

United States Hosts Over 1 Million International Students for the Fifth Consecutive Year

WASHINGTON, D.C., Nov. 16, 2020— The [2020 Open Doors® Report on International Educational Exchange](#), released today, reveals that for the fifth consecutive year the United States hosted more than one million international students (1,075,496) during the 2019/2020 academic year. Despite a slight decline (1.8%) in the number of international students in the United States during the 2019/2020 academic year, this group still represents 5.5% of all students in U.S. higher education. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, international students contributed \$44 billion to the U.S. economy in 2019.

The 2020 *Open Doors* report, released by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and the [Institute of International Education](#) (IIE), provides a critical baseline on the state of international educational exchange prior to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the 2019/2020 academic year, the United States remained the top destination for international students. New international student enrollment continued to stabilize (-0.6%) and showed marked improvement from a 7% decline over the previous two years.

"We are encouraged to see a fifth year of more than one million international students in the United States before the pandemic," said Marie Royce, Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs. "International student mobility is as important today as ever, and we believe the United States is the best destination for students to study and earn their degrees. Education is a pathway to a greater future and international educational exchange has the power to transform students' trajectories."

China, India Remain Top Sources of International Students in U.S.

China remained the largest source of international students in the U.S., with the number of Chinese students in the U.S. increasing for the sixteenth consecutive year. There were over 372,000 Chinese students in the U.S. during 2019/2020, driven by continued growth in Chinese graduate students (+3%) and those pursuing Optional Practical Training (OPT) (+2%). India remained the second largest source of international students in the U.S., despite a 4% decline to 193,124 students. Among the top 20 places of origin, the largest percentage increases were students from Bangladesh (+7%), Brazil (+4%) and Nigeria (+3%). Saudi Arabia saw the largest percentage decrease (-17%), primarily due to changes in its government's scholarship program.

"The U.S. continues to welcome international students from everywhere, at a time when education is more important than ever," said IIE president and CEO, Allan E. Goodman. "The 2020 *Open Doors* report provides a foundational benchmark, critical for understanding the impact on international educational exchange underway today."

STEM Fields of Study Rank Highest Among International Students in U.S.

Over half (52%) of international students in the U.S. pursued majors in STEM fields of study (engineering, math and computer science, physical and life sciences, health professions, and agriculture) in 2019/2020. Engineering continued to be the leading field of study with one in five (20.5%) international students pursuing this field. Math and computer science was the second leading field of study, and the number of international students pursuing this field (205,207) increased by 0.9% compared to the previous year.

Study Abroad Participation Increased in 2018/2019 Academic Year

During the 2018/2019 academic year, 347,099 U.S. students studied abroad for academic credit, a 1.6% increase over the previous year. Documenting ten consecutive years of growth, the 2020 *Open Doors* report provides a benchmark, indicating strong interest in study abroad programs prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We’re proud to see Americans studying abroad in greater numbers than ever before. American students are powerful ambassadors for our nation and study abroad often provides the foundation for future careers as successful diplomats, innovators, educators, and entrepreneurs,” said Royce.

The Americans who study abroad are increasingly diverse, with 31% percent of U.S. students who studied abroad in 2018/19 identifying as racial or ethnic minorities. While this is an improvement from the 15% representation 20 years ago, it remains below minority participation in U.S. higher education today (45%).

European countries remain the most popular destination for U.S. students, hosting over 193,000 students (+3%) and accounting for more than half (56%) of all U.S. study abroad. Latin America and the Caribbean remains the second most popular region for study abroad, hosting 14%, while Asia, the third most popular region, hosted almost 12%. Study abroad to Asia increased by 6%, driven by a 16% increase in study abroad to South Korea and a 5% increase in study abroad to Japan.

U.S. Institutions Take Hybrid Approach to Fall 2020 Semester

There was a 16% decline in international students studying in the U.S. and at U.S. institutions online during the fall 2020 semester due to the impact of the pandemic, according to the 2020 Fall International Student Enrollment Snapshot Survey conducted by IIE and nine partner higher education associations. Nearly all (99%) U.S. institutions taught classes online or used a hybrid teaching model during the fall 2020 semester. Over 710 institutions participated in this survey, a subset of the more than 2,900 institutions surveyed for Open Doors.

To learn more about *Open Doors*, visit: <https://opendoorsdata.org/>.



To learn more about IIE's Fall Snapshot Survey, visit: <https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Open-Doors/Fall-International-Enrollments-Snapshot-Reports>.

About Open Doors

Open Doors is a comprehensive information resource on international students studying at higher education institutions in the United States, and U.S. students studying abroad for academic credit at their home colleges or universities. *Open Doors* also reports on the number of international scholars at U.S. universities and international students enrolled in pre-academic Intensive English Programs. Further details on the 2020 *Open Doors* findings are on the *Open Doors* website. For more data, infographics and resources visit <https://opendoorsdata.org/>.

About the Institute of International Education

Established in 1919, IIE is a global not-for-profit that creates and implements international education programs, conducts research, and provides life-changing opportunities for students and scholars worldwide. IIE collaborates with a range of corporate, government and foundation partners across the globe to design and manage scholarship, study abroad, workforce training and leadership development programs. IIE has a network of 18 offices and affiliates worldwide and over 1,300 member institutions. Visit iie.org.

About the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) builds relations between the people of the United States and the people of other countries through academic, cultural, sports, professional and private exchanges, as well as public-private partnerships and mentoring programs. These exchange programs improve foreign relations and strengthen the national security of the United States, support U.S. international leadership, and provide a broad range of domestic benefits by helping break down barriers that often divide us. ECA sponsors the flagship Fulbright Program, the Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarships for U.S. undergraduates with financial need, the Critical Language Scholarship Program in support of U.S. foreign language study abroad, and the [EducationUSA](#) network of over 400 advising centers worldwide, which provides information to students around the globe who wish to study in the United States. Visit eca.state.gov.

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