



2014 | International Graduate Students Report



UW in the World

We are compassionate and committed to the active pursuit of global engagement and connectedness. We assume leadership roles to make the world a better place through education and research. We embrace our role to foster engaged and responsible citizenship as part of the learning experience of our students, faculty and staff.

—University of Washington Vision and Values

International students play an integral role in advancing the University of Washington's pursuit of global engagement and connectedness, and will continue to do so in an increasingly internationalized world. A key component of this pursuit is the recruitment, retention, and support of a robust international graduate student population. This report—part of a series of UW Graduate School reports on key issues in graduate and professional education—examines international admissions and enrollment trends, identifies important challenges that international graduate students face, and offers recommendations for moving forward to best serve the needs of those students and the larger UW graduate community.

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INTRODUCTION

The University of Washington may be perched on the westernmost edge of the United States, but our teaching, research and service circle the globe. UW students at all levels study regions as large as South America, and countries as tiny as Lesotho, Africa. Students explore languages, health, governments, cultures, business, politics, histories, art, religions, architecture, economics and environments.

With their collective expertise, research and ideas, UW faculty and graduate students identify problems throughout the world and find solutions. By tracking the impact of disease in virtually every community in the world, the UW's Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation is providing public health experts with the information they need to determine how effectively vaccinations protect people in emerging countries. Engineers can use the same database of information to improve water quality. And urban planners can analyze traffic deaths in order to design safer streets.

UW students—undergraduates and graduate students alike—are encouraged to immerse themselves in other cultures through study, service and research. A quarter of all UW undergraduates study abroad. The UW ranks first in the nation for undergraduate alumni who enter the Peace Corps. And when it comes to the Fulbright U.S. Student Exchange Program, 77 recent UW graduates and current graduate students are teaching and conducting research in other countries. These are examples of “brain circulation,” the emerging concept that the multi-directional flow of talent, education and research advance global knowledge, as well as local economies.

Being a global university means more than sending our students into the world and solving problems from research labs in Seattle. It also means welcoming international students to the University of Washington for higher education and learning from them.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The University of Washington continues to be a top choice for many prospective graduate students from other countries. This year's 2,258 international graduate students hail from 90 countries. They comprise 17.6 percent of all UW graduate students, compared to 14.3 percent in 2008—a 23 percent increase in just five years.

As the number of international graduate students has increased dramatically over the past five years, their academic interests have shifted. Five years ago, a UW international graduate student was most likely from China and had selected the UW for a doctoral program.

Today, most international graduate students still call China home. But, much like students from Washington state and other U.S. states, international graduate students are increasingly choosing the UW's master's degree programs over doctoral programs. This year, for the first time, more international students are enrolled in master's programs than doctoral programs.

This report examines the UW's international graduate admissions and enrollment from 2008 to 2013, as well as the financial, academic and cultural challenges international graduate students face. In addition, this report urges the University to develop a strategic plan to ensure the UW's global reputation and impact, as well as the success of international graduate students.

The Graduate School recognizes that this report presents a large amount of data and hopes that the information, trends and perspectives provided here will prompt chancellors, vice provosts, deans, directors and chairs to lead a campus-wide discussion about the importance of international students in our graduate programs.

Key points in this report:

Applications

- ▶ International graduate applications—for master's and doctoral programs—increased by 10 percent for autumn 2013 over the previous autumn, and were 130 percent higher than five years ago.
- ▶ In the last five years, international master's applications increased 234 percent.
- ▶ Most of the increased interest has been in the UW's fee-based master's programs as applications spiked 71 percent between autumn 2012 and autumn 2013.
- ▶ International doctoral applications dipped slightly—3 percent—between autumn 2012 and 2013.
- ▶ China remains the UW's largest source of international applications.
- ▶ The UW's most popular graduate programs—in terms of number of applications and growth since 2008—are in Engineering, Arts & Sciences–Natural Sciences, Information School, Business, Arts & Sciences–Social Sciences and Public Affairs.
- ▶ About 20 percent of international applicants are offered admission to the UW.
- ▶ About 40 percent of U.S. applicants are offered admission to the UW.

Enrollment

- ▶ 17.6 percent of the UW's graduate students are international students—a slightly lower proportion than our peer institutions.
- ▶ Nationally, international students make up an average of 15 percent of graduate students.
- ▶ One-third of all UW graduate students are in fee-based programs.
- ▶ More than half of all international master's students are in fee-based programs.
- ▶ The College of Engineering's master's and doctoral programs enroll more graduate students—international and domestic—than any other UW school or college.
- ▶ The largest number of international master's students is in Engineering's and Information School's fee-based programs.

New Enrollment

- ▶ A record 910 new international graduate students enrolled in autumn 2013—17 percent more new international students than in 2012.
- ▶ One in five new UW graduate students is from another country.
- ▶ China, India, South Korea and Taiwan are the top countries of origin for international graduate students.

Financial Challenges

- ▶ Recruiting the top international graduate students to the UW is hampered by limited funding—just as with top domestic students.
- ▶ Engineering provides the greatest levels of financial support to its graduate students in the form of assistantships and fellowships.
- ▶ Arts & Sciences–Natural Sciences allocates the largest number of teaching assistantships to domestic and international graduate students.

Student Perspectives

- ▶ International graduate students must navigate complicated immigration and visa policies, adapt to new learning styles, research and educational methods, as well as a new culture.
- ▶ A new quarterly fee, paid by UW international students, will bolster services to help international students adapt and be successful.
- ▶ The Graduate School has streamlined some processes for international graduate students to speed the admissions process.

Moving Forward

To maintain and bolster the UW's global reputation and competitive edge, the University needs a strategic plan for the recruitment, enrollment, retention and student support for all UW international students. The Graduate School intends to work with UW leaders, faculty, staff and students to develop a plan that would address:

- ▶ the value international graduate students bring to teaching, research and learning at the UW;
- ▶ recruitment, enrollment, retention and degree completion goals and metrics;
- ▶ the educational, cultural and financial support international graduate students need to succeed;
- ▶ academic and social challenges international students face and ways the UW is helping them succeed, as well as a communications plan UW leaders, faculty and staff can use to explain the role international students play at the UW and the value they bring to the state of Washington.

METHODOLOGY

The data and analysis offered here address continuing changes in the admissions and enrollment of international students seeking master's and doctoral degrees and how well the UW graduate community is serving those students and the University's own mission.

Several methods were used to prepare this report, including:

- ▶ analysis of UW institutional data stored in the University-wide Student Database (SDB), which tracks individuals from application through graduation,
- ▶ analysis of national graduate education data,
- ▶ literature reviews,
- ▶ focus groups with UW international graduate students and
- ▶ surveys of UW faculty, staff and international graduate students.

To measure the demand for UW graduate programs from international students, we relied on SDB data, which calculates the number of applications and students in each degree program rather than headcount. This means that students who are enrolled in more than one degree program at the same time—also called concurrent programs—are counted more than once. By contrast, some application and enrollment data reported on the UW Graduate School website are calculated from actual headcount.

DEFINITIONS

Admissions = The UW's step-by-step process of recruiting applicants, evaluating their applications, and issuing them offers or denials of admission.

Applicant = An individual who completes and files an application.

Application = The written request to enroll in one or more specific graduate programs at the UW. The number of applications can be larger than the number of applicants as an individual may file an application to more than one graduate program.

Offer = The UW approves an applicant and asks him or her to enroll at the UW.

Acceptance = The applicant agrees to enroll as a student.

Denial = The UW rejects an applicant.

Decline = Applicant who is extended an offer refuses it and/or does not enroll.

Enrollment or total enrollment = The number of accepted students who are actively taking UW courses.

New enrollment = Students who are enrolling for the first time in a UW graduate program.

Graduate programs = Unless otherwise noted, includes all degree programs beyond the bachelor's degree, except for M.D., D.D.S., Pharm.D. and J.D., which are often referred to as professional programs and are administered within the Schools of Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy and Law, respectively. However, the UW Graduate School administers all other graduate degree programs within those schools—such as the School of Medicine's master's program in Bioethics and Humanities and School of Pharmacy's master's and doctoral programs in Medicinal Chemistry.

