Financial Impact on Metro Economies

**\$35 billion**  
Over 2008-2012



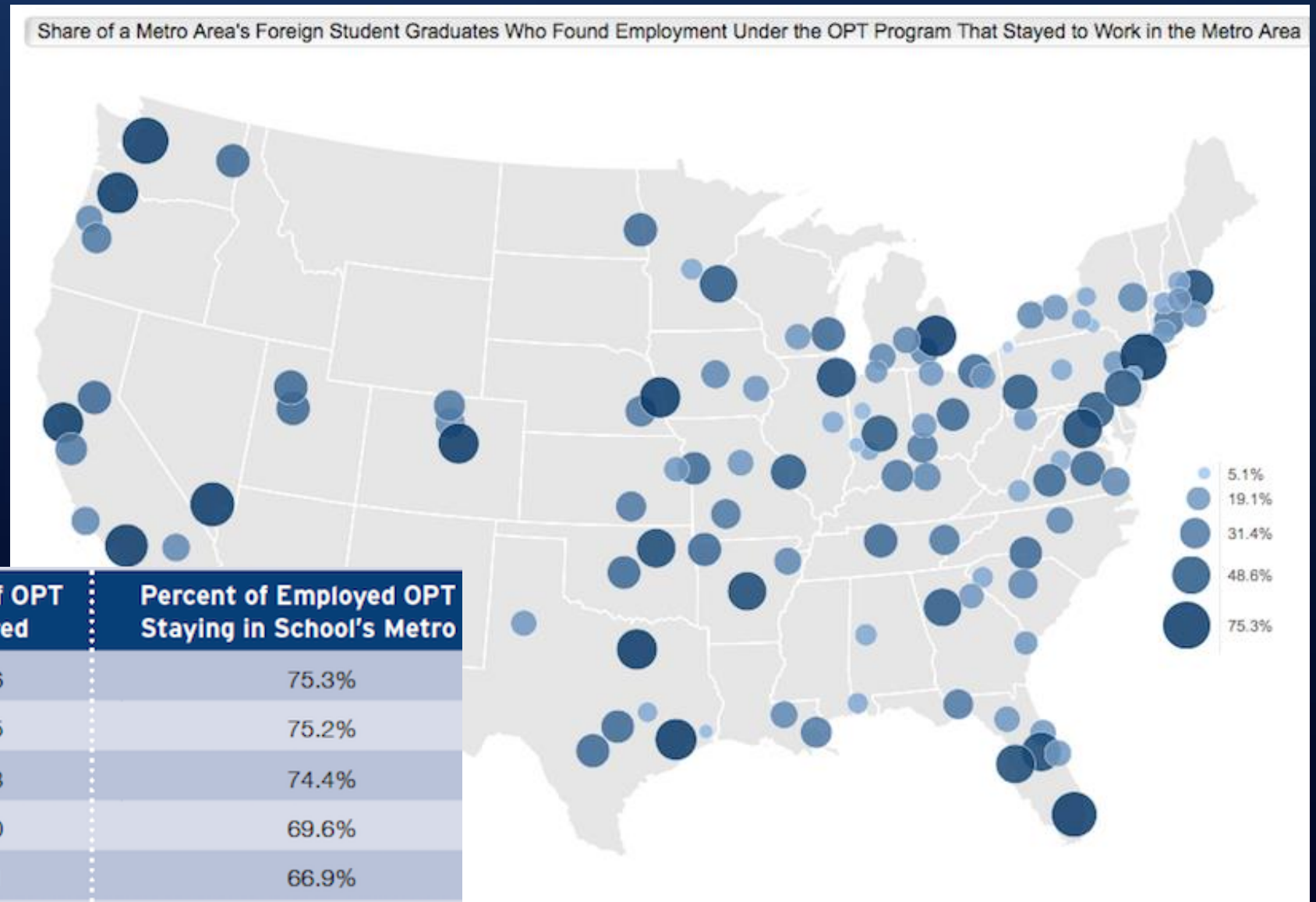
**Tuition**



**Living Expenses**



# 45% of Foreign Student Graduates Stay to Work in School's Metro Post-Graduation under OPT



High/Low	Rank	Metropolitan Area	"Number of OPT Employed in Metro	Number of OPT Employed	Percent of Employed OPT Staying in School's Metro
High Percentage Stay	1	New York-Newark-Edison, NY-NJ-PA	15,970	21,206	75.3%
	2	Honolulu, HI	741	985	75.2%
	3	Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA	1,416	1,903	74.4%
	4	Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL	2,095	3,010	69.6%
	5	Las Vegas-Paradise, NV	496	741	66.9%
	6	Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA	8,847	13,960	63.4%
	7	El Paso, TX	494	799	61.8%
	8	Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown, TX	2,081	3,548	58.7%
	9	Detroit-Warren-Livonia, MI	823	1,406	58.5%
	10	Portland-Vancouver-Beaverton, OR-WA	242	414	58.5%

