

# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

U.S. Edition | February 7, 2019 | Print Edition | Video

U.S. | Education

## International Student Enrollment Drops for Second Year, Report Says

Institutions that primarily offer masters degrees but not doctorates are hardest hit



At the University of Bridgeport in Connecticut, the number of Indian graduate engineering students has fallen recently, said Patrick Quinn, vice president for enrollment. PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

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Feb. 7, 2019 12:01 a.m. ET

The international market for U.S. graduate education is softening.

For the second year in a row the number of students from abroad who enrolled in U.S. graduate schools fell by 1%. The drop was led by a decline in students from Saudi Arabia and India, according to a report released Thursday from the Council of Graduate Schools, a Washington, D.C., based organization whose members include 500 colleges and universities.

The modest declines follow years of robust growth and represent a challenge for U.S. universities, which rely on full-pay international students to balance budgets strained by a declining number of domestic students.

Hardest hit were institutions that primarily offer masters degrees but not doctorates. Those schools experienced a 15% decline in masters and certificate programs among first-time international graduate students. Doctoral programs at major research institutions rose slightly.

The drop in international students, measured between the fall of 2017 and fall of 2018, was most sharply felt in programs that have long been among the fastest growing. Enrollment in engineering fell 10%, physical and earth sciences fell 13% and public administration fell 27%, according to the report.

Students who earn master's degrees, which are typically professionally oriented, often want to stay in the U.S. and work for a year or two. Many aren't sure if they will get a visa allowing them to stay, said Hironao Okahana, co-author of the report.

Other factors include anti-immigrant sentiment, a strong U.S. dollar that can make programs more expensive, and a cutback in scholarship money provided by some countries—especially those dependent on oil revenue, Mr. Okahana said.

Graduate applications for Middle Eastern and North African students fell 14% between the fall of 2017 and the fall of 2018.

Nearly 250,000 international graduate students enrolled in U.S. graduate schools in the fall of 2018, about 20% of the total. China accounted for 36% of international student enrollment last year, India accounted for 24%.

At the University of Bridgeport in Connecticut, the number of Indian graduate engineering students has fallen recently, said Patrick Quinn, vice president for enrollment. Because the school recruits from a broad base of countries, overall international graduate enrollment has remained flat, he said.

The school plans to continue to broaden its recruitment base to Vietnam, Morocco and Japan.

“We have to be smart and go to the right locations,” Mr. Quinn said.

Higher education is one of the nation's leading exports: International students at all levels spent a total of \$42 billion in the U.S. in 2017, according to the Institute of International Education, almost double what the U.S. sells in soybeans every year.

The U.S. still has the largest concentration of world class universities, according to global rankings, but that dominance is slipping. This year, the overall number of U.S. schools in the top 200 dropped to 60 from 72 in 2010, the first year of the Times Higher Education World University Rankings. Meanwhile, seven Chinese schools cracked the top 200, up from just two in 2014.

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