



Council of Graduate Schools

PRESS RELEASE

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New Graduate Student Enrollment Down Slightly in 2010

The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) reported today that enrollment of new students at U.S. graduate schools fell 1.1% from 2009 to 2010, compared to a 5.5% increase the previous year. This marks the first decrease in first-time graduate enrollment since fall 2003. This decline occurred despite an 8.4% increase in applications to U.S. graduate schools. Total graduate enrollment grew 1.1%.

Differences were seen in first-time enrollment of domestic students (down 1.2%) versus international students (up 4.7% after a decline last year). This is contrary to trends seen over the past decade when the average annual rate of increase for U.S. citizens and permanent residents was 4.4% vs. 2.3% for international students. According to the survey, 84% of first-time graduate students in fall 2010 were U.S. citizens and permanent residents, and 16% were temporary residents. One-quarter of all first-time graduate students were members of U.S. citizen and permanent resident racial/ethnic minority groups.

A 4.9% gain in first-time enrollment for Hispanics/Latinos between fall 2009 and fall 2010 was countered with declines for American Indians/Alaskan Natives (-20.6%), Blacks/African Americans (-8.4%), Whites (-0.6%), and Asians/Pacific Islanders (-0.1%).

“The decline in first-time enrollment, particularly across most ethnic groups, is a concern given changing demographics and the need for more students from all groups to pursue graduate degrees so that America will have the talent needed to remain competitive,” said Debra W. Stewart, CGS President. She continued, “We saw decreases in first-time graduate enrollment in broad fields such as business, education, and public administration in particular. The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that by 2018, 2.5 million more jobs will require advanced degrees and unfortunately, our numbers are going in the wrong direction. Strategic investments are needed now to support graduate students and the development of highly skilled talent.”

Institutions responding to the survey received nearly 1.77 million applications; the fields seeing the largest numbers of applications were business, engineering, and social and behavioral sciences.

The report presents statistics on graduate applications and enrollment for fall 2010, degrees conferred in 2009-10, 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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First-time enrollment:

- More than 445,000 students enrolled for the first time in graduate certificate, education specialist, master's, or doctoral programs for the fall term in 2010 at the institutions responding to the survey.
- Over 60% of first-time graduate students were enrolled at public institutions.
- About 58% of all first-time graduate students in fall 2010 were women.
- Between fall 2009 and fall 2010, first-time graduate enrollment increased 1.5% at the doctoral level, but fell 1.6% at the master's degree and graduate certificate level.

Total graduate enrollment:

- There were nearly 1.75 million students enrolled in graduate programs in fall 2010 at the responding institutions.
- More than half of all graduate students in fall 2010 were enrolled in programs in education, business, or health sciences.
- About three-quarters of all graduate students were enrolled in programs leading to a master's degree or a graduate certificate.
- About 59% of all graduate students in fall 2010 were women.
- Total graduate enrollment fell 10.3% for American Indians/Alaskan Natives and 0.6% for Asians/Pacific Islander between fall 2009 and fall 2010. Over the same time period other groups saw gains: Hispanic/Latinos (4.5%), Blacks/African Americans (1.6%), and Whites (0.6%).
- Total graduate enrollment decreased in four broad fields between fall 2009 and fall 2010: education, 'other' fields, business, and public administration and services.
- Between fall 2009 and fall 2010, total enrollment increased faster at the doctoral level than at the master's degree and graduate certificate level—3.3% vs. 0.5%.

Graduate certificates and degrees awarded:

- About 42% of all doctoral degrees awarded were in health sciences, biological and agricultural sciences, and social and behavioral sciences while about 51% of all master's degrees were awarded in education and business.
- Women earned about two-thirds of the graduate certificates awarded in 2009-10, 60% of the master's degrees, and 52% of the doctorates.
- Academic year 2009-10 marked the second consecutive year in which women earned the majority of the degrees awarded at the doctoral level.

[*Graduate Enrollment and Degrees: 2000 to 2010*](#) 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 655 institutions, which collectively confer about 75% of the master's degrees and 88% 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 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