# But OPT Stay Rates Vary by Degree Program



## Top 5 Metros Retaining Masters OPTs

1. Seattle, WA	74.2%
2. New York, NY	73.7%
3. Honolulu, HI	71.6%
4. Miami, FL	66.2%
5. Detroit, MI	59.6%

## Top 5 Metros Retaining Doctorate OPTs

1. Honolulu, HI	63.8%
2. New York, NY	57.9%
3. San Diego, CA	54.2%
4. Houston, TX	53.7%
5. El Paso, TX	51.7%

## Top 5 Least Retaining Masters OPT

118. Binghamton, NY	3.9%
117. Erie, PA	4.0%
116. Beaumont, TX	5.6%
115. Mobile, AL	6.8%
114. Lafayette, IN	6.9%

## Top 5 Least Retaining Doctorate OPT

118. Erie, PA	0%
117. Daytona Beach, FL	0%
116. Trenton, NJ	8.6%
115. Mobile, AL	11.1%
114. Eugene, OR	13.2%

# Metro Profiles

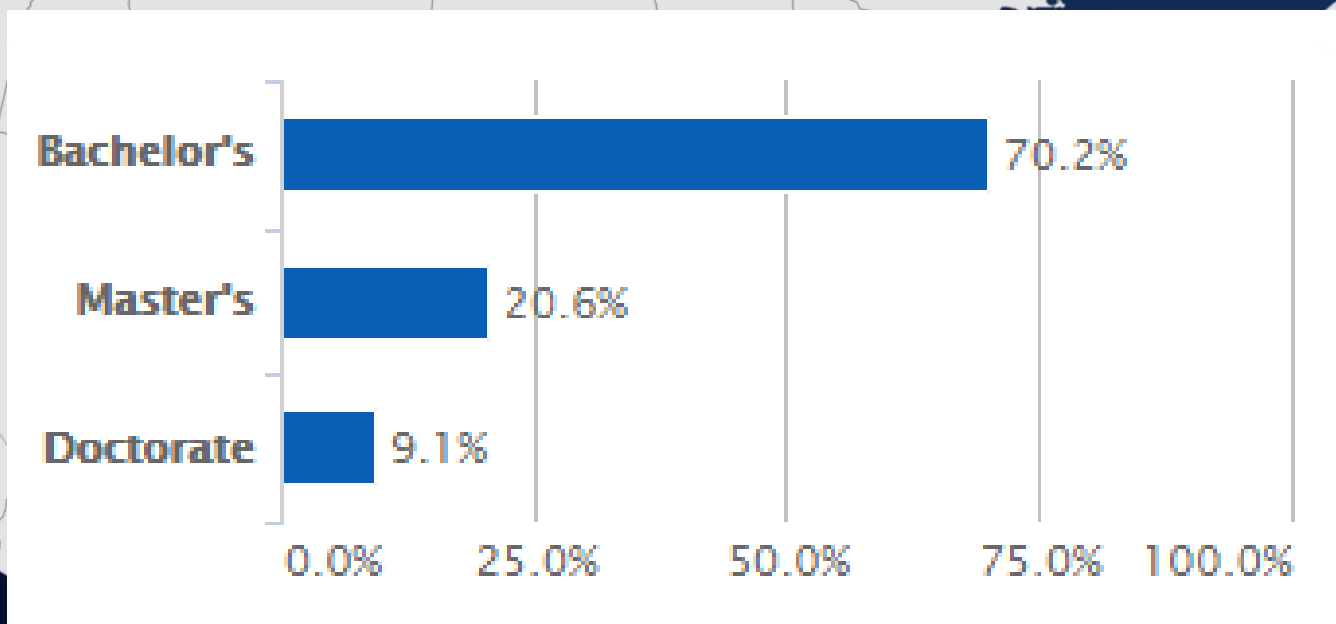




# Foreign Students Metro Profile

## Seattle, WA

● Seattle



### F-1 Students

13,290

50.1

F-1 Visas  
Approved

Intensity

### Top Schools



### 27.8% STEM

Business and Management	24.8%
Multi / Interdisciplinary Studies	16.8%
Engineering	9.9%
Liberal Arts and Sciences	6.5%
Social Sciences	6.2%

### Top Global Hometowns

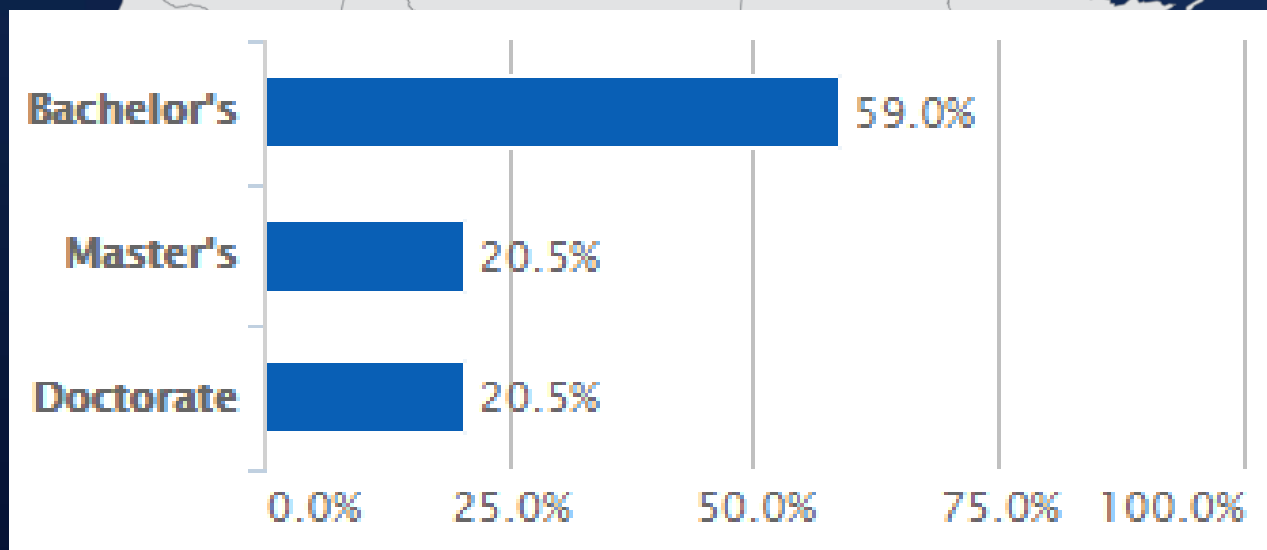
Seoul	8.1%
Jakarta	4.5%
Hong Kong	4.2%
Taipei	3.6%
Beijing	3.5%

### Foreign Student Retention under OPT

74.4%

# Foreign Students Metro Profile

## Lafayette, IN



### F-1 Students

11,354

55.1

F-1 Visas  
Approved

Intensity

### Top Schools



### 64.1% STEM

Engineering	38%
Business and Management	16%
Computer and Information Sciences	6%
Mathematics	6%
Liberal Arts	5%