Fee-based = Refers to programs and classes that do not receive direct financial support from the State of Washington. Typically, students in these programs cover most of the cost of education themselves. These programs tend to be tailored toward students seeking professional careers in the workforce, rather than academic careers.

State-based = Refers to programs and classes funded by both students' tuition and the State of Washington.

College of Arts & Sciences = Because the college's degree-offerings are so diverse, the UW has established four academic divisions within Arts & Sciences: social sciences, natural sciences, arts and humanities. Using that convention, we reported all applications and student data by division, rather than the college as a whole.

ADMISSIONS

APPLICATIONS

Interest in UW graduate programs from international applicants is keeping pace with the national average. UW international applications increased by 10 percent for autumn 2013 to 10,585, compared to 9,596 for autumn 2012. The UW received 27,381 total graduate applications for autumn 2013, with 17 percent coming from Washington state residents, 44 percent from other U.S. residents, and 39 percent from residents of other countries.

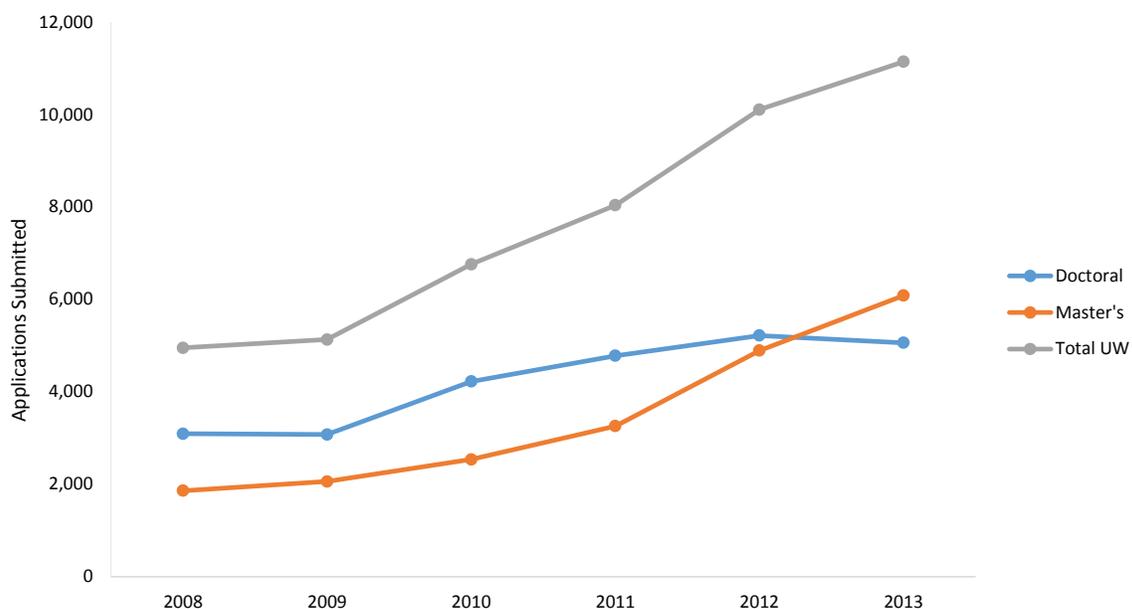
In fact, international applications for autumn 2013 were up 130 percent compared to just five years ago. In the last five years (between autumn 2008 and autumn 2013) international doctoral applications grew 65 percent, and master's applications increased a staggering 234 percent (Figure 1).

UW master's programs received 25 percent more international applications for autumn 2013 than they did the previous year. And, for the first time, the number master's applications from international students surpassed that of doctoral applications. Much of the increased interest is in the UW's fee-based master's programs, which saw their overall applications—from international and domestic students—spike 71 percent between autumn 2012 and autumn 2013.

International doctoral applications dipped slightly for the first time in four years. The UW received 3 percent fewer international doctoral applications for autumn 2013 than the year before—a difference of 204 applications from 4,882 for autumn 2012 to 4,678 this autumn. Overall applications to UW doctoral programs were off by 44 over autumn 2012.

Nationally, interest in U.S. graduate programs from international applicants seems to be leveling, after years of consistent growth. Graduate applications nationwide for the academic year 2012-13 increased by 9 percent over 2011-12, just slightly higher than the 8 percent increase in applications between 2010 and 2011, according to preliminary admissions data gathered by the Council of Graduate Schools. (CGS tracks applications and enrollment by academic years, while in this report we compare UW numbers by autumn quarters.)

Figure 1. International Applications, Autumn Quarters 2008-2013

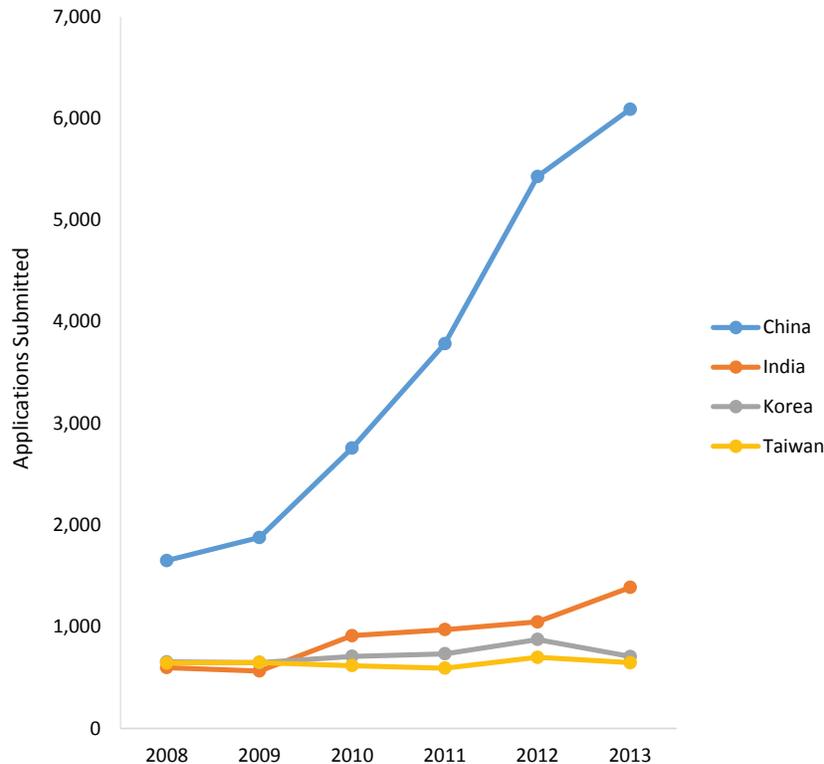


China

China is the largest source of international applications to UW graduate programs. For the autumn 2013 quarter, the UW received applications from 135 countries other than the United States, with more than 54 percent of those applications coming from China. Applications from China for autumn 2013 were up 12 percent over 2012, on the heels of a 41 percent increase between 2011 and 2012. Following China for international applications, new enrollment and overall enrollment, in order, were India, South Korea and Taiwan.

More than half of international graduate applications to the UW for autumn 2013 came from China.

Figure 2. Increase in Number of UW International Applications from Top 4 Countries, Autumn Quarters 2008-2013



Nationally, applications for the 2012-13 academic year from China fell 3 percent, while graduate applications from India rose 22 percent over the previous year, according to Council of Graduate Schools. The CGS report lumps master's and doctoral applications together and does not distinguish between types of graduate applications. CGS counts applications and admissions for entire academic years, while, in this report, the UW Graduate School uses data from the autumn 2013 quarter.

High-Demand Graduate Programs

Just over half of the UW's doctoral programs experienced growth in applications for autumn 2013, as compared to autumn 2012. The most notable were Law with a 250 percent increase, Nursing with a 46 percent spike, Interschool/ Intercollege Programs with a 21 percent boost and Public Health with a 20 percent rise. The largest percentages of declines in doctoral applications were in Built Environments, Education and Engineering. That said, applications to Built Environments were only 12 fewer than the year before, while Education applications were only 16 fewer. Engineering had 2,136 doctoral applications for autumn 2012 and 1,819 for autumn 2013—a difference of 317 applications.

