



WORLD EDUCATION NEWS AND REVIEWS

April 2007

Regional Recruiting and Admissions Information

AMERICAS

Argentina

Expatriate Researchers Offered Enticements to Return

Officials in Argentina have decided to broaden policies directed at encouraging overseas Argentine researchers to return home and to allow the country to take advantage of the expertise of those who remain abroad. Most scholars abroad are resident in Europe and the United States, and left during periods of political unrest and economic collapse over the last 40 years.

Since 2003, over 300 researchers have been encouraged to return home through a program known as [R@ices](#), or Roots. The program offers subsidies for researchers who return permanently to Argentina, as well as grants to researchers who return temporarily for specific projects. This month Tulio del Bono, secretary of science and technology, announced that the secretariat would soon offer to pay half the salaries of returning researchers. The secretariat also provides grants of about \$700 each to encourage the creation of four virtual networks, embracing the sciences, mathematics, social sciences, and engineering, to link expatriates with researchers still in Argentina. Among other incentives being offered by the Roots program are airfares for the researchers and their families and two years' salary in Argentina.

- *The Chronicle of Higher Education*

April 27, 2007

Brazil

President to Spend \$4bn Improving Education Standards

Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has announced proposals that will tackle problems ranging from low teacher salaries to poor standards of reading and writing. US\$4 billion will be spent on launching what the president hopes will be the start of a new century of education in Brazil. While access to education has been significantly improved in recent years, salaries for teachers are often poor, many children are - for practical purposes - illiterate, and the infrastructure of many schools is often terrible. Earlier in April more than 70 schools had to close in one state in the poorer north east of the country because they were unsafe for use.

Introducing a package of more than 40 measures, President Lula said he wanted every child to have a chance at success regardless of their family's wealth. The measures include:

- a new index of basic educational development to help the weakest parts of the country;
- a new test to measure reading and writing abilities of younger children;
- more funding for transport and information technology;
- a new minimum wage for teachers will be phased in and there are plans for increased access to higher education;
- guarantee of electric light for all schools.

- *The BBC*

April 25, 2007

African Students Targeted by Arsonists at Brasilia University

Dorm rooms for African students at the [University of Brasilia](#) were set on fire in late March. The incidents, officially classified as Arson, have drawn attention to racial tensions at the university. The fires caused no injuries but damaged the doorways of three

dormitory rooms housing 10 exchange students from Africa, forcing the students to flee through windows in the early morning hours. The arsonist had also disabled nearby fire extinguishers.

Some of the African students said that in the months before the attack they had experienced threats and racial discrimination from other students, including crosses placed on their dorm-room doors. Some Brazilian students said there had been numerous conflicts between Brazilian and African students. African students are reportedly seen by many Brazilians as privileged. The university enrolls about 21,000 undergraduate students, 134 of them from Africa. The university has created a commission to focus on issues of racism, plans to create a Web site for discussion of the problem, and will create two new courses, on African history and contemporary black thought.

- *The Chronicle of Higher Education*

April 25, 2007

Canada

\$2 Million in Federal Budget to Attract International Students

For the first time, the Canadian federal budget has allocated funds specifically for the recruitment of international students. C\$2 million over the next two years will be used to launch a new international education marketing campaign to attract talented students to Canada.

- *Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada*

March 19, 2007

United States

US Engineering Education

A new [study](#) by researchers at [Duke University](#) contradicts the widely held belief that US graduate engineering education is falling behind that in India and China in terms of quantity and quality of degrees conferred, yet recommends a number of improvements to boost numbers and ensure economic growth.

Although China and India collectively graduate 12 times more engineers than the United States, researchers from Duke's Pratt School of Engineering say that does not mean the United States has a shortage of engineers. In fact, the study, which included an analysis of salary and employment data, found evidence that China and India are the countries with shortages. The report, "Where the Engineers Are," was published in the spring issue of *Issues in Science and Technology* and is a follow-up to a 2005 study, which found that the number of engineering graduates reported to be in India and China are often inflated.

The report notes that while China and India are producing large numbers of engineering graduates, "there are serious deficiencies" in the training received at Indian and Chinese schools. However, it also warns of jobs being outsourced from the US to cheaper locales, and that foreign nationals earn close to 60 percent of the engineering doctorates awarded in the United States.

