



The Power of International Education



Fall 2020 International Student Enrollment Snapshot

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November 2020



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Introduction

The Fall 2020 International Student Enrollment Snapshot presents current international student enrollment patterns based on data from over 700 U.S. higher education institutions. The report focuses on international students studying in person or online (in the U.S. or from abroad) at U.S. higher education institutions in Fall 2020. The findings reflect how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the U.S. higher education sector and global student mobility to the United States. The report, conducted by IIE and nine partner higher education associations, is released jointly with and complements *Open Doors 2020*, which provides a comprehensive view of international student trends from the previous year (2019/20). *Open Doors 2021*, to be released in November 2021, will survey more than 2,900 institutions to provide a full picture of 2020/21 international student enrollment.

Key Findings

U.S. higher education institutions have adapted so that international students can attend classes amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

- 99 percent of responding institutions are holding classes online or implementing a hybrid model. One in five international students (20 percent) are studying online from abroad in Fall 2020.
- Most institutions report providing specific support to international students on campus and online: virtual networking events (74 percent), adapting course schedules and teaching methods to accommodate international students (68 percent), and emergency student funding for international students on campus (29 percent).
- 100 percent of institutions with international students on campus are instituting protocols to support all students' safety. Measures include restricting campus events and social areas, publishing safety guidelines, requiring face coverings, and reducing class sizes.

The COVID-19 global pandemic has impacted international student enrollment.

- Total international students at higher education institutions in the United States and studying online outside the United States decreased by 16 percent in Fall 2020.
- New international student enrollment in the United States and online outside the United States has decreased by 43 percent in Fall 2020. Many international students studying at U.S. institutions took advantage of opportunities to begin their studies remotely. According to *Open Doors*, new student enrollment accounted for 25 percent of the international student population in 2019/20.
- 90 percent of institutions report international student deferrals in Fall 2020. Responding institutions indicate that nearly 40,000 students have deferred enrollment to a future term.

U.S. colleges and universities remain committed to international student outreach and recruitment.

- 82 percent of responding institutions report increasing virtual recruitment through online recruitment events (74 percent) and asynchronous or synchronous virtual campus visits (54 percent).
- 64 percent of institutions have committed funding for outreach and recruitment of international students at the same level or higher than previously.
- Over half of all responding institutions are leveraging current international students (68 percent), online recruitment (58 percent), social media (56 percent), EducationUSA (53 percent), and international partnerships (53 percent) for outreach and recruitment.
- 56 percent of institutions are recruiting international students at U.S. high schools. Approximately half are prioritizing overseas recruitment in China, Vietnam, and India.