The vast majority of the UW's master's programs experienced growth in applications for autumn 2013, as compared to autumn 2012. Arts & Sciences–Natural Sciences' applications grew by 104 percent—an additional 312 applications—while master's programs at UW Tacoma rose 91 percent. Interdisciplinary Graduate Programs' international applications were up 76 percent, Business by 47 percent, Public Affairs by 38 percent and Law by 35 percent.

Table 1. UW International Graduate Applications by College/School, Autumn Quarters 2008-2013

COLLEGE/SCHOOL	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	% Change 2012-2013	% Change 2008-2013
Total	4950	5129	6758	8034	10105	11141	10%	125%
Doctoral	3091	3073	4223	4778	5216	5059	-3%	64%
Arts & Sciences - Arts	37	45	47	40	29	29	0%	-22%
Arts & Sciences - Humanities	71	61	88	85	88	104	18%	46%
Arts & Sciences - Natural Sciences	488	522	587	737	784	868	11%	78%
Arts & Sciences - Social Sciences	293	271	300	346	446	462	4%	58%
Built Environments	26	23	35	46	58	46	-21%	77%
Business	300	302	320	208	181	187	3%	-38%
Dentistry	2	6	5	5	11	13	18%	550%
Education	36	31	27	48	94	78	-17%	117%
Engineering	842	864	1715	2062	2136	1819	-15%	116%
Environment	85	94	106	149	152	156	3%	84%
Information School	34	28	27	44	48	37	-23%	9%
Interdisciplinary Graduate Programs	216	226	226	263	268	263	-2%	22%
Interschool or Intercollege Programs	97	91	112	122	134	162	21%	67%
Law	4	7	9	16	6	21	250%	425%
Medicine	295	243	298	281	380	374	-2%	27%
Nursing	18	11	19	16	24	35	46%	94%
Pharmacy	78	94	111	89	118	105	-11%	35%
Public Affairs	34	18	27	30	48	56	17%	65%
Public Health	115	121	144	158	183	220	20%	91%
Social Work	20	15	20	33	28	24	-14%	20%
Master's	1859	2056	2535	3256	4889	6082	24%	227%
Arts & Sciences - Arts	67	61	72	74	132	148	12%	121%
Arts & Sciences - Humanities	74	84	80	111	190	218	15%	195%
Arts & Sciences - Natural Sciences	74	67	109	296	301	613	104%	728%
Arts & Sciences - Social Sciences	75	68	122	99	237	241	2%	221%
Bothell Campus	19	24	27	38	80	95	19%	400%
Built Environments	132	167	237	256	318	404	27%	206%
Business	305	362	400	335	432	636	47%	109%
Dentistry	2	4	4	3	7	5	-29%	150%
Education	33	20	36	51	101	94	-7%	185%
Engineering	478	526	622	942	1415	1558	10%	226%
Environment	26	30	33	37	72	56	-22%	115%
Information School	65	83	146	179	476	601	26%	825%
Interdisciplinary Graduate Programs	19	25	24	41	38	67	76%	253%
Interschool or Intercollege Programs	44	53	50	56	87	84	-3%	91%
Law	182	179	239	268	306	414	35%	127%
Medicine	54	68	60	72	102	103	1%	91%
Nursing	13	2	13	12	4	4	0%	-69%
Pharmacy	4	3	15	14	6	7	17%	75%
Public Affairs	61	75	82	164	255	353	38%	479%
Public Health	101	117	130	165	202	192	-5%	90%
Social Work	20	26	15	29	61	61	0%	205%
Tacoma Campus	11	12	19	14	67	128	91%	1064%

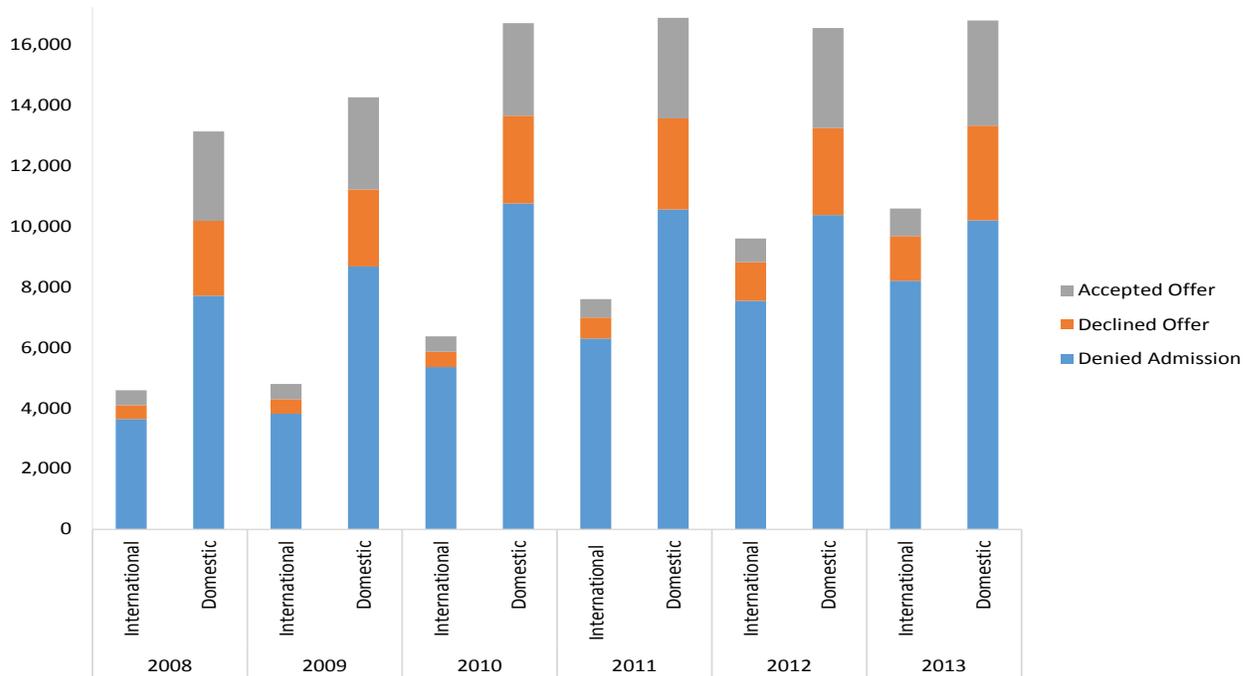
Selectivity and Yield

While graduate applications have increased by more than 50 percent since autumn 2008, acceptance to the UW's graduate programs has remained selective. For each of the last two years, the UW has offered admission to about 20 percent of international applicants, compared to about 40 percent of U.S. applicants.

Even though the UW is admitting more international applicants, proportionally fewer of them are choosing the UW—the result of the large increase in the number of applicants. Between autumn 2008 and autumn 2013, yield

fell from 52 percent to 38 percent. In autumn 2011, the UW admitted 17 percent of international applicants—46 percent of whom accepted. The UW increased its offers to international graduate applicants to 22 percent for autumn 2013, of which only 38 percent accepted. However, twice as many international applicants were denied UW admission in 2013, compared to 2008.

