

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

April 3, 2012

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International Graduate Applications Rise for Seventh Consecutive Year China, Mexico, and Brazil show largest gains

The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) is reporting that the number of applications from prospective international students to U.S. graduate schools increased 9% in 2012, following an 11% gain in 2011 and matching the 9% growth seen in 2010.

The initial snapshot of graduate applications for fall 2012, released today, shows a seventh successive year of double-digit growth in applications from China, up 18%, compared to a 21% increase in 2011. Applications from India increased 2%, following an 8% increase in 2011. South Korea's 2% gain last year was followed by a decrease of 1% this year.

This year, in addition to collecting data for all international students, the report also looks at data for ten specific countries and regions, up from the four countries and regions in previous years. The survey now collects data on seven countries (China, India, South Korea, Taiwan, Canada, Mexico, and Brazil) and three regions (the Middle East, Africa and Europe). China, India, South Korea, Taiwan, and Canada are the top five countries of origin for international graduate students in the United States. Altogether, the ten countries and regions highlighted in the CGS International Graduate Admissions Survey account for the home countries of about 85% of all international graduate students in the United States.

Between 2011 and 2012, applications from Mexico grew 17%, those from Brazil increased 14%, and Canadian applications saw 9% growth. Taiwan saw a slight decline of 2%. Data collected indicate that applications from Africa decreased 5%, while those from Europe grew 7% and the Middle East increased 6%.

The majority of institutions reported an increase in applications over last year with an average increase of 11% at these institutions. About four out of ten responding institutions reported a decrease, averaging 9%.

"The overall growth in applications is encouraging but there are interesting variations between individual countries and regions," said CGS President Debra W. Stewart. "We need to ensure that U.S. graduate education attracts students from around the globe by increasing outreach efforts and pursuing policies that would allow those graduates who want to remain in the U.S. and contribute to our economy to do so," she added.

Application trends by field of study

Applications increased in all broad fields by varying amounts, with the exception of life sciences which saw no growth. Engineering, the most popular field of study for international students, saw a 12% increase in international applications, followed closely by business (11%), physical and earth sciences (10%), and 'other' fields (10%). Education increased 17%, however relatively few international students enroll in that field. International applications grew 8% in social sciences and psychology, and 4% in arts and humanities.

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Application trends by institutional characteristics

CGS also analyzes changes in international applications by various institutional characteristics. As in 2011, growth this year was stronger at institutions that award the largest number of degrees to international students. This pattern was particularly pronounced for applications from prospective Chinese students: applications from China surged 20% at the 10 largest schools, compared to 14% growth at those responding schools outside the 100 largest. Similar patterns were seen for applications from prospective students from Mexico, India, Europe, and Brazil as well. In contrast, applications from prospective students from the Middle East grew 14% at institutions outside the 100 largest, while remaining flat at the 25 largest institutions.

On average, private and public institutions both saw increases in the number of applications from prospective international students. For the last three years, the gains at private, not-for-profit institutions have outpaced those at public institutions.

Application trends by region

Applications from international students increased in all regions of the U.S. The increase was largest in the West (15%) and Northeast (9%), while the South (8%) and Midwest (6%) saw smaller gains.

About the report

Findings from the 2012 CGS International Graduate Admissions Survey, Phase I: Applications is based on the first phase of a three-part annual survey of international graduate student applications, admissions, and enrollment among CGS U.S. member institutions. The analysis includes responses from 242 schools, including 82% of the 50 institutions that award the largest number of degrees to international graduate student; the respondents award about 61% of the degrees granted to international graduate students in the U.S. The report is available at www.cgsnet.org.

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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 92% of the doctoral degrees and 77% 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 2010 CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees*