AAU SUMMARIZES 2004 VISA SURVEY RESULTS FOR AAU UNIVERSITIES

Following is a summary of responses by member campuses of the Association of American Universities (AAU) to a national survey on fall 2004 enrollment, application, and visa delay trends for international students and scholars. The survey was conducted jointly by AAU; NAFSA: Association of American Educators; the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC); the Institute of International Education (IIE); and the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS). A joint press release on the survey as well as an overall summary are attached or will be available on the AAU Web site.

Survey Background

The above five organizations conducted a joint survey in October on fall 2004 applications, enrollments, and visa delays for international students and scholars.

A total of nearly 2,000 U.S. colleges and universities were surveyed, including all 60 AAU member universities in the United States. (For a list of all AAU institutions, see http://www.aau.edu/aau/members.html. A total of 480 institutions submitted responses, including 52 AAU universities. The results described here are from only the 52 AAU universities that submitted responses - the results do NOT include responses from non-AAU institutions. Note: Not all universities responded to every survey question.

A similar survey last year obtained responses from 331 institutions, including 40 AAU universities.

AAU universities account for 125,373 international students and 41,482 international scholars in the survey. This is 41% of the 302,750 international students and 61% of the 68,247 international scholars included in the survey.

Applications
• All but one responding AAU university experienced a decline in applications from international students at the graduate level.

• The picture was different at the undergraduate level. At the undergraduate level, of the 47 AAU universities answering this question, 22 (or 47%) had experienced an increase in applications at the undergraduate level. 11 (or 23%) had experienced a decrease, and 14 (30%) had shown no noticeable change.

_Undergraduate Enrollment_

• At the undergraduate level, 46% of AAU respondents reported a decrease in international student enrollment, 33% reported an increase, and 20% reported no change. The figures were virtually identical for new and continuing students.

• Of the 22 AAU universities reporting a decline in enrollment of new or continuing undergraduate students, the following were listed as reasons for the decline:
  - Applicants chose to go to another country instead – 12
  - Cost of enrollment at institution – 9
  - Visa delays caused by an inability to get a timely interview – 7
  - Decrease in number of applications to the institution – 6
  - Perceptions that the U.S. does not welcome international students* – 5
  - Visa delays caused by lengthy Washington agency security checks (e.g. Condor or Mantis) – 3
  - Lack of recruiting by U.S. institution* - 2
  - Lack of financial support – 1

_Graduate Enrollment_

• At the graduate level, a more serious decline in enrollments was seen with new graduate students at AAU institutions.
  - 66% of AAU respondents reported a decrease in new international student enrollment, 26% reported an increase, and 9% reported no change.
  - 36% of AAU respondents reported an increase in continuing international student enrollment, 36% reported no change, and 29% reported a decrease.

• Of the 31 AAU universities reporting a decline in enrollment of new or continuing graduate students, the following were listed as reasons for the decline:
  - Decrease in number of applications to the institution – 16
  - Visa delays caused by lengthy Washington agency security checks (e.g. Condor or Mantis) – 15
  - Applicants chose to go to another country instead – 13
  - Cost of enrollment at institution – 9
  - Visa delays caused by an inability to get a timely interview – 8
  - Increase in visa denials - 5

* Not offered as specific option; added under “Other Reasons.”
- Perceptions that the U.S. does not welcome international students* – 4
- Lack of recruiting by U.S. institution* – 2
- Lack of financial support – 2
- Departments admitting smaller numbers* – 2
- Increase in deferred enrollments* – 1
- Costs of living in area – 1

**Visa Delays**

- For cases in which responding universities had information about the international students who were delayed, visa delays dropped by 43% for graduate students and 48% for undergraduate students from fall 2003 to 2004. 33 of 52 AAU respondents collectively reported a total of 372 international students who missed their academic start dates. Of these, 289 were new students and 83 were continuing students. Visa delays were experienced by 241 international graduate students and 131 undergraduate students in fall 2004, compared to 555 and 271 respectively for these institutions in fall 2003.

**Country of Origin**

The survey asked whether schools had experienced an increase, decrease, or no change in student enrollment from various countries.

- China, India, and Korea have been three major sending countries in recent years.

  - **China:** Almost half of the responding AAU universities report an increase in the number of Chinese students over the last year at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. At the undergraduate level, 47% of responding AAU universities reported an increase in enrollment of Chinese students, 29% reported a decline, and 24% reported no change. At the graduate level, 48% of AAU universities reported an increase in enrollment of Chinese students, 39% reported a decline, and 13% reported no change.

  - **Korea:** At the undergraduate level, more AAU universities reported increases than decreases in the enrollment of Korean students; however, the reverse was true at the graduate level. At the undergraduate level, 73% of responding AAU universities reported an increase in enrollment of Korean students, 9% reported a decline, and 18% reported no change. At the graduate level, 51% of AAU universities reported a decline in enrollment of Chinese students, 37% reported an increase, and 12% reported no change.

  - **India:** At both the undergraduate and graduate levels, more AAU universities reported decreases than increases in enrollment of students from India. At the undergraduate level, 43% of responding AAU universities reported a decrease in enrollment of Indian students, 32% reported an increase, and 25% reported no change. At the graduate level, 50% of AAU universities reported a decline in enrollment of Indian students, 36% reported an increase, and 14% reported no change.
• A significant number of AAU universities report that enrollment of students from Indonesia and Saudi Arabia also has decreased at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

  - **Indonesia:** At the undergraduate level, 42% of responding AAU universities reported a decrease in enrollment of Indonesian students, 20% reported an increase, and 38% reported no change. At the graduate level, 40% of AAU universities reported a decline in enrollment of Indonesian students, 14% reported an increase, and 46% reported no change.

  - **Saudi Arabia:** At the undergraduate level, 30% of responding AAU universities reported a decrease in enrollment of students from Saudi Arabia, 12% reported an increase, and 58% reported no change. At the graduate level, 35% of AAU universities reported a decline in enrollment of students from Saudi Arabia, 9% reported an increase, and 56% reported no change.

**Academic Discipline**

• Engineering and business have been two of the most popular courses of study for international students in recent years, and more AAU universities reported decreases than increases at the graduate level in these areas.

  - **Engineering:** 63% of AAU universities reported a decline in enrollment in graduate students studying engineering, 22% reported an increase, and 15% reported no change.

  - **Business:** 48% of AAU universities reported a decline in enrollment in graduate students studying business, 32% reported an increase, and 20% reported no change.

• AAU universities reported increases in enrollment of international graduate students in biological sciences, physical sciences, and humanities.

  - **Biological sciences:** 43% of AAU universities reported an increase in enrollment in graduate students studying the biological sciences, 31% reported a decrease, and 26% reported no change.

  - **Physical sciences:** 48% of AAU universities reported an increase in enrollment in graduate students studying the physical sciences, 32% reported a decrease, and 20% reported no change.

  - **Humanities:** 46% of AAU universities reported an increase in enrollment in graduate students studying the humanities, 22% reported a decrease, and 32% reported no change.

**Scholars/Researchers**

• Although more AAU institutions reported an increase in new international scholars than those reporting decreases, more reported a decline in continuing scholars.
- 35% of AAU respondents reported an increase in new international scholars for the fall 2004 over the fall of 2003. 24% reported decreases, and 41% reported no change.

- 30% of AAU respondents reported a decrease in continuing international scholars for the fall 2004. 24% reported an increase, and 46% reported no change.

- AAU universities reporting a decrease in the number of international scholars listed the following reasons for the decline:
  - Visa delays caused by lengthy Washington agency security checks (e.g. Condor or Mantis) – 10
  - Visa delays caused by an inability to get a timely interview – 6
  - Increase in visa denials - 5
  - Applicants chose to go to another country instead – 3

- A decline in scholars from Russia was reported by a significant number of AAU respondents. 34% of AAU universities reported a decrease, 16% reported an increase, and 50% reported no change. The number of scholars from all other countries, including China and India, held relatively steady.

- No major changes were seen in the number of scholars in business, engineering, or the physical or social sciences, although slightly more AAU institutions reported decreases than increases in these areas. The humanities reflected the largest drop with 32% of AAU respondents reporting a decrease, 13% reporting an increase, and 55% reporting no change.

- The only academic discipline in which more AAU institutions reported an increase than a decrease was the biological sciences. In that area, 40% of AAU respondents reported an increase, 34% reported a decrease, and 26% reported no change.

**Recommendations**

While international competitiveness and students’/scholars’ perceptions about the United States are clearly factors that influence enrollment at U.S. universities, visa policy continues to play a role as well. AAU continues to call for a visa issuance process that is secure, timely, efficient, transparent, and predictable; that enhances homeland security; and that will permit full scientific exchange and collaboration. Specifically, AAU recommends the following:

- AAU supports an efficient and practical exit and reentry process for international students and scholars who have been issued a visa so they can exit and re-enter the U.S. without having to be completely re-screened. AAU commends the State Department for revising its Visas Mantis procedure to allow most international students and scholars who have received a Visas Mantis clearance to exit and reenter the U.S. for one year without having to undergo additional Visas Mantis reviews. **AAU recommends that the federal government extend the current one-year Visas Mantis clearance to make it more compatible with the time it takes students to complete their degrees or scholars to complete their scholarship or research.**
• AAU recommends that a notification system be created alerting federal agencies that a visa application has been pending more than 30 days and that priority then be given to processing those applications. Such a system would ensure that the hard cases don’t get stuck in the system.

• AAU recommends a process by which current student and scholar visa holders can revalidate their visas before leaving the U.S. for academic, health, or other personal reasons. This would significantly reduce the impact of visa processing delays because students and scholars could continue their work while their visas are being processed.

• AAU recommends that Congress and the Administration provide adequate resources to the State Department, the Department of Homeland Security, and other federal agencies involved in the visa process to ensure that the requisite personnel, communications, and technology are in place.

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