Figure 3. UW Graduate Admissions by Residency, Autumn Quarters 2008-2013

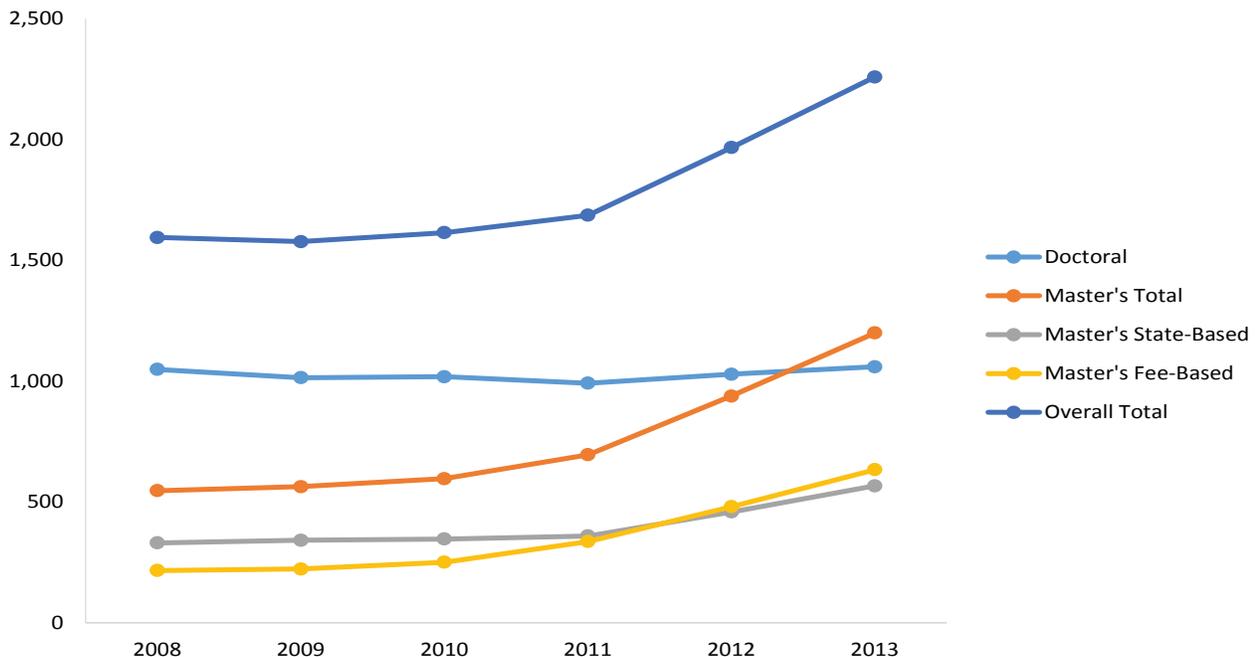


ENROLLMENT

Total Enrollment

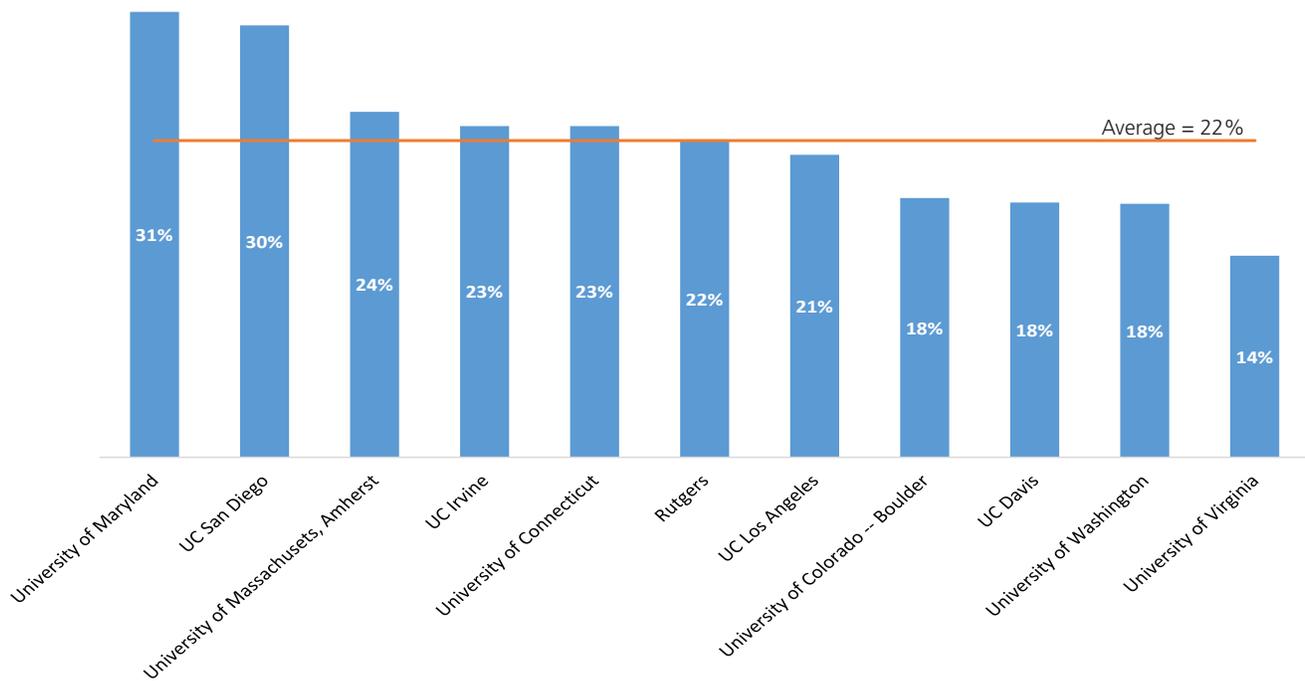
The total number of international graduate students enrolled at the UW reached an all-time high of 2,258 students in autumn 2013—an increase of 15 percent from autumn 2012. Overall, these students comprise 17.6 percent of the 12,812 graduate students at the UW—up from 16 percent in autumn 2012 (Figure 4).

Figure 4. UW International Graduate Student Enrollment, Autumn Quarters 2008-2013



Compared to our peer institutions¹, the UW has a slightly lower percentage of international graduate students with 17.6 percent of the total graduate student body. And, we're just ahead of the national average of about 15 percent, according to CGS.

Figure 5. International Graduate Student Enrollment (as a Percentage of Total Enrollment) at Peer Institutions, Autumn 2013



Fee-Based Programs

Nearly one-third of all UW graduate students—and more than 28 percent of all international students—are in fee-based programs.

As for new graduate students who began their studies in autumn 2013, 41 percent are enrolled in fee-based graduate programs. And 18 percent of those new graduate students are from other countries.

A fee-based program is a program of study that is supported solely by student course fees (i.e., receives little to no state-based support). Students in fee-based programs pay the same fees, regardless of their residency, which means international students pay the same amount of money as students who are residents of Washington state or another U.S. state. The vast majority of the UW's fee-based graduate programs are master's programs.

Nearly one-third of all UW graduate students are in fee-based programs.

More than half of all international graduate students pursuing master's degrees at the UW are in fee-based programs.

By contrast, state-based programs are supported by student tuition and funding provided by the state. Students in these programs are referred to as tuition-based students.

These programs have been steadily growing over the last 10 years. In 2004, one-quarter of all UW master's students were in fee-based programs. Today, nearly half are—including 53 percent of all international master's students (see Figure 4).

High-Demand Programs

The UW's most popular graduate programs are in the College of Engineering, which enrolls the largest numbers of both international and domestic graduate students in its master's and doctoral programs. When enrolling international doctoral students, Arts & Sciences–Natural Sciences and Arts & Sciences–Social Sciences are a distant second and third behind Engineering. Even Natural Sciences and Social Sciences' combined international doctoral student enrollment is less than Engineering's. As for international enrollment in master's programs, Business and

¹ Global Challenge State Peer Institutions, as defined by the UW Office of Planning and Budgeting.

Information School are second and third to Engineering. The largest number of international master's students can be found in the College of Engineering's and Information School's fee-based programs. (Note that while Engineering offers fee-based and state-based master's programs, all of the I-School's master's programs are fee-based.) (See figures 6a and 6b.)

