

International Enrollments in the United States: 60 Years of Open Doors Data

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In 2008/09, 671,616 international students were studying at US colleges and universities, an 8 percent increase over the previous year, according to the *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange* published by the Institute of International Education. IIE surveys approximately 3,000 accredited US higher education institutions annually on various aspects of international educational exchange and has collected data on international students in US higher education since its founding in 1919.

IIE published the results of its first international student census for academic year 1948/49 under the title of *Education for One World*. Only 25,464 international students were reported that year, less than 4 percent of the total in 2008/09. Canada was the top sending country in 1948/49, with 4,197 Canadian students studying in the United States that year. In contrast, in 2008/09, India was the top sender, with 103,260 students. While the top places of origin have changed substantially over the past 60 years, following economic and political shifts, Canada and India remain the only two countries that have figured among the top 10 places of origin each year since 1948/49.

TRENDS BY WORLD REGION

Sixty years ago, the distribution of incoming international students was more evenly spread out among the world regions than it is today. Students from Asia comprised the largest group at 26 percent, followed by Europe and Latin America (23 percent, each), North America (17 percent), the Middle East (7 percent), Africa (3 percent) and Oceania (slightly less than 1 percent). Today, students from East, South, and Southeast Asia not only comprise the largest regional group, they also outnumber students from all other regions combined.

The 415,000 students from Asia accounted for 62 percent of all international students in the United States in 2008/09. Four of the top five places of origin overall are in Asia (#1 India, #2 China, #3 South Korea, and #5 Japan—Canada is #4). Recent rates of increase, especially at the undergraduate level, indicate that China may be poised to retake the position of top place of origin, which India has held since 2001/02.

Particularly large increases were seen by two other top-sending Asian countries: #9 Vietnam (46 percent) and #11 Nepal (30 percent).

The number of students from Asia has increased 28 percent over the past five years, 48 percent since 1999/2000 and more than 60-fold since 1949/50. In the decade between 1979/80 and 1989/90, the proportion of international students coming from Asia rose from 29 percent to 54 percent. Actual enrollment totals rose from 45,710 to 127,620, spearheaded by large increases from China, following normalization of relations with the United States, and by large increases from Japan, South Korea, India, and Taiwan, all of which remain among the top places of origin today.

While the actual number of students from Europe grew steadily through the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, the proportion of international students in the United States from Europe has declined from over 20 percent in the early years of the *Open Doors* survey to 13 percent in 2008/09. Enrollments from Europe grew by 4 percent to 87,648 in 2008/09, reversing the declines seen in the years immediately following 9/11.

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Similar to Europe, enrollments from Latin America have also followed an overall upward trend, but have not kept pace with the large increases in students coming from Asia. As a consequence, the proportion of students from Latin America in the United States fell from over 20 percent in the 1940s and 1950s to 10 percent in 2008/09. Mexico is the top place of origin in the region, with 14,850 Mexican students studying in the United States in 2008/09. The region as a whole saw a 5 percent increase in 2008/09.

The number of students from Africa increased by 4 percent to 36,937 students in 2008/09, 6 percent of the world total. The number and proportion of students from Africa rose in the late 1970s and early 1980s, fueled by large enrollments from Nigeria during the oil boom years. At its peak in 1982/83, there were 42,690 students from Africa in the United States, about 13 percent of the world total. Nigeria is still the top place of origin in the region, with 6,256 students in the United States in 2008/09.

The 29,140 students from the Middle East currently comprise 4 percent of the total international student population in the United States. Enrollments from the Middle East also soared during the oil boom years, peaking at 81,390 students in 1980/81—about 26 percent of the international student total, led by enrollments from Iran, the top place of origin overall between 1974/75 and 1982/83. Saudi Arabia is currently the top sending country in the region, with 12,661 students in the United States in 2008/09.

Students from North America (29,697 from Canada and 410 from Bermuda) comprised about 5 percent of all international students in the United States in 2008/09. Canada was the top place of origin of international students in the United States from the beginning of the *Open Doors* survey until 1971/72, when it was surpassed by India.

The 5,053 students from Oceania still comprise slightly less than 1 percent of the overall international student total. The proportion of students from Oceania in the United States has never exceeded 2 percent. Enrollments from Australia increased 18 percent in 2008/09 to an all time high of 11,042 students, accounting for 63 percent of the regional total.

RECENT TRENDS

As has been the case since 2001/02, graduate international students outnumbered undergraduate international students in 2008/09, but by a smaller margin than in previous years. While the number of undergraduates increased 11 percent over the past year, driven by large increases from China (61 percent), Vietnam (56 percent), Nepal (38 percent), and Saudi Arabia (31 percent), graduate enrollment increased only 2 percent. Recent rates of increase indicate that undergraduate international students may once again outnumber graduate international students in the near future. ■

Deciphering “Educational Hubs” Strategies: Rhetoric and Reality

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Over the past two decades, an increasing number of governments have recognized their higher education sectors as important to their economic development. In part, this recognition has prompted governments to adopt innovative, albeit sometimes untested, higher education development policies. Of late, many of these policies have been focused on the development of private higher education, where it had often been an underutilized tool in national strategies. One of the more prominent developments in this policy arena, particularly in

the Middle East and Southeast Asia, is the increasing interest by government officials to reposition their region as an “education hub.” In its most recent assessment of cross-border higher education, the Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (OBHE) highlights the notable increase in “hubs” over the past decade, and identifies seven currently in existence and five more in development.

As an evocative metaphor, education hub has great rhetorical power that likely contributes to its adoption by both the media and policymakers. The widely used slogan encompasses several different types of strategies, almost all of which incorporate the development of private-sector institutions and often include international branch campuses (regulated as private entities); but, the term lacks a commonly acknowledged operational definition. For example, in the OBHE report, hub sites mentioned a lack of commonality across multiple dimensions including size, number and type of institutions, and students enrolled.

While some governments enact policies with the goal of becoming a hub, others use the phrase to give greater definition to an existing agenda. Even more, the level of government involvement can vary (e.g., cities, states, nations). Hubs can include different combinations of domestic institutions, international branch campuses, and foreign partnerships. For example, in the early 1990s, the Australian city of Adelaide used the phrase “education city” (a variant of the hub lingo) to describe its new focus on education, specifically for recruiting foreign students from Southeast Asia to attend local universities. More recently, Qatar’s “Education City” is comprised of six branch campuses of American universities. Elsewhere, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand have all developed different policies intended to boost their respective reputations as a Southeast Asian education hub, while in East Asia, South Korea and Hong Kong use similar language to describe dissimilar activities.

ASSUMPTIONS AND REALITY

In this article we focus on the strategies used by entities that self-identify as educational or academic hubs. We examine four assumptions in the emerging discourse about educational hub strategies. By beginning now to disentangle the rhetoric from reality in the current discourse, we hope to provide greater clarity for ongoing policy and scholarly analysis.

Assumption 1: institutions in educational hubs exist in close proximity to each other.

Reality: in some intended hubs, institutions may be located anywhere in the country. In others, hub institutions are within walking distance of each other. The first arrangement reflects what we call an Archipelago hub, where institutions are dispersed throughout a state or nation with no geographic concentration of academic efforts. The second arrangement is what we call the Acropolis hub, which brings together several institutions in one location. This latter form has recently been used to recruit institutions to establish branch locations in