

Fall 2025 Snapshot on International Student Enrollment Key Findings

In its 20th year, the *Fall 2025 Snapshot on International Student Enrollment* presents the responses of over 825 U.S. higher education institutions on international student enrollments for the 2025/26 academic year. The report, conducted by IIE and ten partner higher education associations, complements *Open Doors* 2025, which provides comprehensive data on international students from the previous year (2024/25). As the Fall 2025 Snapshot Survey represents a subset of the nearly 3,000 institutions surveyed by *Open Doors*, the full picture of 2025/26 enrollment will be analyzed in *Open Doors* 2026.

International student totals decline by 1% in the 2025/26 academic year.

- Reporting colleges and universities note a 1% decline in the total number of international students, including enrolled and Optional Practical Training (OPT) students.
- Shifts in enrollment continue trends noted in *Open Doors* 2025, with an increase in undergraduates (+2%) and a decline in graduate (-12%) students. Due to several years of strong growth at the graduate level, OPT numbers continue to rise (+14%).
- New enrollments, a subset of total enrollments, decreased by 17% for international students studying at their college or university for the first time. Approximately 29% of institutions report an increase in new international enrollment, 14% indicate stable numbers, and 57% note a decrease.
- Nearly three-quarters (72%) of institutions are offering international student deferrals to spring 2026, and more than half (56%) are providing deferrals to fall 2026.

Many factors affect international student numbers.

- For U.S. institutions noting increases, the majority cite active recruitment initiatives (71%) and outreach to admitted students (54%) as the primary drivers of growth.
- Among U.S. institutions reporting declines in new enrollments, colleges and universities cite multiple contributing factors, including visa application concerns (96%) and travel restrictions (68%).

U.S. institutions provide robust support.

- U.S. colleges and universities report engaging in numerous activities to support international

students, including guidance on maintaining status (93%), holding advising sessions (92%), providing mental health services (67%), and increasing engagement programs (44%).

International student outreach and recruitment remain institutional priorities.

- 84% of U.S. colleges and universities consider international student recruitment a priority.
- U.S. institutions cite prioritizing international student outreach and recruitment due to multiple factors, including the value of international student perspectives (81%), financial contributions (60%), and alignment with institutional strategy (56%).
- 78% of institutions indicate that financial support for their international student recruitment efforts is the same or higher than in the previous year.
- U.S. institutions report that OPT is important for recruiting international students interested in work experiences (76%) and presents an economic benefit to U.S. businesses (76%). 92% of U.S. institutions report that without OPT, international students would likely choose other countries for their education.

India and Vietnam are key recruitment markets.

- Institutions are prioritizing undergraduate outreach in Vietnam (55%), India (49%), Brazil (39%), and South Korea (39%).
- Colleges and universities are focusing on graduate recruitment in India (57%), Vietnam (32%), China (28%), and Bangladesh (28%).
- More colleges and universities note prioritizing international students already in the United States. Half (50%) report engaging in undergraduate outreach efforts at U.S. high schools, and nearly one-third (32%) note recruiting current international undergraduates to pursue graduate studies.

Fall 2025 Snapshot on International Student Enrollment will be available on November 17, 2025:
<https://www.iie.org/research-initiatives/fall-international-enrollments-snapshot-reports/>