Figure 6a. Doctoral Enrollment by School/College, Autumn 2013

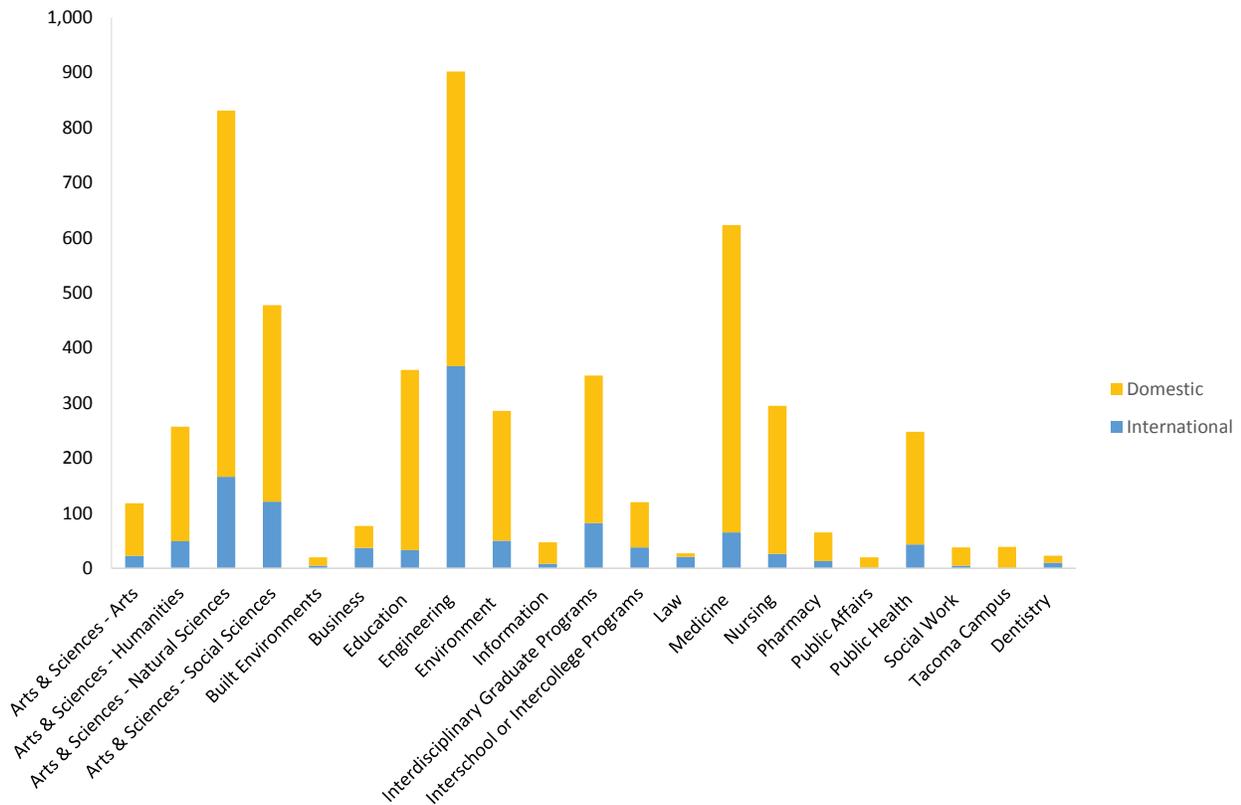
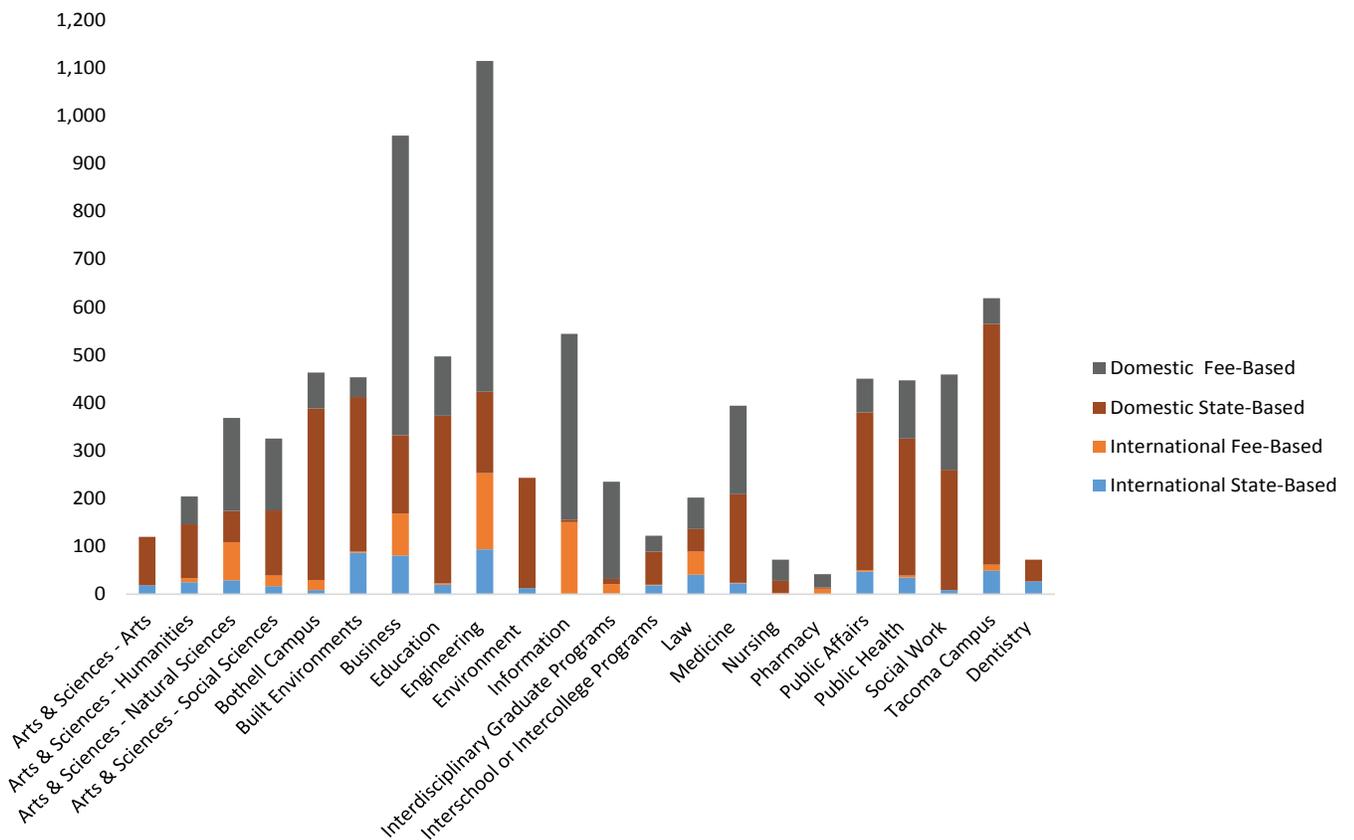


Figure 6b. Master's Enrollment by School/College, Autumn 2013



New International Enrollment

The UW welcomed a record 910 new international graduate students in autumn 2013—a 17 percent increase from autumn 2012. One in five new UW graduate students this academic year is from another country. New international graduate student enrollment has increased for each of the last seven years. Between 2008 and 2013, new graduate international enrollment grew 85 percent, while non-Washington resident enrollment grew at 27 percent, and Washington resident enrollment grew modestly at 12 percent (Table 2).

One in five new UW graduate students in 2013 is from another country.

Just as with applications, the growth is primarily in master's programs, as new master's enrollment is up 25 percent. Doctoral enrollment growth is steady at 2.3 percent increase over autumn 2012.

Table 2. Percentage Change in UW New Graduate Enrollment by Residency, Autumn Quarters 2008-2013

