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Chinese Students Flood U.S. Grad Schools

By MELISSA KORN



Thanks to a thriving economy at home, an increasing number of Chinese students are attending U.S. graduate schools, according to a study to be released on Tuesday by a graduate-school industry group. Melissa Korn has details.

Thanks to a thriving economy at home, an increasing number of Chinese students are attending U.S. graduate schools, according to a study to be released on Tuesday by a graduate-school industry group.

Graduate schools saw a 21% increase in Chinese applicants from the last school year and a 23% increase in admissions offers, for students slated to start this fall, according to a study by the Council of Graduate Schools. It is the sixth year in a row of double-digit percentage increases for Chinese students.

Applications and offers were up sharply for international students overall, jumping 11% compared with 2010, according to the report. The study looked at data for a total of 591,739 applications to U.S. graduate schools by prospective international students for fall 2011.

Business schools, in particular, are accepting more Chinese and international students. Graduate business programs extended 16% more offers to international students for the class entering this fall, compared with the prior school year, according to Council of Graduate Schools' data. That's a significant shift in strategy: In 2010, business schools increased admissions offers by only 3% despite seeing an 11% increase in applicants by international students.

More middle-class Chinese professionals can afford U.S. tuition these days, said Peggy Blumenthal, senior counselor at the Institute of International Education, a nonprofit group that administers the Fulbright Scholar Program and fosters partnerships among schools



Bloomberg News

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international students to represent about 34% of its total class entering this fall, up from 30% in the prior year. International applications rose by 12% in the latest admissions cycle.

And at Stanford University's Graduate School of Business, 37% of students came from outside the U.S., up from 33% the prior year.

To be sure, not all business schools are transforming their student-body profiles. Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Sloan School of Management has kept its proportion of international students around 40% in recent years, despite an increase in international applicants, according to Julie Strong, senior associate director of admissions.

Ms. Strong said, "We're an American school in the United States, so we need to maintain a U.S. flavor in our program."

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world-wide. Meanwhile, American students may have more difficulty finding the funds to cover tuition given the troubled economy, she said.

"In China, the economy is booming and both students and their parents have the money and are willing to invest it in education," Ms. Blumenthal said.

According to the Institute, Chinese students enrolled in U.S. undergraduate and graduate schools increased nearly 30% to 127,628 in the 2009-2010 academic year from the prior academic year. The number of students from Saudi Arabia, which launched a state-funded scholarship program in 2006, rose almost 25% to 15,810 in the same period. Those were two of the fastest-growing sources of international students, according to the IIE.

Brazil and China have also been offering students funding, hoping they will return home with their newfound skills and ideas.

"I've been struck at how many of these countries view these investments as important for their development," said Patrick Osmer, vice provost and dean at Ohio State University's graduate school. He said that, based on his own experience, more students have been going back in recent years as their home countries' economies heat up.

International candidates, particularly those from China, now have better English-language skills, which make them more attractive to U.S. schools, admissions officers say.

Schools are also hoping to bolster their reputations for offering a "global" education that exposes students to people and ideas from around the world. For business schools there is a strong need to meet the demands of corporate recruiters, who are increasingly seeking candidates capable of working in a multinational conglomerate.

The University of Michigan's Ross School of Business expects