



ISSUE BRIEF : 2019 UPDATE

# THE “TRUMP SLUMP” IN HIGHER ED

HOW GROWING INTOLERANCE IS HURTING AMERICA'S  
COLLEGES, COLLEGE TOWNS, AND STUDENTS



**BUSINESSFORWARD**  
FOUNDATION

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 1 million foreign students attending American universities contribute more than \$42 billion to our economy each year. Foreign student spending supports about 455,000 U.S. jobs, making higher education America's sixth biggest service "export."

But enrollment is down at many of those schools, because foreigners feel less safe and welcome here. President Trump's rhetoric about immigrants, Muslims, and Mexicans, as well as his dramatic cuts to work visa programs, contributed to a seven percent drop in foreign student enrollment last year. More foreign students are choosing to go to the UK, Canada, Germany, and Australia, where enrollment is up.

You might think that's a good thing, because it creates room for American students who otherwise might have been denied those seats. But it's actually a big problem.

First, the number of American college students is shrinking. Enrollment dropped by 354,000 last year alone. If they can't fill those empty seats, colleges will cut back.

Second, foreign students pay two to three times as much for tuition as in-state students, which means they are helping keep the cost of your kid's tuition low. In response to years of state budget cuts, public colleges have come to depend on foreign students to keep the lights on, which explains why so many are marketing themselves across the globe.

Third, foreign students are particularly important to science, technology, engineering and math programs (STEM). For example, U.S. computer science graduate programs grew by 350 percent from 1995 to 2015, but this growth was driven by foreign students. Without them, we cannot meet American companies' demand for STEM talent.

Last, universities are critical to American innovation and economic growth. For decades, we've attracted the world's best talent, educated them, hired them, helped them start new businesses, and created millions of new jobs.

[▶ VIEW THE COMPLETE REPORT](#)

**NOTE: THIS REPORT UPDATES OUR 2018 ANALYSIS WITH NEW ENROLLMENT DATA. FOREIGN ENROLLMENT HAS FALLEN AGAIN, AND THE COST TO U.S. COLLEGES, THEIR STUDENTS, AND NEIGHBORING BUSINESSES HAS GROWN.**

INSIDE  
HIGHER ED

NOVEMBER 13, 2018

## New International Enrollments Decline Again

# AMERICA'S \$42 BILLION EXPORT

The 1 million foreign students attending our universities represent only 5 percent of our student population, but they contribute \$42 billion to our economy each year. Their spending supports 455,000 American jobs. **Higher education is America's sixth biggest service export.**

**But enrollment is down at many of those schools**, because foreigners feel less safe and welcome here. President Trump's rhetoric about immigrants, Muslims, and Mexicans, as well as his dramatic cuts to work visa programs, contributed to a seven percent drop in foreign student enrollment last year.

This drop is causing schools to raise tuition and cut programs. It's also hurting their bond rating, which increases their borrowing costs. Last December, **Moody's downgraded higher education from "stable" to "negative,"** based, in part, on declining foreign student enrollment.



“

**“I’m mind-boggled... Higher education is a place where we have a major trade surplus with the world. Doing something to hurt that is obviously going to make our trade balance worse.”**

”

- DICK STARTZ  
PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS,  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,  
SANTA BARBARA

## MOODY'S

FEBRUARY 5, 2018

### Declining international student enrollment dampens US universities' tuition revenue growth

# WHAT COLLEGES ARE SAYING

“ The current administration’s ‘America First’ mantra is causing [international students] a great deal of anxiety and fear. ”

- EARL JOHNSON  
VICE PRESIDENT,  
UNIVERSITY OF TULSA

“ We could be down 60 students... and I’ve been told that 30 students equals \$1 million in tuition revenue. ”

- KEVIN MOORE  
ENGINEERING DEAN,  
COLORADO SCHOOL OF MINES

“ We’ll be trying to reassure folks that the United States is still a free country, and that we’d love to have them attend our institution. ”