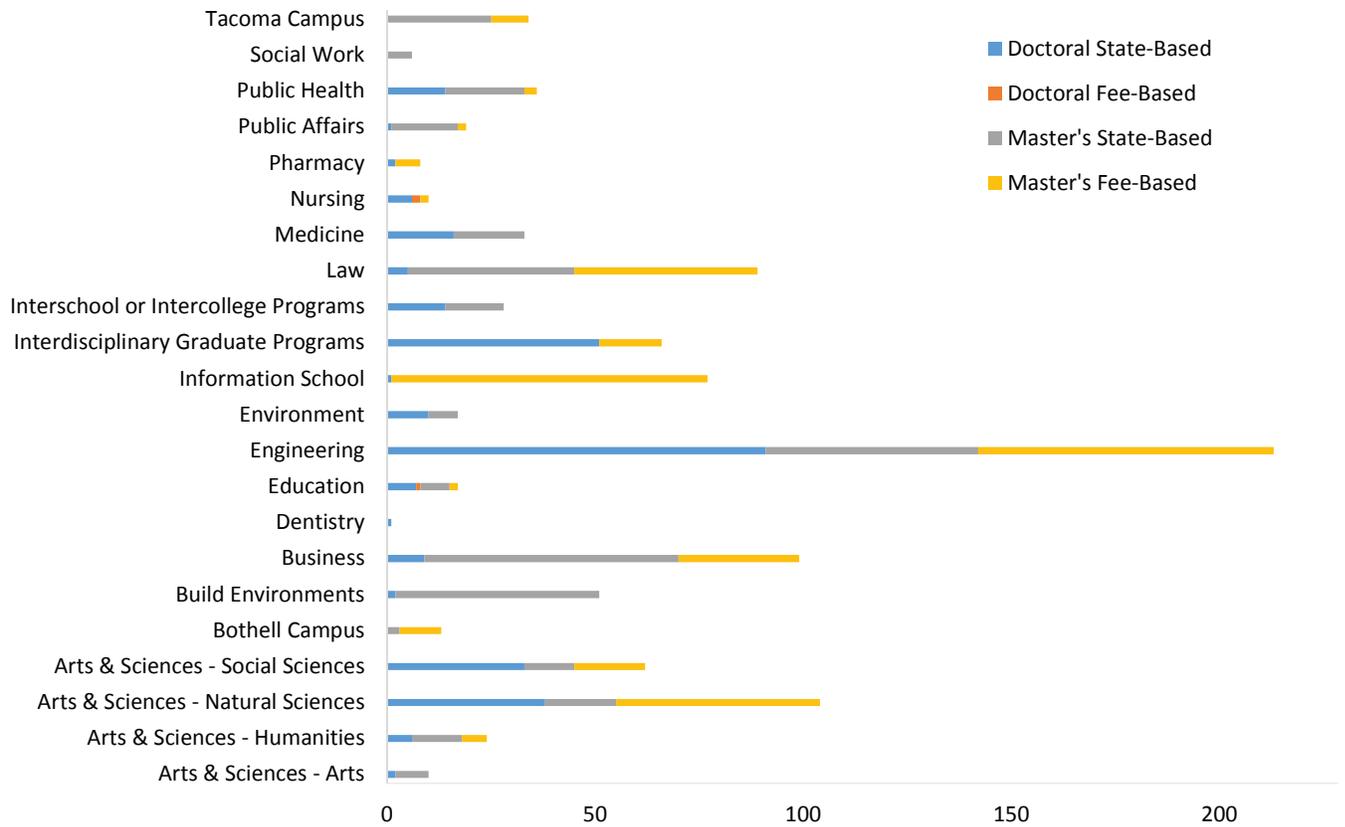
		UW Overall	WA Resident	Other U.S.	International
New Total	2012-2013	7.5%	3.0%	8.7%	17.4%
Graduate	2011-2012	3.8%	-3.4%	3.7%	28.7%
Enrollment	2010-2011	10.2%	9.0%	8.5%	18.7%
% Change	2009-2010	0.4%	-2.6%	5.7%	0.4%
	2008-2009	3.2%	6.3%	-1.6%	2.4%
New	2012-2013	1.6%	-4.7%	5.2%	2.3%
Doctoral	2011-2012	10.3%	13.9%	7.5%	-12.8%
Enrollment	2010-2011	5.7%	17.9%	2.2%	2.3%
% Change	2009-2010	-0.4%	-13.8%	6.9%	15.8%
	2008-2009	-0.9%	0.8%	0.2%	-4.7%
New	2012-2013	9.4%	4.2%	10.6%	25.0%
Master's	2011-2012	1.8%	-5.7%	1.8%	38.2%
Enrollment	2010-2011	11.7%	7.9%	11.9%	34.5%
% Change	2009-2010	0.6%	-1.0%	5.1%	-1.7%
	2008-2009	4.6%	7.1%	2.6%	9.0%

At the UW, the College of Engineering continues to lead in both overall and international graduate enrollment. The most significant percentage gains in new international enrollment this year, however, occurred in the Intercollege/Interschool Programs and the School of Arts & Sciences–Natural Sciences, which saw 56 percent and 53 percent boosts, respectively.

China, India, South Korea and Taiwan were the top four countries of origin for international graduate students enrolling for the first time in University of Washington graduate program, which mirrors national trends.² Nationally, Chinese students make up one-third of all international graduate students in the United States.

² Bell, N. (August 2012) Council of Graduate Schools: Findings from the 2012 CGS International Graduate Admission Survey—Phase II: Final Applications and Initial Offers of Admission, pg 6. Retrieved from <http://www.cgsnet.org/ckfinder/userfiles/files/CGS%202012%20International%20Admissions%20Report%20II%20-%20Final.pdf>

Figure 7. New International Graduate Student Enrollment by School/College, Autumn Quarter 2013



Doctoral Program Enrollment

Over the last 10 years, the UW has expanded its doctoral programs and increased the doctoral degrees awarded from 493 in 2002-03 to 763 in 2012-13. Overall enrollment of new doctoral students increased marginally between autumn quarters 2012 and 2013, as did enrollment of new international doctoral students.

International doctoral students now comprise just 49 percent of total international graduate enrollment, down from 52 percent last year and 66 percent five years ago in 2008.

For the first time, more international students are pursuing master's degrees than doctoral degrees at the UW.

FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

Despite the UW’s global reputation, the University continues to lose some of the best international students to competitors that often offer superior financial aid—one of the same reasons we fail to recruit some of the best U.S. students. “There is limited funding to recruit and attract the most promising international graduate students, and therefore the best and brightest often go elsewhere,” noted Peter Moran, director of the UW’s Study Abroad programs. “Tuition waivers do help, but they are few in number and they are good for just a year at a time. There is no strategic plan about how they will be applied, though we have tightened up and defined the process a great deal in the past two years.”

If graduate students are enrolled in a state-based graduate program, non-resident students—either from another state or another country—pay non-resident tuition, unless they are supported by an assistantship or other tuition remission appointment. Non-resident graduate tuition is generally twice as much as in-state graduate tuition. But international graduate students have even more financial requirements than out-of-state U.S. students.

International graduate students in fee-based programs pay the same fees as non-resident students. But those programs—and many state-based master’s programs—typically do not offer assistantships.

Because student visas restrict the opportunity for international students to earn money while in the country, international applicants without an assistantship must show they have enough money available to cover living expenses, tuition and other campus fees for the first year of study—and enough accessible money to pay for living expenses and health insurance for their dependents. Students may draw from personal funds, money from a family sponsor, a scholarship from a government or agency, or a fellowship or graduate assistantship from a UW department. For the academic year 2013-14, the University estimates an international graduate student would need \$48,330. A student would need an extra \$11,194 for a spouse and another \$7,547 for each child.

Nationally, the primary source of funding for 77 percent of international students comes from outside the United States. The college or university was the primary source of funding for only 21.5 percent of international student financial support. Of that 77 percent, nearly 64 percent were primarily supported by personal and family funds.³

At the UW, international students are awarded research and teaching assistantships at rates in proportion to domestic graduate students. Both domestic and international doctoral students are supported at significant levels, with the majority of support provided in the form of research assistantships (RAs). At the master’s level, far fewer domestic and international students receive financial support; and of those who do, most receive teaching assistantships (TAs) (Table 3).

Table 3. UW Graduate Student Financial Support by Residency, Autumn Quarter 2013⁴

	DOCTORAL		MASTER'S	
	International	Domestic	International	Domestic
Teaching Assistant	335	959	49	270
Research Assistant	454	1,346	37	192
Fellowship	81	587	40	206
Staff Assistant	25	56	10	52
Trainee	19	359	3	66
TOTAL APPOINTMENTS	858	2,867	138	909

Of the all UW graduate programs, Engineering provides the greatest levels of financial support to its doctoral and master’s international graduate students. Engineering also awards the most RAs and fellowships, while Arts & Sciences–Natural Sciences allocates the largest number of TAs to domestic and international students .

³ Council of Graduate Schools.

⁴ Figures reference total appointments (number of TAs, RAs) regardless of % FTE, and not headcount (the number of students holding appointments).