- *The Chronicle of Higher Education*

March 20, 2007

Princeton Leads Ivies in Grade Deflation

Princeton formally adopted a grade-deflation policy three years ago. The policy limited A's to an average 35 percent across departments, and it has reportedly led to stiff competition in the classroom and an inclination among students to steer clear of classes perceived as difficult. There is no quota in individual courses, despite what students think, says Dean of the College Nancy Malkiel. Still, the policy has made an 'A' slightly more elusive. In the first two years, A's, (A-plus, A, A-minus), accounted for 41% of undergraduate grades, down from 47% the two previous years. Grade inflation, well documented at many schools, is most pronounced in the Ivy League, according to an [American Academy of Arts and Sciences 2002 study](#). For example, in 1966, 22% of all grades given to Harvard undergraduates were A's. That grew to 46% in 1996, the study found.

- *USA Today*

March 27, 2007

Ph.D. Programs Ranked, but No Departments Top the List

U.S. News & World Report issued this year's rankings of graduate departments in March, based almost entirely on a reputational survey, while in the same week a new rankings system, in which no department can claim top honors, was also published. Offered by PhDs.org, the new system allows the individual user to access free information on more than 5,000 programs at more than 400 universities, while also allowing the user to decide how to weight the information contained there within. After ranking the relative importance you place on these and other factors, the database produces a customized ranking of departments, indicating both a total ranking and how departments placed in the various criteria selected. Data sources come from information universities report to the U.S. Education Department, to the annual Survey of Earned Doctorates, and to the National Research Council.

- *Inside Higher Ed*
March 30, 2007

ETS Abandons New GRE Exam

Educational Testing Services (ETS) has scrapped an extensive makeover of the GRE graduate school entrance exam, citing concerns they wouldn't be able to accommodate enough students at test centers. ETS had already delayed planned revisions by a year, including lengthening the exam from two-and-a-half to four hours. ETS also was planning substantive changes such as eliminating antonym and analogy questions and emphasizing critical reading skills. The GRE is taken by between 550,000 and 600,000 applicants to graduate programs annually. The April announcement could contribute to concerns that the standardized testing industry, busy with dozens of national and state-level standardized exams, has too much on its plate.

- *Associated Press*
April 2, 2007

Schools Desperate for Chinese-Language Teachers

American students are lining up to learn Chinese, but there are simply not enough teachers to meet demand. Enrollment has jumped ten-fold, from 5,000 primary and secondary school students in 2000 to an estimated 50,000 today, according to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. When the College Board surveyed schools in 2004 about their interest in a Chinese Advanced Placement test, 2,400 schools expressed interest – but many also said they couldn't find a teacher to start a program.

In China, some 200 million students are studying English through programs put in place decades ago. In the US, the sudden attention on Mandarin has exposed a serious lack of infrastructure. To grow Chinese in the US, school districts are using guest-worker visas to bring over teachers from China and Taiwan. Another 34 schools this January received teachers from China through a new program set up by the College Board and Hanban, a Chinese government organization. By 2009, the program hopes to bring as many as 250 teachers to the US. However, to meet demand the federal government realizes it will have to develop U.S.-based teaching resources, which means tapping the large Chinese-speaking population in the United States. To achieve this, Washington is providing generous funding for programs that help Chinese speakers get their teaching certification, while states are working to standardize their requirements, and some universities such as Rutgers are offering teacher training for mid-career professionals

- *The Christian Science Monitor*
March 27, 2007

Graduate Applications from Overseas Up Again

Applications to American graduate schools from international students continue to increase, although the growth rate is slowing, according to the latest figures from the Council of Graduate Schools.

Year-on-year applications for fall 2007 rose by 8 percent from 2006, down from a 12 percent gain last year, which followed two consecutive years of decreased student interest. More than 70 percent of the institutions that have participated in the council's survey since its inception in 2004 have fewer foreign applicants now than then, and among those that take part consistently, the number of applications is still down more than 25 percent since 2003. The findings are part of an annual three-part survey by the council that measures international applications, admissions and enrollments. Last fall, CGS reported that total enrollment figures grew by 1 percent in 2006 after a decline the year before.

Engineering and physical sciences departments both saw 8 percent growth. Along with business, these fields attract a majority of international students. The survey also revealed a 17 percent increase in applications from China, slightly down from last year's total. Applications from India went up by 6 percent, a modest growth considering the 26 percent rate of a year ago. Middle Eastern applications also rose.

- *Council of Graduate Schools*
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