- TIM ANDERSON  
DEAN OF ENGINEERING,  
UMASS AMHERST

“ Inevitably, it does lead them to ask, ‘Will I be welcome here?’ ”

- ALLAN GOODMAN  
PRESIDENT, INSTITUTE FOR  
INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

“ Our political climate appears to be the problem. [The travel ban] has encouraged international students to look elsewhere for their degrees. ”

- DENNIS HANNO  
PRESIDENT, WHEATON COLLEGE

# IMPACT ON PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES - AND YOUR CHILD'S TUITION

At public universities, foreign students pay two to three times more tuition than in-state students. This additional income offsets declining U.S. enrollment and repeated cuts in state funding. As a result, many public colleges are marketing themselves to foreign students across the globe.

The number of American college students is shrinking. Enrollment dropped by 354,000 last year alone, and colleges are struggling to cover the decline in revenue. If they can't fill those empty seats, colleges will cut back.

Meanwhile, state spending on higher education remains well below what it was before the financial crisis.

## University enrollment decline continues into sixth straight year

December 20, 2017

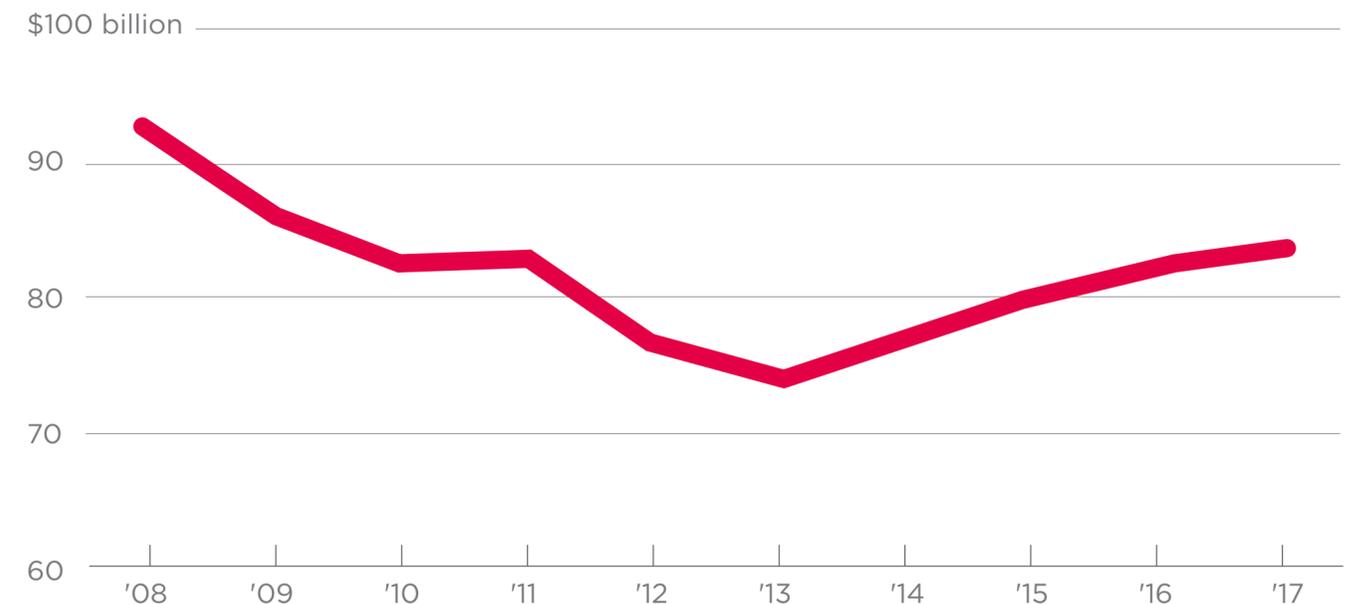
By Jon Marcus

“There are more than 2.6 million fewer students enrolled in higher education in the semester just ending than there were in the fall of 2011.”



## STATE SPENDING ON HIGHER EDUCATION IS WELL BELOW PRE-RECESSION LEVELS

Total State Spending (adjusted for inflation)



# IMPACT ON SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATH

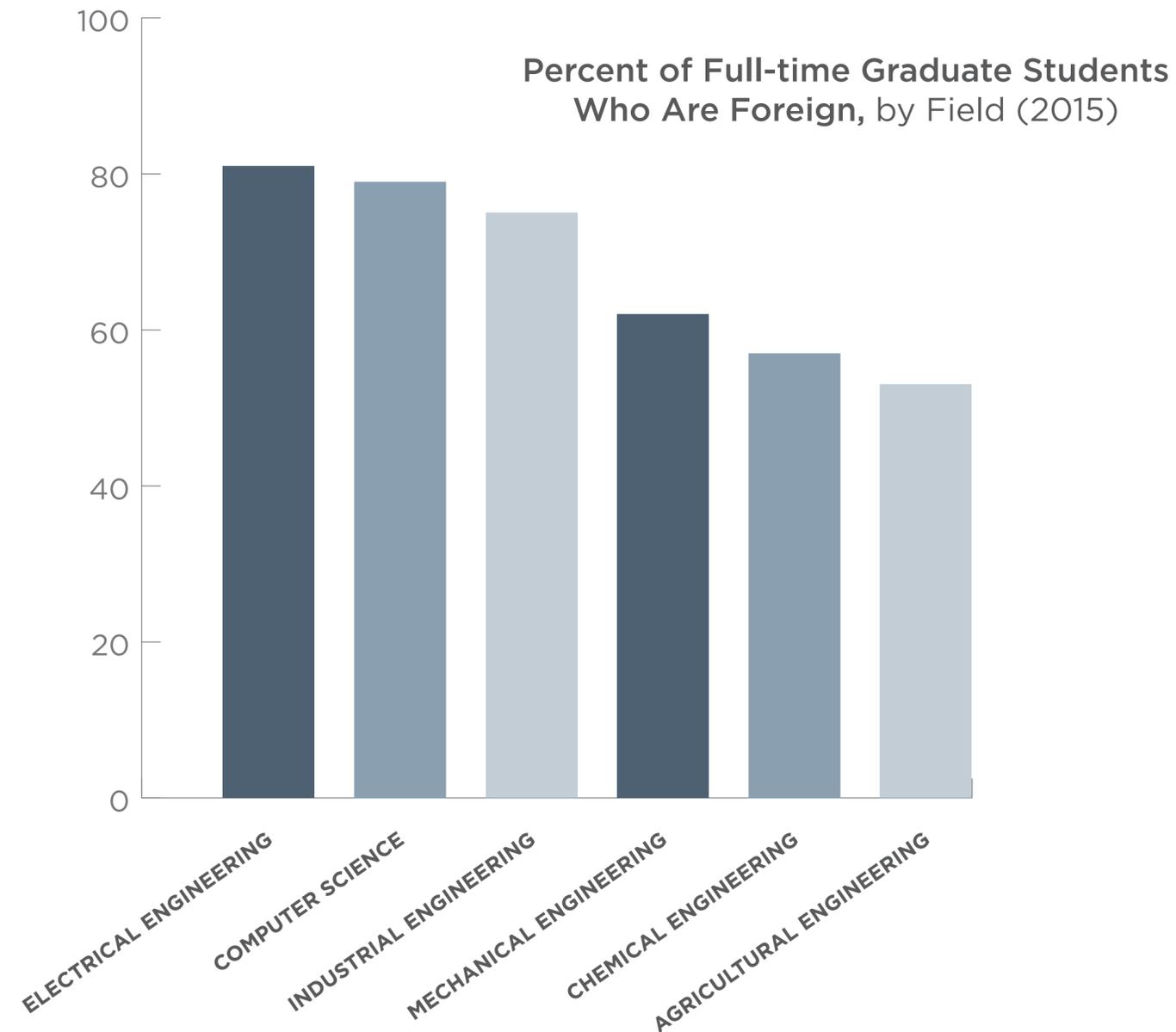
Foreign students are particularly important to science, technology, engineering and math programs (STEM). For example, U.S. computer science graduate programs grew by 350 percent from 1995 to 2015, but this growth was driven by foreign students. Without them, we cannot meet American companies' demand for STEM talent.