Figure 8a. UW Domestic Doctoral Student Support by School/College, Autumn Quarter 2013

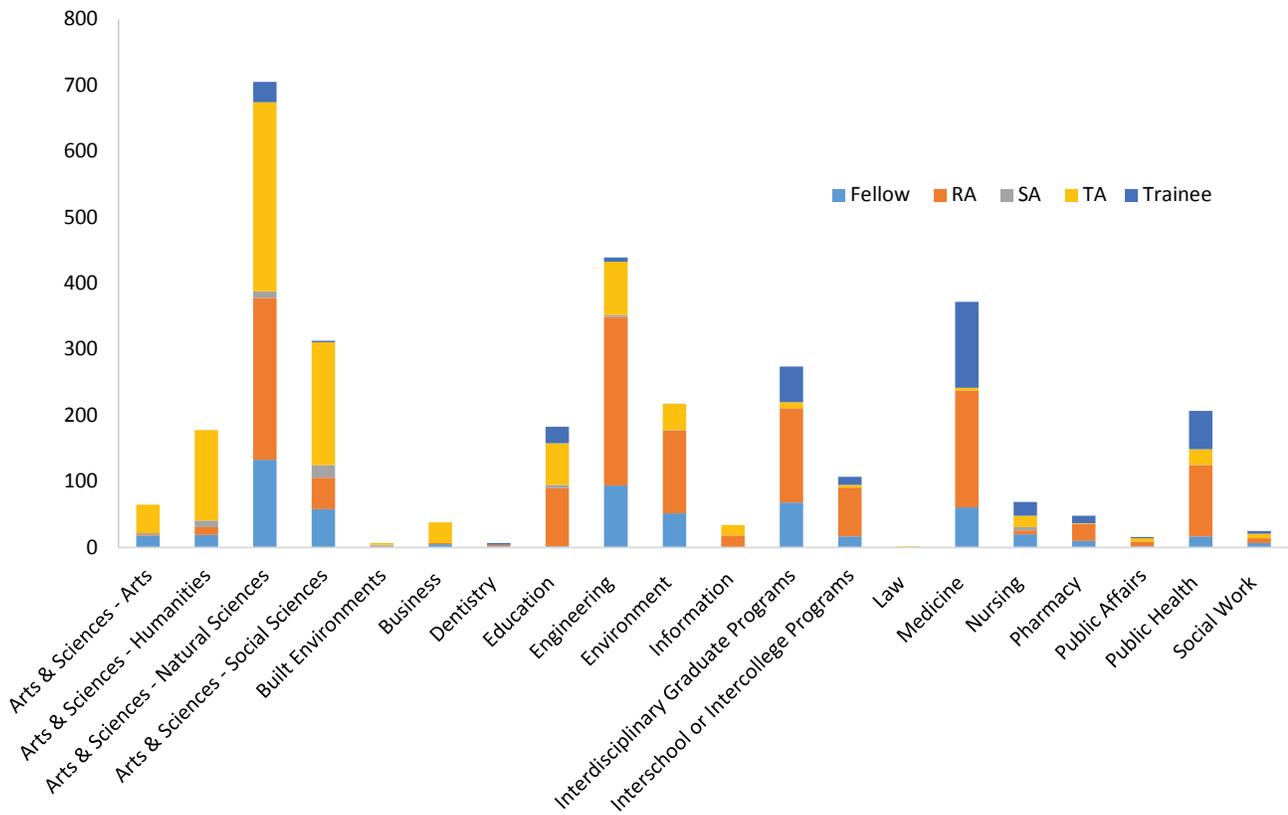
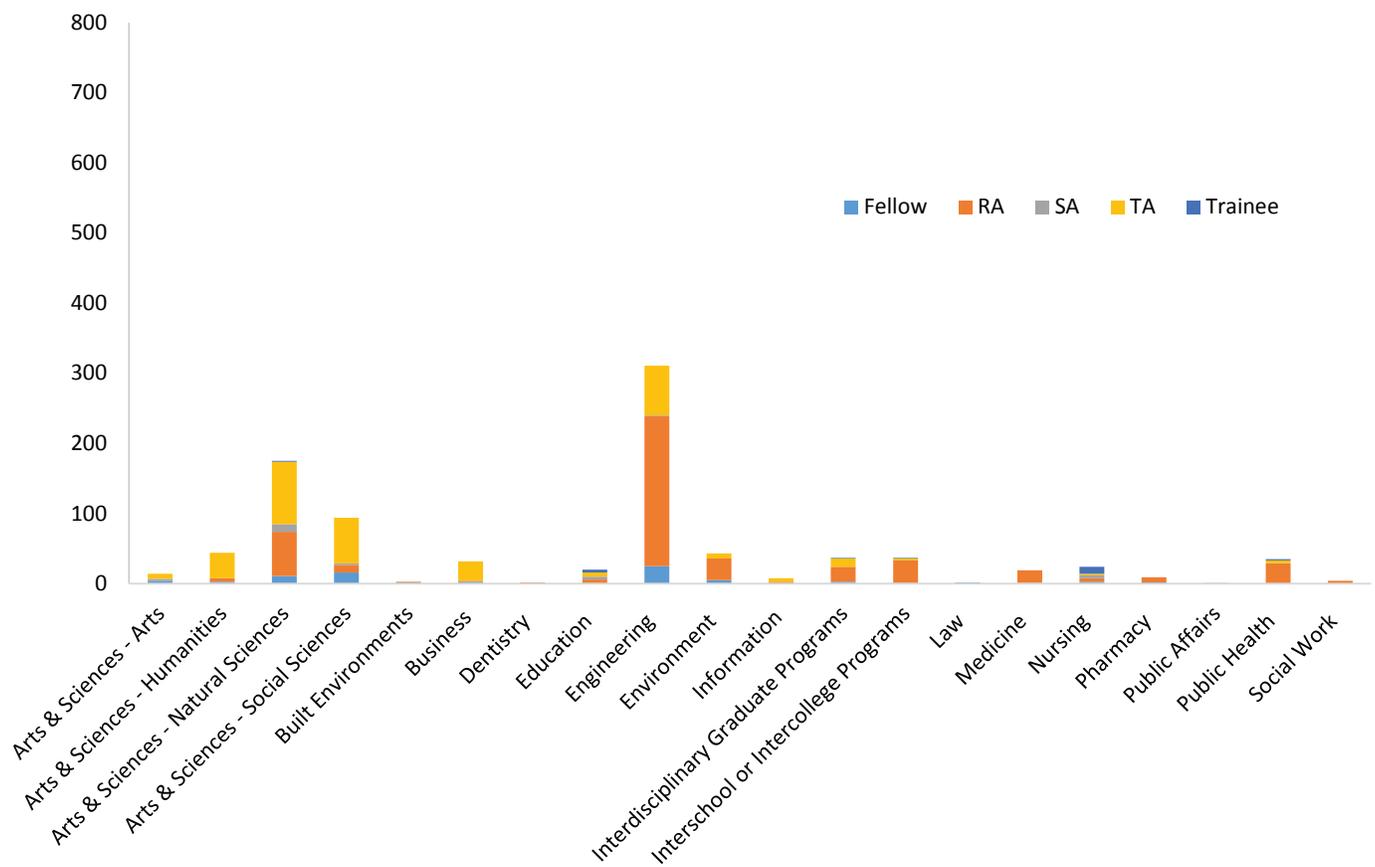


Figure 8b. UW International Doctoral Student Support by School/College, Autumn Quarter 2013



STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

International graduate students often have unique concerns which may affect their courses of study, finances and length of stay in the United States. In an autumn 2011 study conducted by the UW Graduate School, international graduate students identified an array of academic, cultural, financial and communication challenges beyond those faced by many of their domestic counterparts. Students acknowledged that the transition to U.S. education can be difficult—especially when they first arrive.

ACADEMICS

Some academic concerns, such as finding an appropriate advisor or balancing TA/RA responsibilities with classes, are common to all students. But new international students must also quickly adapt to an often unfamiliar American higher education system—a difficult transition that can hinder their academic progress.

English Language Proficiency

English language proficiency can be a chief concern among international graduate students and the faculty who instruct them. For students who have learned English as a second language, classroom challenges can, at times, include difficulties following professors' instructions, participating in fast-paced class discussions and understanding administrative procedures and directions.

The most useful UW resources, international graduate students reported, included:

- departmental and graduate program advisor support;
- friendly academic departmental environment;
- access to and close relationships with professors;
- FIUTS orientation,
- homestay program and social events;
- International Student Services and advising office;
- counseling and advising services;
- technology – regular emails, class webpages and catalyst posts;
- UW Libraries;
- and the Learning Center.

