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## Growth Rate Lags Again in Graduate Schools' International Admissions

By [EUGENE MCCORMACK](#)

The number of foreign students admitted to graduate schools at American colleges and universities grew in 2008 for the fourth straight year, but the rate of increase over the previous year declined for the third consecutive year, according to [survey results](#) released today by the Council of Graduate Schools.

Based on previous years' data, this year's 4-percent increase will mean only a small gain in first-time enrollments for the fall, Kenneth E. Redd, the council's director of research and policy analysis and author of a report on the results, said in an interview.

Admissions offers to students from China, India, and South Korea, the three nations that together account for nearly half of all foreign graduate students in the United States, all reflected a slowing trend in 2008. For students from China, the rate of growth in such offers slowed from 24 percent to 16 percent, and for those from India, it fell from 17 percent to 2 percent. Offers to students from South Korea, which had declined last year by 2 percent, lagged even further this year, posting a 3-percent drop.

Mr. Redd said the slowdown in those three countries can largely be attributed to their own efforts to increase graduate enrollments at home.

"South Korea has embarked on a pretty ambitious campaign to increase enrollments of both its own graduate students and of prospective international students," he said. "They've put in roughly a billion dollars to programs and financial support for international students, and now we're seeing greater competition for those students."

This year's overall increase in foreign admissions follows growth rates of 8 percent last year and 12 percent in 2006.

### Increase for Physical Sciences

Nearly all the major fields of study—business, engineering, social sciences, and life sciences—saw lags in the growth rate. Only the physical sciences actually experienced an increase, to 13 percent from 8 percent.

The report, "Findings From the 2008 CGS International Graduate Admissions Survey, Phase II: Final Applications and Initial Offers of Admission," also indicates that there was a 6-percent increase in applications this year. That updates the 3-percent increase reported in the first phase of the study from last spring ([The Chronicle](#), April 14).

The third phase of the study, which will be released in the fall, will track actual enrollment numbers. In

previous years, first-time enrollments have lagged behind application numbers and offers of admission. For example, in 2007, a 9-percent growth in applications and an 8-percent rise in admissions offers led to only a 4-percent increase in new enrollments.

"Last year we had a very good year in terms of overall enrollments and first-time enrollments," said Mr. Redd. "This year I would not expect to have those same types of increases because activity seems to be slowing down."

The council has conducted its survey every year since 2004. In that year, admissions offers to international students decreased by 18 percent from 2003, caused largely by delays in issuing visas after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Although admissions offers have increased every year since then, nearly half of the institutions that responded to the survey reported that their admissions offers are still 15 percent below what they were in 2003.

Not all colleges and universities are being affected equally. At institutions that are among the 50 largest in terms of international graduate students, admissions offers increased by 7 percent this year over last. At all other institutions, the increase was only 1 percent.

Following up on questions that the council asked last year, the survey found that 38 percent of graduate schools had at least one collaborative graduate or certificate program, compared with 29 percent last year, and 31 percent planned to start such a program in the next two years, compared with 24 percent last year.

The survey uses data from 177 of the council's member schools, including the 10 institutions that enroll the largest number of international graduate students.

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