

United States Hosts 1.2 Million International Students at Colleges and Universities, Totaling 6% of U.S. Higher Education

WASHINGTON, D.C., November 17, 2025 — Today, the *Open Doors® 2025 Report on International Educational Exchange*, the leading annual benchmark for international educational exchange in the United States, announces that U.S. colleges and universities hosted 1.2 million (1,177,766) international students in the 2024/2025 academic year, a 5% overall increase from the previous year.

International students accounted for 6% of the total U.S. higher education population. International students contributed nearly \$55 billion to the U.S. economy in 2024, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce, and supported more than 355,000 jobs across the United States, according to NAFSA. The United States remains the top destination for international students globally.

“International students come to the United States to advance their education and contribute to U.S. colleges and communities,” said Jason Czyz, Institute of International Education (IIE) President and CEO. “This data highlights the impact international students have in driving innovation, advancing scholarship, and strengthening cross-cultural understanding.”

International student numbers vary by academic level

The number of graduate students (488,481) pursuing master’s or doctorate degrees decreased by 3%, following three years of growth. The number of undergraduate students grew by 4% to 357,231, marking the first significant increase at that academic level since the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of international students on Optional Practical Training (OPT) reached 294,253 students, an increase of 21% from the prior year. More than half (57%) of international students across academic levels pursued STEM fields of study.

The total number of new international students – those enrolling at a U.S. college or university for the first time in fall 2024 – decreased by 7% (277,118). This varied by academic level – the number of new undergraduates grew by 5%, while the number of new graduate students fell by 15%.

India remains the top-sending country of international students

There were 363,019 international students from India in the U.S. in 2024/2025, reflecting a 10% increase from the prior year. China followed with 265,919 students, a 4% decline. Twelve of the top 25 countries sending international students reached their largest totals to date: Bangladesh, Canada, Colombia, Ghana, India, Italy, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Spain, and Vietnam.

Most international students studied at public institutions, with the largest growth at community colleges

International students studied in all 50 states. Among the 45 states that saw increases in their international student totals, the largest growth was reported in Texas (+8%, +7,497 students), Illinois (+7%, +4,336 students), and Missouri (+11%, +3,694 students). Most international students (59%) attended public institutions, while community colleges experienced the fastest rate of growth (+8%) among institutions.

U.S. students studying abroad rises, with top destinations in Europe and Asia

The *Open Doors* Report showed that in the 2023/24 academic year, 298,180 U.S. students studied abroad for academic credit, an increase of 6% from the prior year. Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, and France remained the leading host destinations, with nearly half (45%) of all students studying in these top four destinations. Japan became the 5th-largest destination for the first time, with a robust 16% growth in 2023/24. Seven destinations in the top 25 reached all-time study abroad highs as of 2023/24: Denmark, Greece, Italy, Japan, Portugal, South Korea, and Spain.

“The *Open Doors* report provides a comprehensive picture of the destinations where U.S. students study abroad,” said Dr. Mirka Martel, IIE Head of Research, Evaluation & Learning. “For U.S. students, studying abroad is an integral part of the higher education experience that prepares them to thrive in a global economy.”

Fall 2025 Snapshot on International Student Enrollment

Over 825 U.S. higher education institutions participated in the *Fall 2025 Snapshot*, providing an initial look into international student numbers as of the 2025/26 academic year. These institutions report a 1% decline in international student totals in fall 2025. Undergraduate enrollments are up by 2 percent, while graduate enrollments have decreased by 12 percent. OPT continued to increase by 14 percent. New enrollments, international students studying at their U.S. college or university for the first time in fall 2025, decreased by 17%. Many institutions are continuing to focus on international student recruitment, citing the value of international students’ perspectives on campus (81%) and their financial contributions (60%).

About Open Doors

Open Doors is the most comprehensive information resource on international students and scholars in the United States and on U.S. students studying abroad for academic credit. The *Open Doors* project is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. Government and supported in its implementation by the Institute of International Education. For more data, infographics, and resources, visit opendoorsdata.org.

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