International students need to be able to participate in scholarly discussions, explain their opinions, develop hypotheses, and substantiate their arguments—abilities that are essential to writing and defending theses and dissertations. Although tests and admissions requirements are designed to ensure language proficiency upon enrollment, the TOEFL or domestic bachelor's degree is not always an adequate predictor of English skills—not to mention that two or more years can pass between a student's TOEFL test and his or her arrival on campus.⁵

Learning Styles

Some international graduate students have struggled to engage their instructors as is usually expected in graduate education. Many students report that they had expected more support and direction from their advisors. Faculty members, conversely, relay that international students are less likely to engage in class discussions or challenge their instructors.

Many international students must adjust to a different academic year and increased—or decreased—number of tests or written assignments.⁶ While some are concerned that they will have limited opportunities to demonstrate mastery of the material, others suggest that they are overburdened by the number of assignments. Some are surprised by the amount of individual work, especially those from countries where collective efforts are valued over the individual's. The lack of familiarity of some international graduate students with the concepts of intellectual property and proper citation of sources has been an issue within some colleges and universities.⁷

International graduate students and faculty members recognize the importance of strong student-faculty relationships, but international students are not always knowledgeable about how to develop those. Several survey

5 Redden, E. (June 5, 2008). English for Graduate Students. Inside Higher Ed. Retrieved from <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2008/06/05/english>

6 Shen, Y., & Herr, E. (2004). Career placement concerns of international graduate students: A qualitative study. *Journal of Career Development*, 15–29.

7 Ibid.

participants suggested that workshops about finding research advisors and addressing the research culture in the United States would be helpful to international students.

Faculty play an essential role in helping students overcome academic challenges, said Era Schrepfer, director of the UW's Foundation for International Understanding Through Students (FIUTS). "Many things that professors and advisors complain about—academic integrity, research skills, interactive teaching styles—these are things we should be prepared to teach our internationals so they are prepared to succeed."

CULTURE

New international graduate students often have a more difficult time transitioning to the social and cultural environment than U.S. students do because they are unfamiliar with social norms.⁸ Facing new environments without loved ones and close friends nearby often leads to more stress—many international students say they have superficial relationships with peers because of language difficulties and cultural differences.⁹

Orientations and student services provide new students with guidance on financial aid, registration, parking, student accounts, the libraries, child care, housing, career services, technology and mentoring. And the UW's existing services and programs for international students, such as FIUTS, are critical to students' success in integrating into the larger social and educational community.

Through a series of surveys and focus groups, UW international graduate students expressed interest in more social opportunities to learn about American culture and build their confidence in both academic and social situations. "More social events would be highly appreciated. As an international graduate student, I feel most of my life is being grounded in the lab," one student noted in the autumn 2011 survey. A focus group with faculty members echoed this recommendation. "A lot of these social issues and international students feeling slighted or ignored can be resolved over coffee or beer and a polite conversation. We really need to have as many of these opportunities as we can. They help students become more comfortable in class, labs and studios," one faculty member said.

ADDITIONAL SERVICES

Fortunately, the UW is in the process of enhancing the services for international graduate students, which are covered by a \$45 per quarter fee that each international undergraduate and graduate student pays. Those services include new international student orientation provided by FIUTS, communication and coordination of the UW resources to international students, specialized career counseling and assistance with visas and other paperwork. The fee also will cover a new training and mentorship program for international graduate students who will work as teaching assistants.

IMMIGRATION

Obtaining—and maintaining—legal permission to study in the United States has become increasingly difficult for international students. Half of the prospective international students in a national survey had concerns about obtaining visas to study in the United States, as noted by the Institute of International Education.¹⁰ Newly admitted students worry about receiving their visa documents in time for their embassy interviews, getting approval for their visa requests and traveling under U.S. visas back to their home countries or conferences abroad. At the same time, countries such as Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Germany and Canada have reformed their immigration policies to attract the best students in the world. For instance, Canada allows foreign students to work off campus and to transfer among institutions without changing their study permits.¹¹

Within the past few years, the Graduate School has streamlined its process for international admissions visa document issuance (I-20s). Students are now notified immediately of their acceptance to the UW through email and asked to upload their I-20 request forms directly to their online application. This allows a graduate admissions

8 Furnham, A., & Bochner, S. (1982). Social difficulty in a foreign culture: An empirical analysis of culture shock. In S. Bochner (Ed.), *Cultures in contact: Studies in cross cultural interaction*. Elmsford, NY: Pergamon Press.

9 Bulthuis, J. (1986). The foreign student today: A profile. *New Directions for Student Services*. Cross, S.E. (1995) Self-construals, coping, and stress in cross-cultural adaptation. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 673–697.

10 Chow, P. (2011). What International Student Think About U.S. Higher Education: Attitudes and Perceptions of Prospective Students in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America. Institute of International Education.

11 Fischer, K. (2010). Foreign-Student Enrollments in U.S. Rise Despite Global Recession. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*; Mattioli, D. (2009) With Fewer U.S. Opportunities, Home Looks Appealing to Expats. *The Wall Street Journal*; Birchard, K. (2005) Canada Seeks More Foreign Students. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*

officer to begin processing the I-20s that day, instead of waiting for the completed forms to arrive by mail.

Additionally, the Graduate School has partnered with a global shipping consortium that allows students to pay upfront for express shipping of their completed I-20 directly from the UW back to their home countries. Revamping these two processes have shortened the average wait time for an I-20 by several months, ensuring that admitted international students have their documents well in advance of their visa interviews, which they need to secure approval for travel to the University of Washington.

MOVING FORWARD: DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC PLAN

With the recent hiring of Vice Provost for Global Affairs Jeffrey Riedinger, the UW is poised to establish a central strategy to address the recruitment, enrollment, retention and student support needs of all UW international students—graduate and undergraduate. Reinforced by institutional research and University-wide support, a strategic plan is critical if the UW is to maintain and improve its global reputation and competitive edge. The UW Graduate School intends to work actively and closely with faculty leaders, administrators, students and student services staff to develop and implement a strategic plan that supports the UW's mission, objectives and priorities. Such a plan would address:

- ▶ The value international graduate students bring to the UW and how they enrich teaching, learning and research for all students, faculty and staff.
 - ▶ How can the University build upon international students' contributions as a way to strengthen cultural competency for all students and prepare them for the global workforce and economy?
 - ▶ In what ways does the UW benefit from the diversity, talent and research that international students contribute, even after they graduate?
 - ▶ How do U.S. students benefit from learning and researching alongside students from other countries?
- ▶ Goals for the recruitment and enrollment of top international graduate students for the University as a whole and for specific graduate programs and areas of study, along with targeted retention and degree completion rates for international students.
 - ▶ What is the desired residency distribution among the graduate student population?
 - ▶ Which graduate programs, colleges or units might benefit from having more—or fewer—international students?
 - ▶ On which countries or regions should the University focus its recruitment efforts?
 - ▶ What resources and efforts are already in place—such as faculty members' extensive global relationships—that can be coordinated and leveraged in order to achieve the goals? What timeline and metrics will be used to determine success?
- ▶ The support—educational, cultural and financial—international students need to succeed, the effectiveness and efficiency of the services and funding the UW provides and how they should be expanded, adjusted or maintained.
 - ▶ What existing networks of services are serving international students?
 - ▶ Are we adequately serving international students and doing everything we can to facilitate their success?
- ▶ The academic and social challenges international graduate students face as they adjust to the American education system and life in the United States and Seattle and best practices that faculty and staff can use to help students adapt and succeed.
 - ▶ How can the University best assist international students with English language proficiency, learning styles, culture, academic relationships, finances and immigration?
 - ▶ Which academic programs and faculty are using innovative and successful ways to help international students adjust to U.S. education system and the UW?
 - ▶ How can faculty adapt their teaching methods to foster collaboration among international and U.S. students?
 - ▶ Could some academic requirements be adjusted, depending on an international student's goals and area of study? If an international graduate student is enrolled in an exclusively online UW program, never sets foot on the campus and will not immigrate to the United States—and can successfully complete the degree requirements—is it necessary for the student to prove English proficiency?
- ▶ A communications plan that UW leaders, administrators, faculty and staff can use with internal and external audiences to consistently and accurately explain the role international students play in making the UW a global university and the value they bring to the state of Washington.