

Foreign Student Enrollment in U.S. Exceeds 400,000 for First Time

The number of foreign students at U.S. colleges and universities reached an all-time high of 407,500* in the 1990/91 academic year. This was a 5.3% increase over the previous year's total of 386,900, according to the Institute of International Education (IIE).

The data, published in *Open Doors 1990/91*, is based on a survey of 2,879 accredited U.S. postsecondary institutions, which IIE conducts each year with grant support from the USIA. Business was the most popular field of study for the second consecutive year, replacing engineering, which had ranked first for forty years.

"Our higher education system is, in many respects, the best in the world," said Dr. Richard Krasno, president and CEO of IIE. "It's a national resource that attracts students from all over the world. The U.S. higher education system continues to perform well as an export, materially adding to our balance of payments. Also, foreign students help to 'internationalize' our campuses, exposing our students to different cultures, and establishing international links among future business leaders of the U.S. and their international counterparts."

The number of foreign business and management students studying in the U.S. in 1990/91 was 79,700, up 5% from last year. Numbers in engineering were essentially flat at 73,600. The next most popular fields were math/computer sciences (36,800) and physical and life sciences (35,300).

China is Leading Place of Origin

Despite restrictions instituted by China in 1989 on degree study abroad, enrollment by Chinese students increased by almost 19% over last year's figure, making China the leading place of origin for the third year in a row. Japan is the second leading sender, and the country with the highest percentage increase (nearly 23%).

Large Increase in Students from East Asia

Asian students (229,800) account for 56% of the total number of foreign students in the United States. Nine of the top ten places of origin were in Asia. The top five places, China (39,600), Japan (36,600), Taiwan (33,500), India (28,900) and Korea (23,400), alone accounted for 40% of the world total.

Substantial Increase in Students from Europe and Oceania

There were also substantial increases in the number of students from Europe and Oceania (western Pacific). Europe is now the home region of the second largest group of foreign students (49,600), surpassing Latin America (47,580). The number of students from Latin America, Africa and the Middle East declined in 1990/91.

Recent developments in Eastern Europe spurred growth in the heretofore limited number of students from that region, up

42% to 4,8900 from the previous year's 3,400. Most Eastern European growth has been from the Soviet Union, with significant increases from Poland and Hungary as well. By comparison, Western European totals were up over 5% to 44,800.

"It is encouraging that the number of students from countries making the transition to democratic pluralism and market-oriented economies is rising," Dr. Krasno said. "Their experience at U.S. colleges and universities will help to provide them with the knowledge they need to manage the profound changes taking place. Increased exchanges will contribute to building the scholarly, institutional and economic linkages that can help support the development of a civil society."

African and Middle Eastern Students are a Smaller Proportion of Total

Middle Eastern students were 30% of the total as the eighties began, and were just 8% of students in 1990/91. African students were 12% of foreign students in the U.S. at the beginning of the eighties, and 6% today. Declines from virtually all Arab states, Iran, and Nigeria account for much of the decrease.

Foreign Graduate Students Now 45% of Total

The number of graduate students increased 7% to 182,100, with over one-third (65,600) pursuing doctorates. East Asians are the major engine of growth in graduate study. Graduate enrollment has almost caught up to slower-growing undergraduate enrollment,

which totalled 189,900 (47%). In 1990/91, 48,900 foreign undergraduates studied for a 2-year associate's degree and 141,000 worked toward a bachelor's degree. The remaining 8% of foreign students were enrolled in pre-academic English language programs, practical training, or other non-degree study.

Foreign Students Choose Private Institutions at Higher Rate than U.S. Students

By way of comparison, over 34% of foreign students, but only 20% of U.S. students, enrolled in private institutions. Foreign students do not fit the U.S. student norm in another respect—only 14% of foreign students study at 2-year institutions, while 42% of U.S. students enroll at 2-year schools.

Women Foreign Students Continue to Increase in Number

In 1990/91, 36% of all foreign students were women, the highest percentage ever and a continuation in a trend of steady growth throughout the eighties.

Open Doors 1990/91 Available from IIE Books

The new *Open Doors* study is available at \$36.95 plus \$3 handling from IIE BOOKS, 809 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017-3580. The book is a 200-page statistical report on the annual IIE international student census with extensive explanatory text and over 100 supporting statistical tables and charts.

* Numbers have been rounded.