

## PRESS RELEASE

**EMBARGOED UNTIL:**

Tuesday, June 30, 2015, 12 a.m. EDT

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### **Master's or Doctorate? For International Students Applying to U.S. Graduate Programs, Clear Preferences Emerge by Country, Field of Study**

#### **International Applications Up 2% for Fall 2015**

Washington, DC — New data from the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) provides a first-ever breakdown of international graduate applications by degree objective. The report, [2015 CGS International Graduate Admissions Survey: Preliminary Applications](#), collects data on international graduate applications by all geographic regions and fields of study, revealing trends important to the graduate research enterprise and our understanding of the global competition for top talent. Conducted annually since 2004, the survey was expanded this year to distinguish between applications to programs at the doctorate and master's & certificate levels.

The findings show that degree objectives of international applicants vary dramatically by country of origin and field of study, and in some cases contrast with those of their domestic U.S. counterparts.

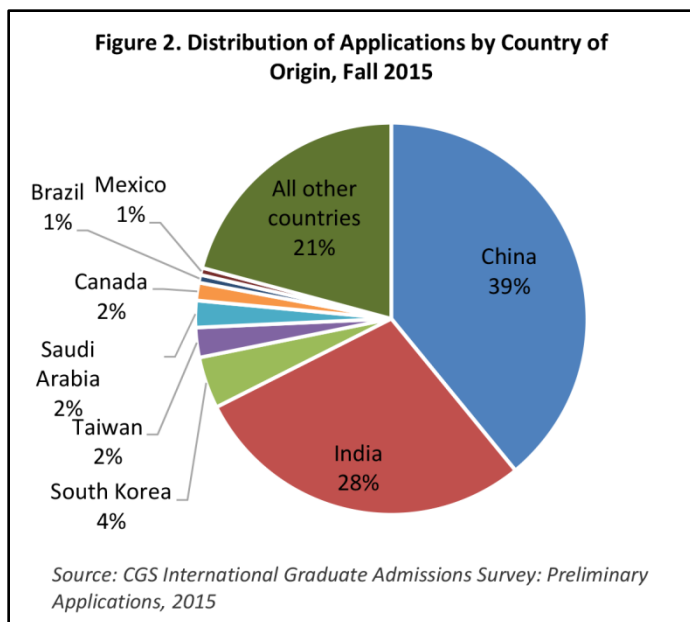
No sending country favored master's studies more than India, where 84% of graduate applications were for admission to master's & certificate programs. The master's share of graduate applications was also large among students from China (64%) Saudi Arabia (60%), and Taiwan (52%). Smaller shares of graduate applications went to master's programs from prospective international graduate students from Mexico (50%), Canada (45%), Brazil (43%), Europe (35%), and South Korea (30%).

Overall, international students applied to doctoral programs in higher proportion than their domestic U.S. counterparts. Thirty-seven percent of international graduate enrollments were in PhD programs, compared to only 17 percent among U.S. citizens and permanent residents, according to the *CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees*.

According to CGS President Suzanne T. Ortega, the additional data on degree objectives is illuminating for U.S. graduate schools, even as it leads to more questions about the goals and motivations of international graduate students. "Now that our international survey offers data by degree objective, we will have a more nuanced picture of the encouraging growth we have seen in international applications to U.S. graduate programs," Ortega said. "Our challenge is to investigate what these new data can tell us about the market for advanced skills. Are students preparing for careers in the U.S. or at home after earning their degree? Are they drawn here by academic reputations, employment prospects, or professional advancement? How do economic conditions in the U.S. and abroad influence international graduate enrollments?"

#### **Trends by country of origin**

International graduate applications for Fall 2015 increased 2% from Fall 2014, for a total 676,484 applications received by the U.S. institutions responding to the survey. For the third consecutive year, applications from China were down (-2%) while applications from India posted double-digit growth (12%). China remains the largest source of prospective students for U.S. programs, representing 39% of all international graduate applications. India continues to narrow the gap between first- and second-largest source country, reaching 28% of international applications for Fall 2015. South Korea, the third-largest sending country, increased 4% after three straight years of declines.



### Trends by field of study

Growth in applications was driven by engineering and physical & earth sciences, which gained 4% and 14%, respectively. Together these STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields account for 50% of all applications to U.S. graduate programs from prospective international students for Fall 2015. This makes international graduate students crucial to U.S. research and workforce needs. Experts ([including CGS](#)) have pointed out the American economy's demand for advanced STEM skills is unlikely to be met by homegrown talent alone, as only 16% of U.S. citizens and permanent residents enrolled in graduate programs are studying in STEM fields, according to the *CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees*.

In another finding of the *Preliminary Applications* report, international applications to graduate programs in business fell 2%, the first decline in this field since the survey launched in 2004. Nevertheless, business was the third largest field of study, accounting for 13% of international graduate applications.

### About the report

Findings from the *2015 CGS International Graduate Admissions Survey: Preliminary Applications* are based on an [annual survey](#) of international graduate student applications among U.S. institutions. Some responding institutions may continue to receive international applications after the completion of the report. For this reason the figures are preliminary. Final application, admission and enrollment figures will be reported in late 2015. Final application numbers have traditionally tracked very closely to the preliminary numbers. Analysis from the *2015 Preliminary Applications* report includes responses from 377 schools, including 80% of the top 100 institutions awarding the largest number of degrees to international graduate students. Collectively, the respondents to this year's survey award about 70% of the degrees granted to international graduate students in the U.S. The full report is available at [http://cgsnet.org/ckfinder/userfiles/files/Intl\\_I\\_2015\\_report\\_final.pdf](http://cgsnet.org/ckfinder/userfiles/files/Intl_I_2015_report_final.pdf).

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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 91% of the doctoral degrees and 81% 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 2013 CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees