



# Foreign students

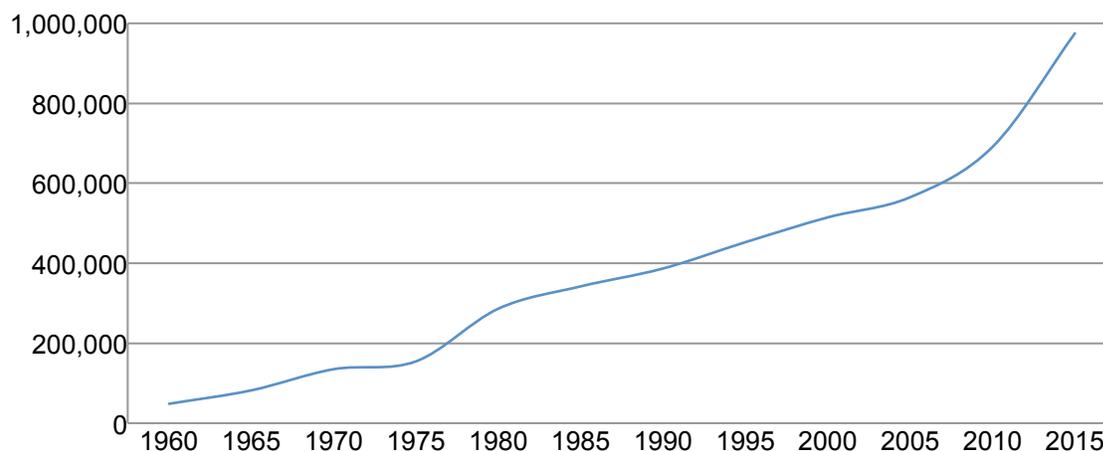
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The student visa program gives university students from foreign countries the opportunity to study in the United States so that they will be better able to contribute to the development of their countries when they return. But, in practice, many foreign students hope to remain in the U.S. to better their own lot. And U.S. employers see these students as a pool of recruits for U.S. jobs.

Multiculturalists assert that the presence of foreigners in our universities is an asset to the international awareness and understanding of American students, but they do not recognize any limits. Their emphasis has led foreign post-secondary student enrollment to grow to the point where foreign student enrollment grew from 1.6 percent of overall enrollment in 1970 and to more than 4.8 percent in 2015 (see chart below)<sup>1</sup>. At the same time, the rapid increase in the foreign student population impinges on opportunities for American students.

## Foreign Students at U.S. Universities



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<sup>1</sup> Foreign student enrollment from the Institute for International Education and overall enrollment from the National Center for Education Statistics.

Foreign students enter the U.S. as nonimmigrants on an "F-1" visa. To obtain this visa, the consular official must be convinced that they intend to return to their home country at the end of their studies. These foreign students may violate the terms of their admission if they take a regular job or remain in the country illegally.

According to the Institute for International Education (IIE), for the 2015-16 school year there are more than 1,043,839 foreign students at American colleges and universities. But, in reality, foreign students significantly exceed the nearly five percent of all student enrollment, because the IIE data miss foreign students in the country illegally. In addition, the IIE data do not include foreign students in secondary schools. The Council on Standards for International Educational Travel puts the number of high school foreign exchange students at more than 73,000 in the 2013-14 school year (and that, also, only includes foreign students legally here with student visas).<sup>2</sup>

### **Foreign students are taking the places of American students in class and in the workplace.**

The rate of increase in the foreign student population outstrips that of native students. Since 1970 the rate of increase in the foreign student university population has risen much faster than the overall university enrollment (622% vs. 136%).

Between 2010 and 2015, international university student population rose by more than 41 percent. Over the same period, the estimate of the National Center for Education Statistics is that overall university enrollment declined slightly.

With enrollment limited at public universities, the admission of increasing numbers of foreign students also means greater competition for admission spaces and funding for American students. In the past, the IIE has reported that 22.9 percent of foreign students say that the "primary source of funding" of their school costs is provided by the U.S. school.

The transition from a student F-visa to a temporary worker visa (H-1B) was expanded in 2005 to allow an additional 20,000 foreign workers who earn a masters or higher degree to take jobs above of the 65,000 annual H1-B visa cap. In the 2015-2016 school year there were about 384,000 foreign students enrolled in post-graduate studies in U.S. universities. When many of these students enter the U.S. job market after graduation or as research assistants on the campus, they depress salary levels, and this acts to dissuade American students from entering fields with large numbers of foreign graduates such as math and the sciences. In 2015-16 more than one-third - about 360,000 – of the foreign students were enrolled in engineering, math or science fields. These foreign students are also attractive to universities in allowing them to meet affirmative action goals, which were designed to help American native minorities, diminishing the need to recruit those U.S. minority students.

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<sup>2</sup> USNews, January 26, 2017.

## **Student Visa Reform Options**

Moderating the surge in foreign student enrollment could be done with an annual ceiling, like for immigration. As long as entry to a U.S. university operates as a precursor to obtaining a work visa and sponsorship for permanent immigrant status, it would make sense to limit the influx of foreign students to a level proportionate to the need of the U.S. workforce for such foreign workers. This would reduce possible disappointment by foreign students who may be unable to obtain sponsorship for a work visa and later for an immigrant visa, and it would end the role of universities in lobbying for expansion of the H1-B visa program and immigrant visas in order to accommodate the foreign students they have admitted.

Another approach would be to condition the student visa so that the student would be required to return home at the end of his or her studies. This provision applies now to exchange visitors ("J" visas) who come usually for research or in university exchange programs. They are required to return abroad for at least two years before returning to the United States as immigrants. This would probably reduce the attraction for foreign student admissions to a U.S. school, but it should benefit the home country of the students as was the original concept in educating foreign students in U.S. universities