### Top Global Hometowns

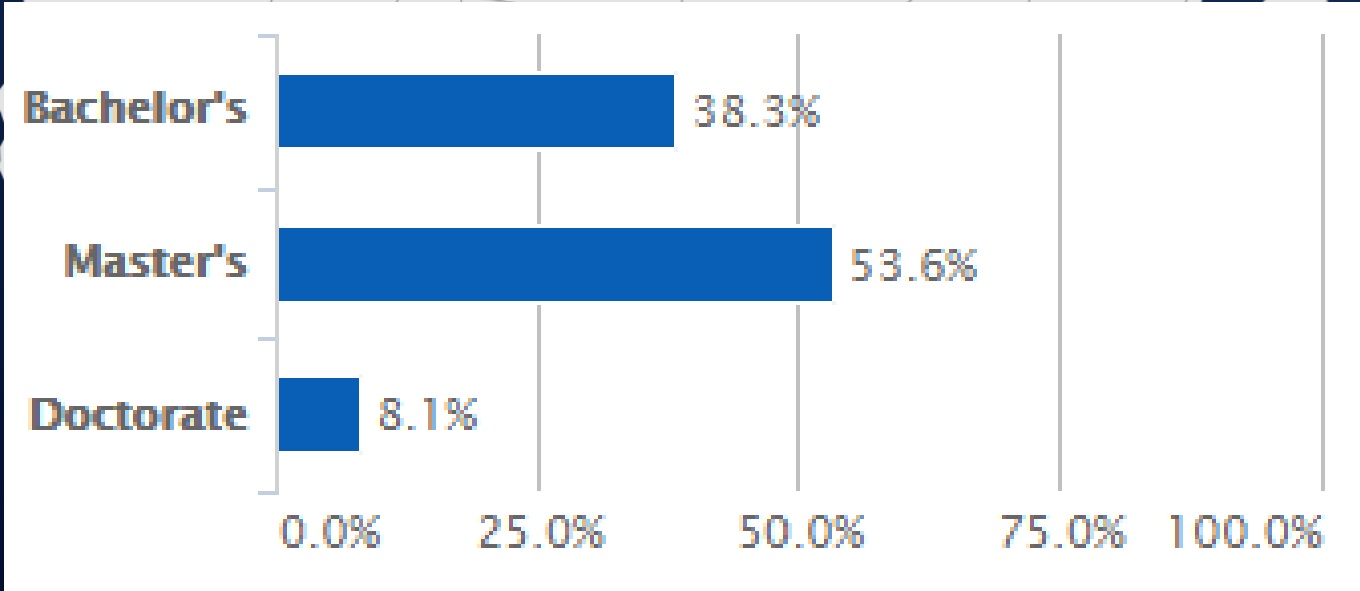
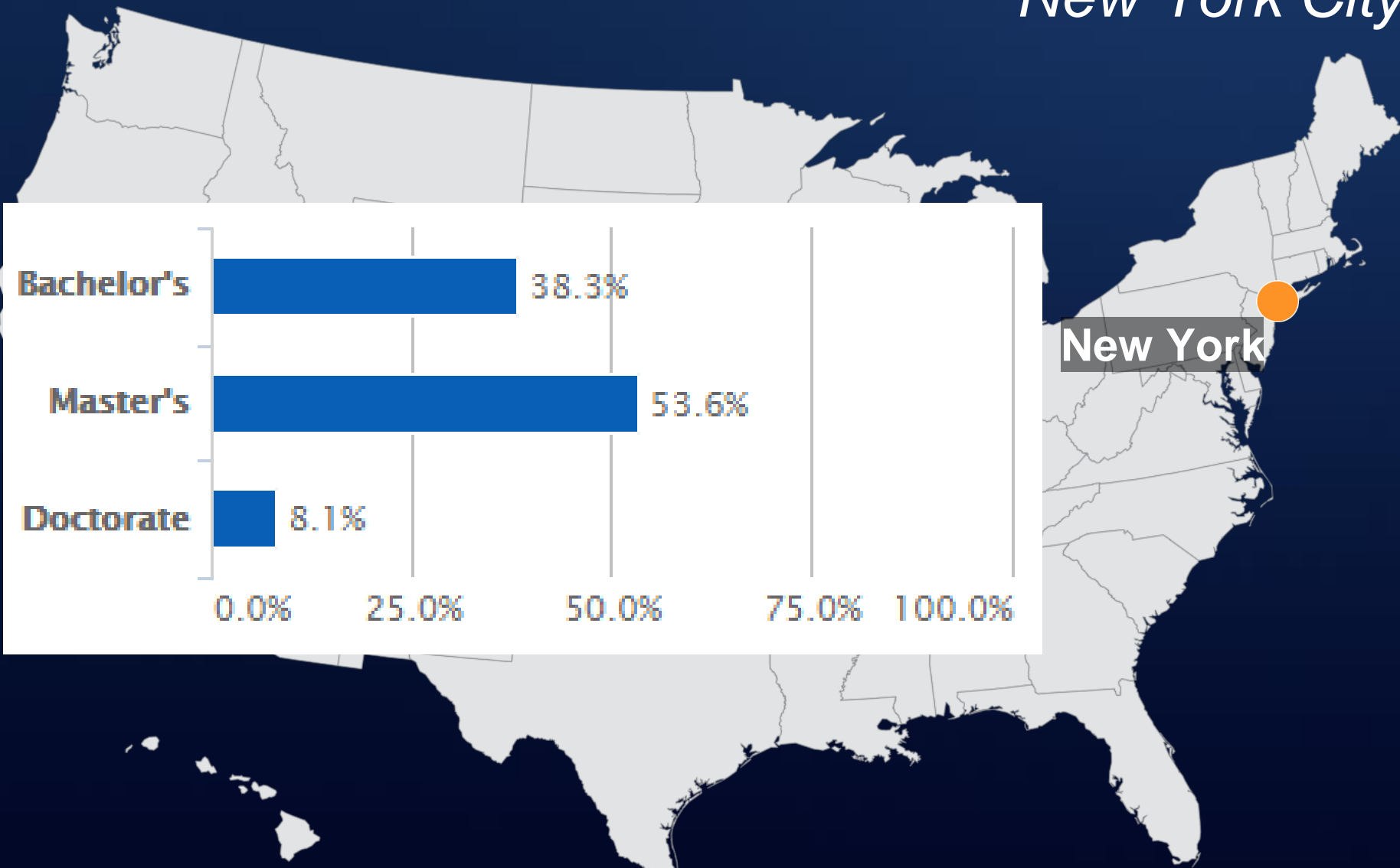
Beijing	11%
Seoul	7%
Shanghai	5%
Nanjing	2%
Mumbai	2%

