Analysis of Summer and Fall 2005 Foreign Student Statistics

- Visa update, new foreign students, and total enrollment –

By Lisa Krieg, Director, Office of International Education

Carnegie Mellon’s Office of International Education (OIE) serves as the clearinghouse for foreign student visa matters and production and oversight of federally-required documentation for foreign students studying at Carnegie Mellon in F-1 or J-1 status. We annually review and report on visa delays and denials, new foreign student enrollment at Carnegie Mellon, and the total fall enrollment of foreign students at the University. Our analysis includes some information on national trends.

Visa delays and denials

This section summarizes information about visa delays and denials for Carnegie Mellon foreign students entering or re-entering the US for summer and fall 2005 start dates at Carnegie Mellon. In all, it’s a better situation than in the previous 3 or 4 years.

In terms of new students, we are aware of three new students who were delayed due to the Technology Alert List (TAL) or other security checks, and seven new students who were denied for other reasons (such as insufficient resources). Most continuing students and scholars who were checked for security reasons cleared relatively quickly – in just 2 to 4 weeks. That timeframe is a marked improvement over previous delays of 3 months or more.

In the four-month period between May and August 2005, we were aware of 15 delayed or denied visas for students and scholars. During the same period last year, 2004, we were aware of 27 delays or denials. Perhaps the Department of State is easing up on student and scholar visa issuances.

Since May 2005, we are aware of five current/continuing students and scholars who were delayed in renewing their visas; of these four have been resolved after clearances that took 2 to 4 weeks. Of the five visa delays during the last 4 months, one went over the 45 day typical timeframe; he may have a security check due to “common name” issues.

It seems that the U.S. government is focusing attention on people with “common names” including security checks before benefit issuance (such as visa application or approval of the (final) adjustment of status phase of the U.S. permanent residency application process.)
News from Department of State (cable dated September 28, 2005)

The requirement for students to demonstrate “non-immigrant intent” and a “residence abroad he/she has no intention of abandoning” has been tempered with this cabled directive to US consular officers recommending that they consider context (i.e. take the “long view”) in the case of students. Students may not be able to demonstrate strong home country ties because of their youth, lack of employment and their general rather than specific future plans. Rather than trying to determine how strong the home country ties are, the consular officers should focus on whether or not, at the time of visa application, the student intends “to abandon his or her residence abroad”. For continuing students, posts are encouraged to facilitate student visa issuance so “students can travel freely back and forth between the homeland and the US.”

And while it doesn’t have much impact for CMU, the cable also directed consular officers to grant visas regardless of the type or name recognition of the school. All schools (community colleges, English language schools, lesser-known four year institutions) “must be accorded the same weight under the law.”

Fall 2005 new foreign student analysis

In fall 2005, Carnegie Mellon experienced very significant growth in both numbers and percentages of new foreign students over the previous fall.

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<th>Fall 2005</th>
<th>Fall 2004</th>
<th>% Change</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total New Students</td>
<td>759</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>+11.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Undergrads</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>+20.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Grads</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>+13.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Exchanges</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>-2.7%</td>
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The top sending regions of the world remain stable from year to year with Asia consistently at the top; there was a notable increase in students from North America in fall 2005. There was a significant (58%) increase in new Chinese students comparing this year to last and undergraduates from China (N=7) are now in the list of top 5 sending countries, for the first time. At the same time, there was a sharp decrease in new Malaysian undergraduate students (from 8 in fall 2004 to 1 in fall 2005). It appears that the government and other sponsoring agencies are giving fewer scholarships and/or fewer students are choosing CMU.

Top receiving departments/colleges for new undergraduates are: Carnegie Institute of Technology (general), Humanities and Social Sciences (general), computer science, Mellon College of Science and business administration. Top receiving departments for new graduate students are: information systems management, two Tepper programs (business administration and computational finance), electrical and computer engineering and public policy and management. New foreign student enrollment in computational finance grew from 17 in 2004 to 41 in 2005. At the same time, new students in Information Technology almost halved.

Exchange participation was down largely due to the cancellation of a computer science exchange with an Italian institution. Exchange students represent a variety of countries, some not regularly seen in our undergraduate population.
Undergraduate application trends

International student statistics from the Office of Admission differ from OIE’s statistics because Admission includes additional visa types not tracked by OIE. That said, foreign undergraduate applications and admission are trending in a similar direction as OIE’s statistics. There was a significant drop in international student applications in 2002, but numbers have climbed and, in 2005, are above 2001 numbers; this drop off is not as noticeable in the number of admits and enrolls. International applications yield at a higher rate than domestic applications, and international admits who decline admission to Carnegie Mellon primarily attend other US schools, although some choose to go overseas. From the CMU undergraduate admission perspective, Carnegie Mellon’s competition is from other US schools, rather than students choosing to go to schools in the UK, Australia, etc.

Graduate application trends – Carnegie Mellon and national

It is hard to get comprehensive admission data at Carnegie Mellon due to the decentralized nature of the admission processes for graduate students. That said, an informal request for information from the Colleges resulted in the following information about foreign application and admission trends.

- CIT – international applications were down 16% from previous year.
- SCS – PhD applicants, foreign applications were down 20% in 2005 vs. 2004, down 15% in 2004 vs. 2003. Master Applicants, foreign applications were down 14% in 2005 vs. 2004, down 33% in 2004 vs. 2003.

Excellent information about foreign graduate application and acceptance trends is gathered by the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) in an annual 3-part investigation, and can be found on their website at www.cgsnet.org. According to the CGS findings published in September 2005, graduate applications from overseas are trending down and they cite the following trends for Fall 2005:

- a small (3%) increase in number of admitted international graduate students over previous year,
- 57% of responding universities (N=140) reported declines in graduate applications from international students,
- 5% overall decline in applications from overseas from 2004 to 2005,
- institutions in the top 25, admitted a larger number than last year, and
- Admits from India (8%), Korea (7%) and Middle East (12%) are up while there is a continued decline in admitted students from China (5%).

Fall 2005 Foreign Student Statistics

Using our internal software, fsaATLAS, we report annually on foreign student enrollment at Carnegie Mellon. This is a very accurate, although somewhat limited, picture of the foreign student enrollment situation at Carnegie Mellon; unscientifically, we guess that our statistics represent at least 95% of all non-immigrant foreign students studying full-time on the Carnegie Mellon campus. We provide very accurate statistics on full-time F-1 and J-1 students who are under the sponsorship of the Carnegie Mellon F-1 and J-1 programs, i.e. students who have been
issued documentation by OIE in order to maintain their legal student status in the United States. U.S. legal permanent residents (aka “green card” holders) are not included in our statistics and neither are students on other non-immigrant documents (such as A-1, F-2, J-2, H-4, and L-2 dependants).

Broad 10-year trends in total F-1 and J-1nternational student enrollment at Carnegie Mellon are represented in the table below.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total # Int’l Students</td>
<td>1333</td>
<td>1493</td>
<td>1602</td>
<td>1640</td>
<td>1784</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>2111</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>2076</td>
<td>2071</td>
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In terms of overall foreign student enrollment at Carnegie Mellon there is a negligible decrease (N=4) from last year’s number of 2076.

In terms of regions and countries of origin, students from the Middle East are down by 40% from the previous year. Of the countries most represented by our foreign students, China and India are holding steady at the top while Korea has increased by almost 15%, primarily an increase in undergraduates. Taiwan also saw a large increase of 21%. Canada replaced Turkey for the fifth spot in graduate student country of citizenship; these two countries trade back and forth from year to year in the 5th spot, and sometimes share 5th place with equal numbers.

*Updated 11/2005*