

International students account for greater percentage, as total number of first time graduate students in the US falls

Description

Released annually, the Council of Graduate Schools and the Graduate Examinations Board's Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees is a fascinating snapshot of the current state of graduate studies in the US, covering things like the shifting demographics of applicants, and the subjects they are choosing to study.

This year's report has made the headlines as a result of one of its findings – that first time enrolments onto graduate-level degrees fell by 1.1% in 2009/10. This is the first time this has happened since 2003. That fewer students are enrolling on graduate courses for the first time could be down to a number of factors, but it seems possible that this is a shift from a mentality of enrolling on a graduate program while waiting for the job market to improve, to one of being unwilling to leave a secure job and risk not finding another.

However, the figures also reveal that the number of international students (temporary residents) enrolling on a graduate course increased this year, after dipping for the first time since 2004 in 2008/09. International students now account for 16% of first-time graduate students in the US. The percentage of US residents actually fell this year by 1.2%, while the number of international students increased by 4.7%. This bucks the trend of the past decade, over which new domestic enrolment has typically gone up by a greater percentage than international (an average of 4.4% as compared to 2.3%). Mathematics is the subject which has seen the greatest increase in international student numbers, with a rise of 10%, followed by business (8.3%), physical and earth sciences (6.4%).

A total of 445,000 students enrolled on graduate programs for the first time, with education, business and health science students accounting for nearly half.

Total enrolment

In total, 1.75 million were enrolled by the participating institutions (of which there were 655), with more than half in education, business and health science (education, business, public administration and services, and 'other' subjects all had smaller enrolment figures this year). Though first time enrolment was down, overall enrolment was up slightly this year (the incoming contingent is still larger than the outgoing) – by 1.1%. However this is much smaller than the average over the past decade, which stands at 3.3%.

86% of the total are US residents, and 14% temporary residents. In terms of total enrolments, the latter went up by a higher percentage – 2.8%, compared to 0.9% for US residents – in the academic year covered by the survey. The number of men also increased by a greater percentage than women (1.6% compared to 0.9%), bucking the general trend of the past decade, in which the number of women has gone up by an average of 3.8%, as compared to an average of 2.8% for men.

Of the total, around three quarters were enrolled in programs leading to graduate certificates or

master's degrees, with doctoral programs accounting for the remaining quarter. The number of students enrolled on doctoral degrees increased by a greater percentage than those enrolled on Masters programs (3.3% and 0.5% respectively).

Degrees awarded

Finally, the report covers the number of degrees conferred. In total, 59,500 doctoral degrees, 496,000 master's degrees, and 30,700 graduate certificates were awarded. Overall, 2.9% more master's degrees and 5.4% more doctoral degrees were handed out in 2010. At doctoral level, 42% of these were in health, biological, and agricultural sciences.

Women earned two thirds of graduate certificates, 60% of master's degrees and 52% of doctorates. This is the second consecutive year in which women have earned the greater share of doctoral degrees.

If you want to see the report for yourself it goes into a lot more detail it [then click here](#).