### Foreign Student Retention under OPT

11.0%

# Foreign Students Metro Profile

## New York City, NY



### F-1 Students

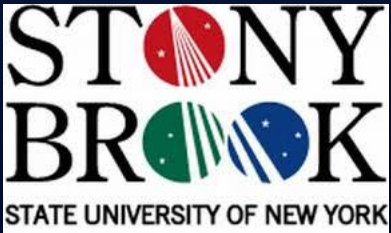
101,586

44.5

F-1 Visas  
Approved

Intensity

### Top Schools



### 31.3% STEM

Business, Management, Marketing	25%
Engineering	11%
Visual Arts	11%
Computer and Information Sciences	8%
Liberal Arts	5%

### Top Global Hometowns

Seoul	7%
Beijing	5%
Shanghai	3%
Mumbai	2%
Taipei	2%

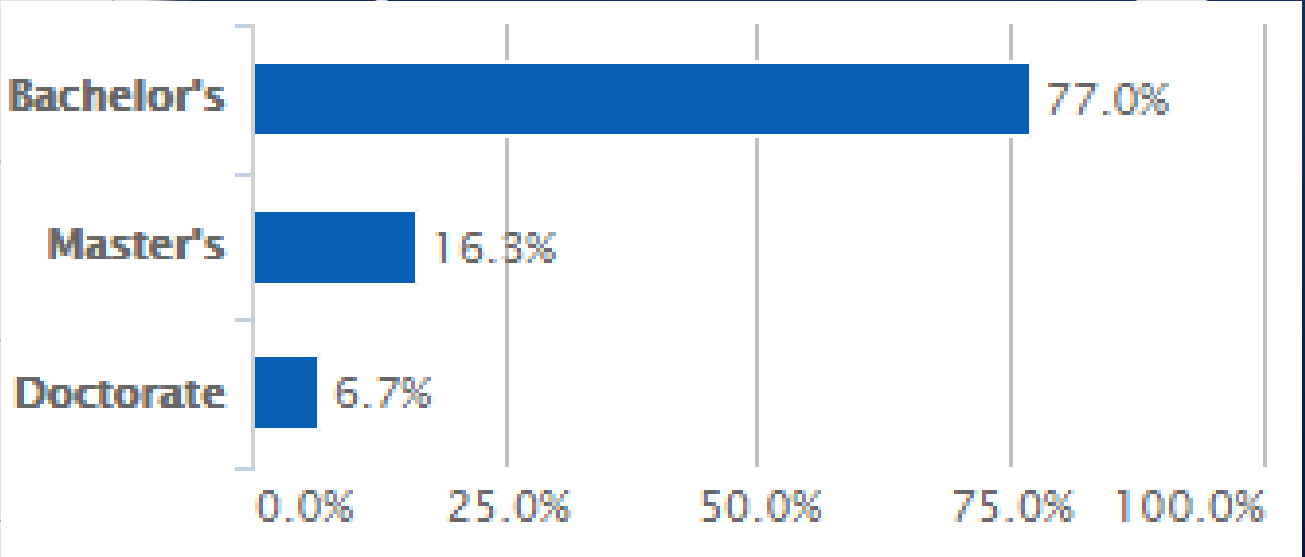
### Foreign Student Retention under OPT

75.3%



# Foreign Students Metro Profile

## Las Vegas, NV



### F-1 Students

2,850

15.4

F-1 Visas  
Approved

Intensity

### Top Schools



### Top Global Hometowns

Seoul	16%
Singapore	10%
Hong Kong	3%
Beijing	2%
Busan	2%

### Foreign Student Retention under OPT

66.9%

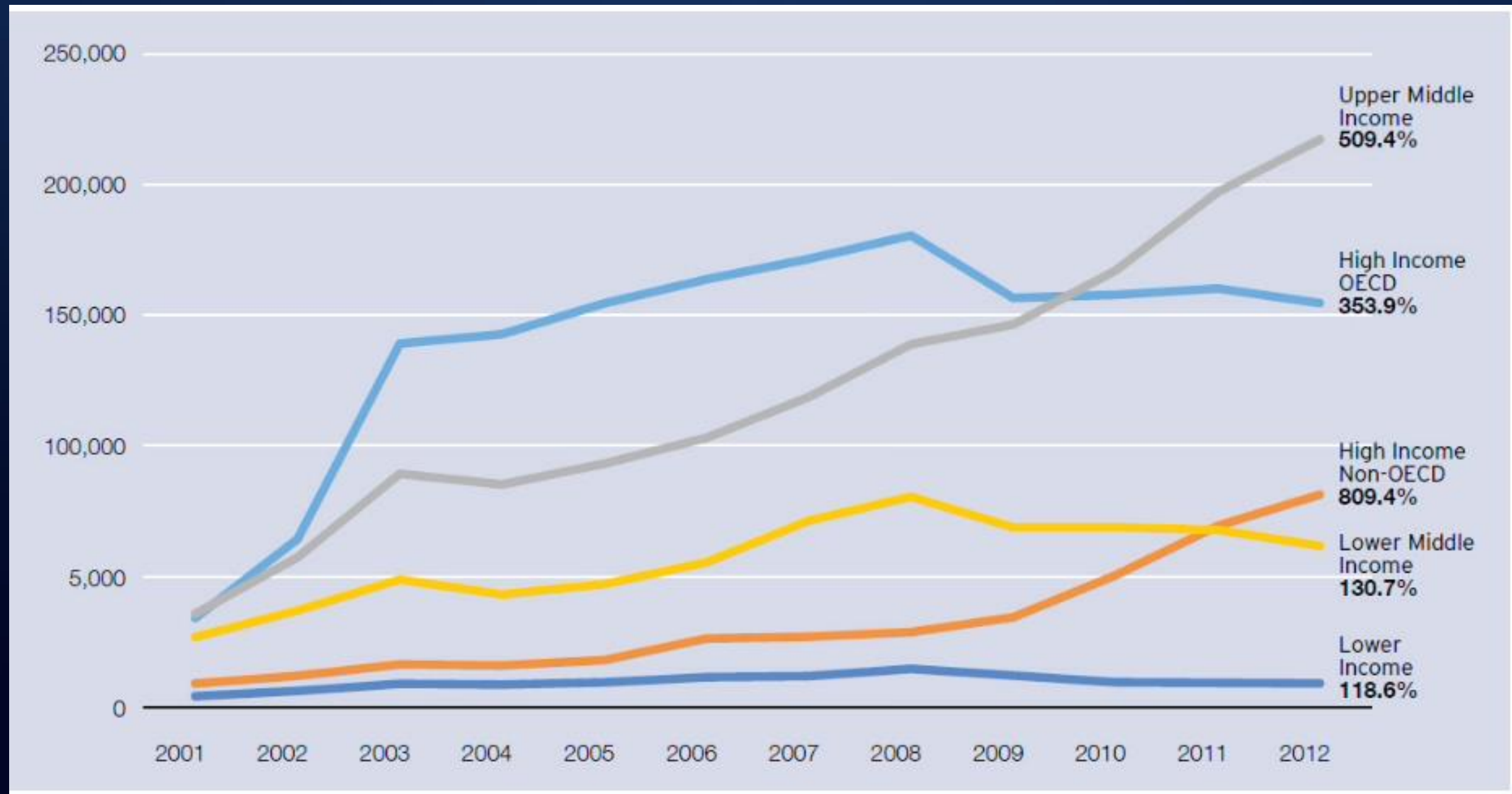
### 12.1% STEM

Business and Management	67%
Engineering	6%
Basic Skills	5%
Health Professions	4%
Computer and Information Sciences	3%

Foreign Students connect  
metros to global markets



# Foreign Students from fast-growing emerging economies are driving growth





# Global Hometowns of America's Foreign Students



Top Source Hometown of F-1 Foreign Students, 2008-2012					
Rank	City	Number of Students	Share	City Size	City Income Type
1	Seoul, South Korea	56,503	4.9%	Large	Upper Middle Income
2	Beijing, China	49,946	4.3%	Megacity	Middle Income
3	Shanghai, China	29,145	2.5%	Megacity	Middle Income
4	Hyderabad, India	26,220	2.3%	Large	Very Low Income
5	Riyadh, Saudi Arabia	17,361	1.5%	Large	Upper Middle Income
6	Mumbai, India	17,294	1.5%	Megacity	Low Income
7	Taipei, Taiwan	15,985	1.4%	Large	High Income
8	Hong Kong, SAR	12,406	1.1%	Large	High Income
9	Kathmandu, Nepal	10,721	0.9%	Small	Very Low Income
10	Jeddah, Saudi Arabia	10,468	0.9%	Middle	Middle Income

# Emerging Fast-Growing Global Cities Send the Most Students

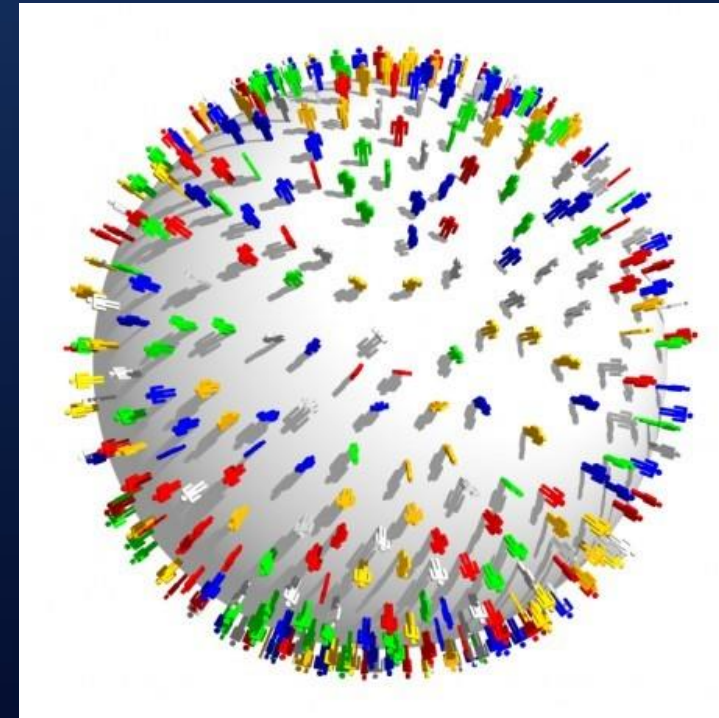
**75.2%**

of foreign students came from Large and Mega-Cities, with populations between 5M and 10M, or over 10M

**73.4%**

of foreign students came from cities with GDP per capita between \$6K and \$40K

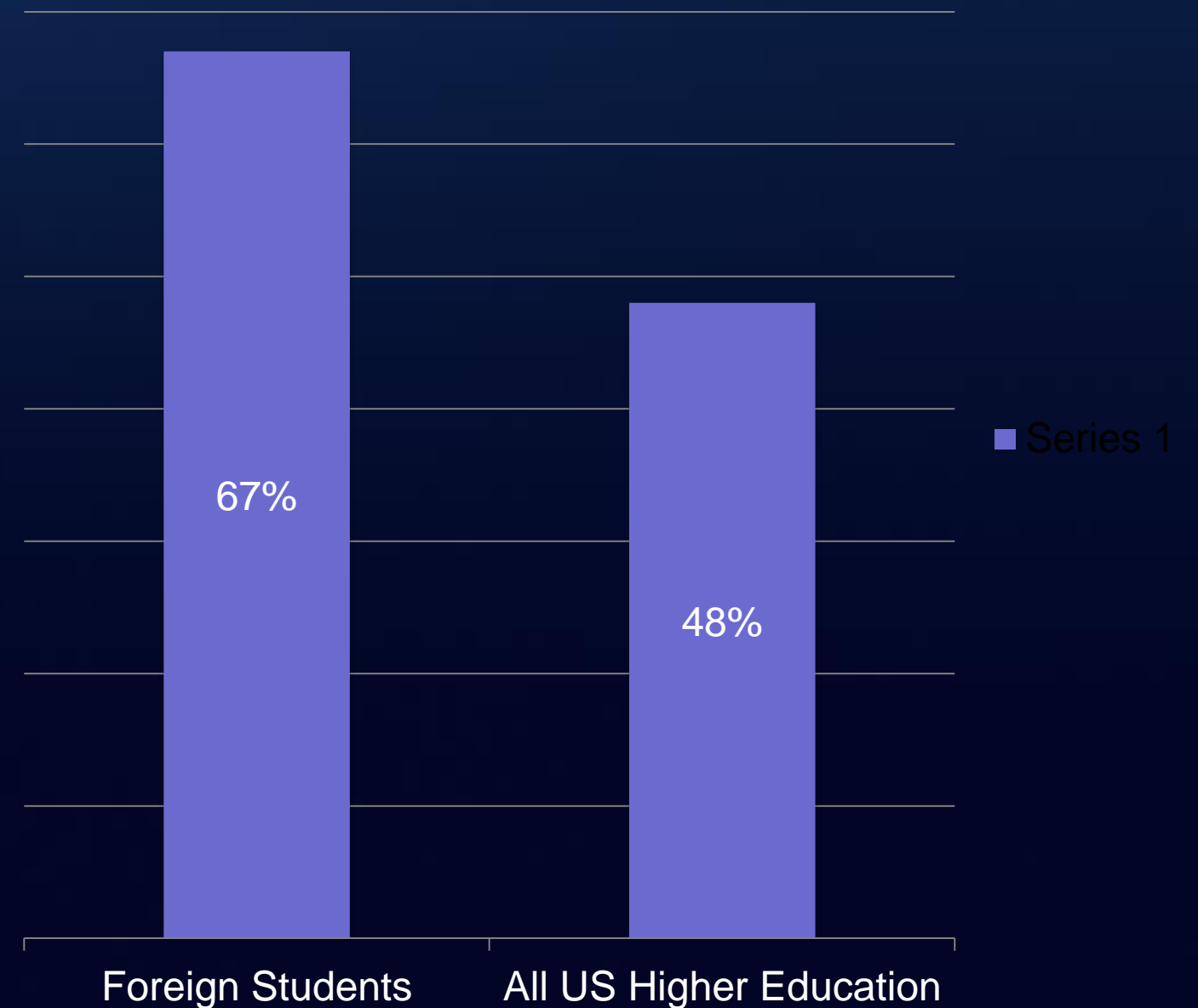
For students earning a Bachelors, Masters or Doctorate degree in the 2008-2012 period





# Foreign Students Disproportionately study STEM or Business Fields

Percent of Student Population Pursuing STEM or Business Degrees, 2008-2012





# Majority (54 percent) of F-1s are in Graduate School

## Masters: 42 percent of all F-1s

Master's	1	Business, Management, Marketing	146,146	30.4%
Master's	2	Engineering	86,590	18.0%
Master's	3	Computer And Information Sciences	59,000	12.3%
Master's	4	Education	21,377	4.4%
Master's	5	Health Professions And Related Programs	20,653	4.3%
Master's	6	Visual And Performing Arts	17,139	3.6%
Master's	7	Legal Professions And Studies	15,911	3.3%
Master's	8	Social Sciences	13,576	2.8%
Master's	9	Theology And Religious Vocations	10,962	2.3%
Master's	10	Biological And Biomedical Sciences	10,831	2.2%
Master's		All Other Fields	79,199	16.5%
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>481,384</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

## Doctorate: 12 percent of all F-1s

Doctorate	1	Engineering	38,201	27.8%
Doctorate	2	Physical Sciences	16,262	11.8%
Doctorate	3	Biological And Biomedical Sciences	13,766	10.0%
Doctorate	4	Health Professions And Related Programs	10,620	7.7%
Doctorate	5	Social Sciences	8,329	6.1%
Doctorate	6	Computer And Information Sciences	8,199	6.0%
Doctorate	7	Mathematics And Statistics	5,935	4.3%
Doctorate	8	Business, Management, Marketing	5,237	3.8%
Doctorate	9	Education	4,278	3.1%
Doctorate	10	Theology And Religious Vocations	3,408	2.5%
		All Other Fields	23,246	16.9%
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>137,481</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

# Top Origin Cities of Graduate School F-1s

## Top Origin Cities of Master's F-1s (total / %)

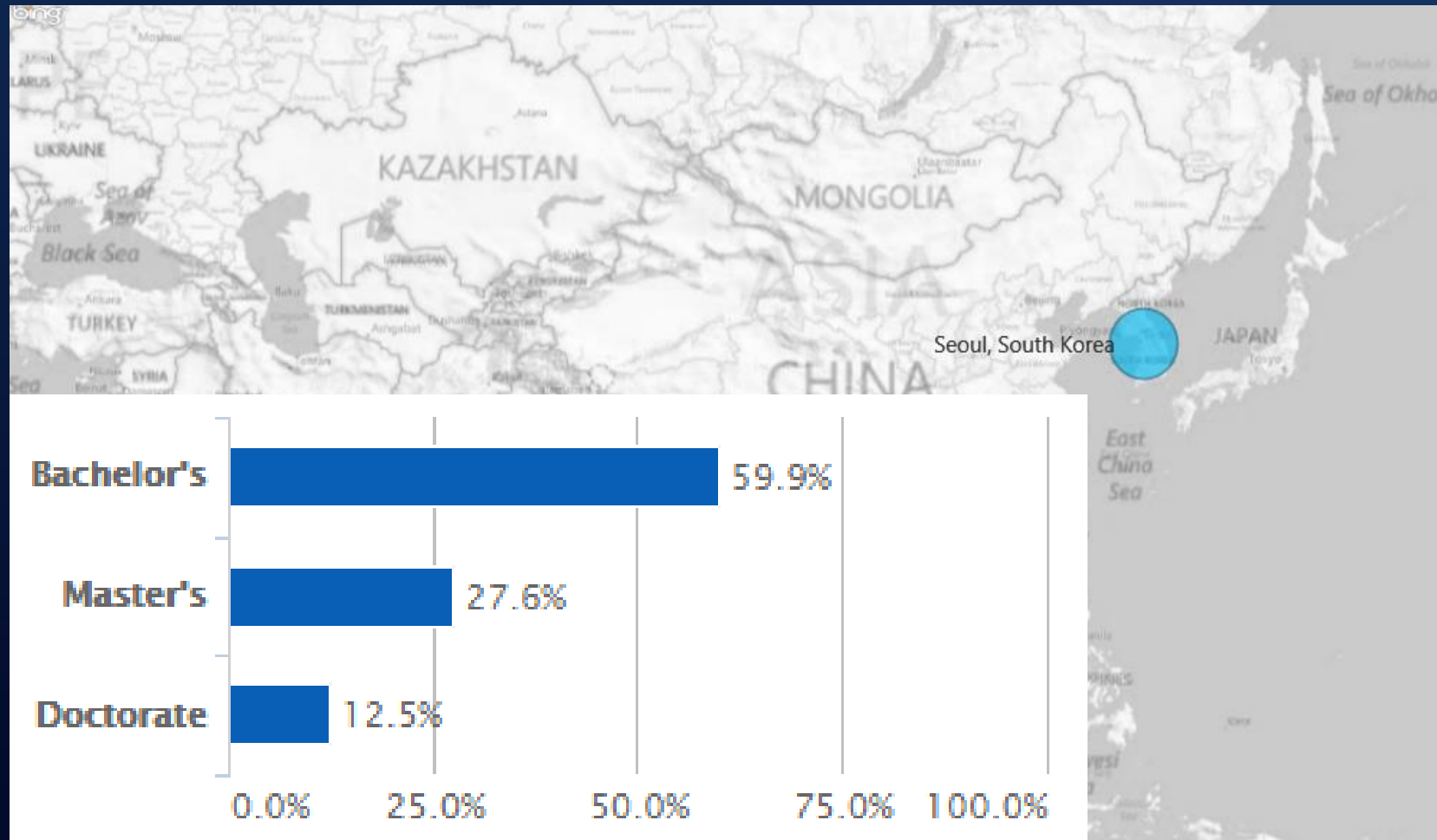
1. Beijing, China	23,916	47.9%
2. Hyderabad, India	23,810	90.8%
3. Seoul, South Korea	15,596	27.6%
4. Shanghai, China	13,390	45.9%
5. Mumbai, India	12,838	74.2%



## Top Origin Cities of Doctorate F-1s (total / %)

1. Seoul, South Korea	7,063	12.5%
2. Beijing, China	6,734	13.5%
3. Tehran, Iran	3,484	56.6%
4. Shanghai, China	3,213	11.0%
5. Taipei, Taiwan	2,302	14.4%

# Seoul, South Korea



## Top US Metro Destinations

Los Angeles Metro	7,109
New York Metro	6,966
Boston Metro	2,056
San Francisco Metro	2,045
Atlanta Metro	1,715

## F-1 Students

56,503

11,628

F-1 Visas  
Approved

STEM

## Top Schools

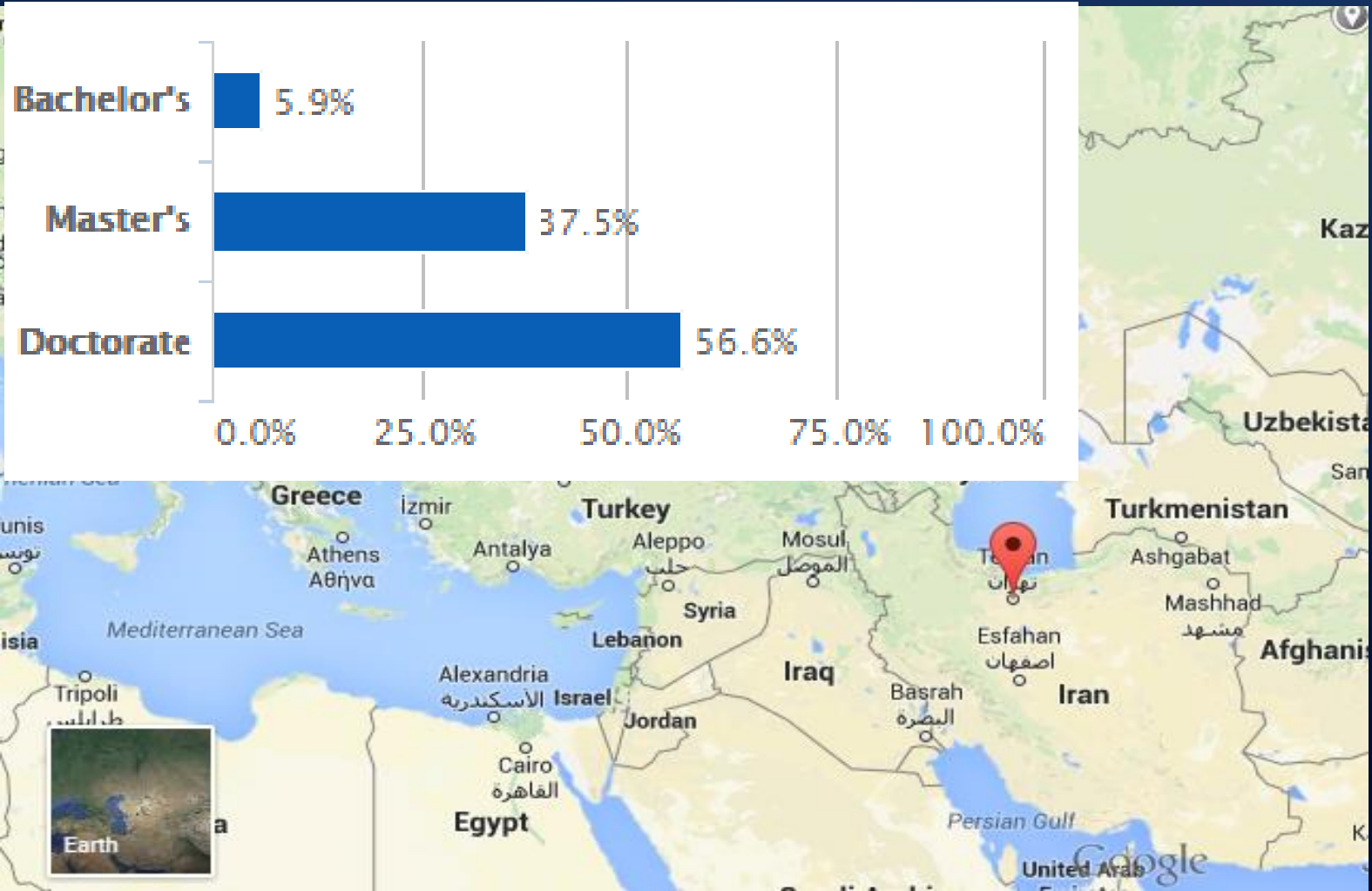


## 20.6% STEM

Business, Management, Marketing	12,509
Visual And Performing Arts	6,298
Engineering	4,566
Social Sciences	4,358
Theology And Religious Vocations	4,062



# Tehran, Iran



## F-1 Students

6,154 4,670

F-1 Visas Approved STEM

## Top Schools



## 75.9% STEM

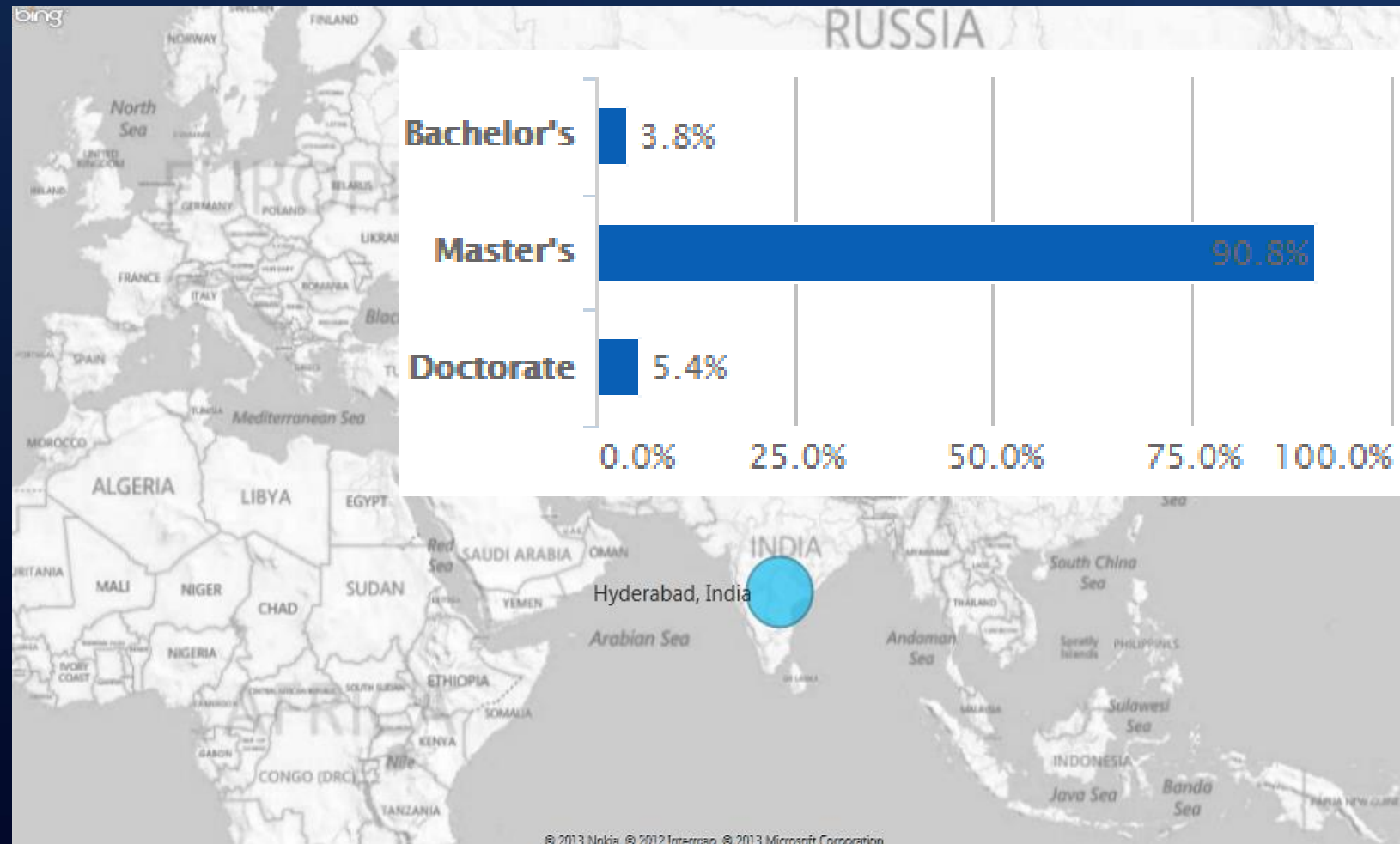
## Top US Metro Destinations

Los Angeles Metro	457
New York Metro	287
Boston Metro	260
Chicago Metro	200
Washington DC Metro	179

Engineering	3,332
Computer and Information Sciences	498
Business and Management	406
Physical Sciences	384
Architecture and Related Services	225



# Hyderabad, India



## Top US Metro Destinations

San Jose Metro	2,826
Washington DC Metro	2,169
New York Metro	1,440
San Francisco Metro	1,403
Chicago Metro	1,167

## F-1 Students

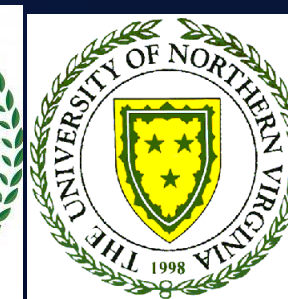
26,220

20,840

F-1 Visas  
Approved

STEM

## Top Schools



## 79.5% STEM

Computer and Information Sciences	9,074
Engineering	8,773
Business, Management, Marketing	3,989
Health Professions	1,040
Engineering Technologies	996

Metros can leverage  
foreign students' global  
connections and retain  
them after they graduate



# Every metro has major global connections abroad

The Five Largest Hometowns of Foreign Students in the Lafayette, IN Metro Area, 2008-2012





# USC and UCLA Leverage Foreign Students for Metro-to-Global City Exchanges

MBA's assist LA Businesses Export



UCLAAnderson  
SCHOOL of MANAGEMENT

MBA's assist businesses abroad import  
into LA





# Foreign Student Graduates are Economic Ambassadors



[www.brookings.edu/foreignstudents](http://www.brookings.edu/foreignstudents)



## Foreign Students Help Grow the U.S. Economy

**They are a bridge back  
to their local economies**

**2/3rds of them study  
high-demand STEM and  
business fields**

**45% work in the same  
metro area after graduation**

**BROOKINGS**



# Current US Visa System



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