The increase in both the size and number of graduate programs in science and engineering at U.S. universities indicates U.S. student enrollment has not been held down by the lack of available slots at U.S. graduate schools.



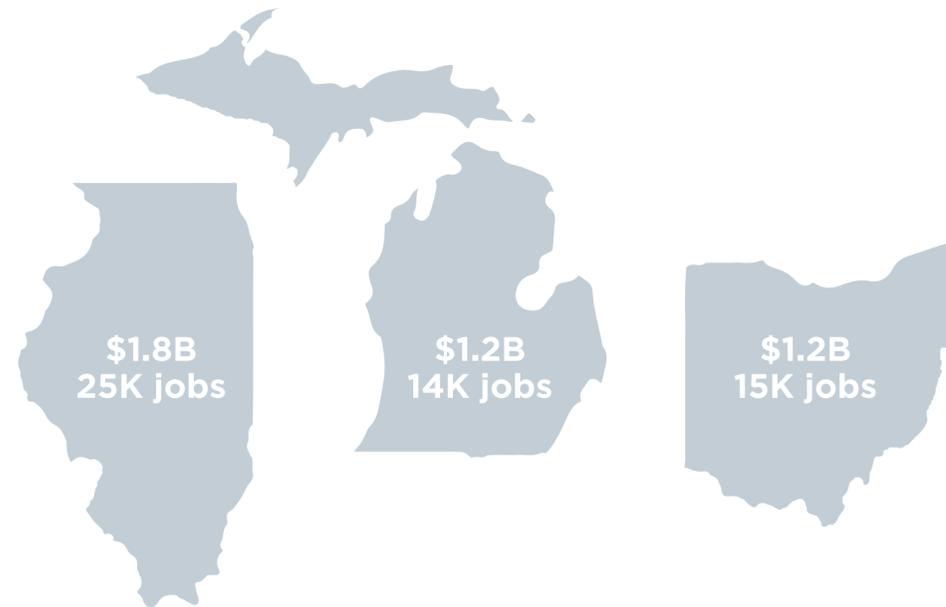
“THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS TO AMERICAN SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING”

OCTOBER 2017



# FOREIGN STUDENT DROP-OFF IS HURTING SCHOOLS IN “TRUMP COUNTRY” MOST

Foreign students spend more than \$7 billion across the Midwest, supporting 88,000 Midwest jobs. Foreign students in Michigan, Ohio, and Illinois, alone, account for \$4 billion in spending and 54,000 jobs.



“There are institutions in the Midwest that are facing a much sharper decline – and a bigger effect of this Trump effect, you might say.”

**RAHUL CHOUDAHA**  
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT,  
STUDYPORTALS

“

For the first time in 14 years in this field, last fall, I was asked by a student in Rome if Indiana was a red state or a blue state.

”

- JOHN WILKERSON  
ADMISSIONS,  
INDIANA UNIVERSITY

“

“[I] was turned away by prospective students who would ask whether Tennessee was a red or blue state. I’d say, ‘Well, we’re a red state,’ and they would literally walk to the next table.

”

- CHARLES WILKERSON  
TENNESSEE TECHNOLOGICAL  
UNIVERSITY

## As Flow of Foreign Students Wanes, U.S. Universities Feel the Sting

“Schools in the Midwest have been particularly hard hit – many of them non-flagship public universities that had come to rely heavily on tuition from foreign students, who generally pay more than in-state students...”

*The New York Times*

## Panicked universities in search of new students are adding thousands of new majors

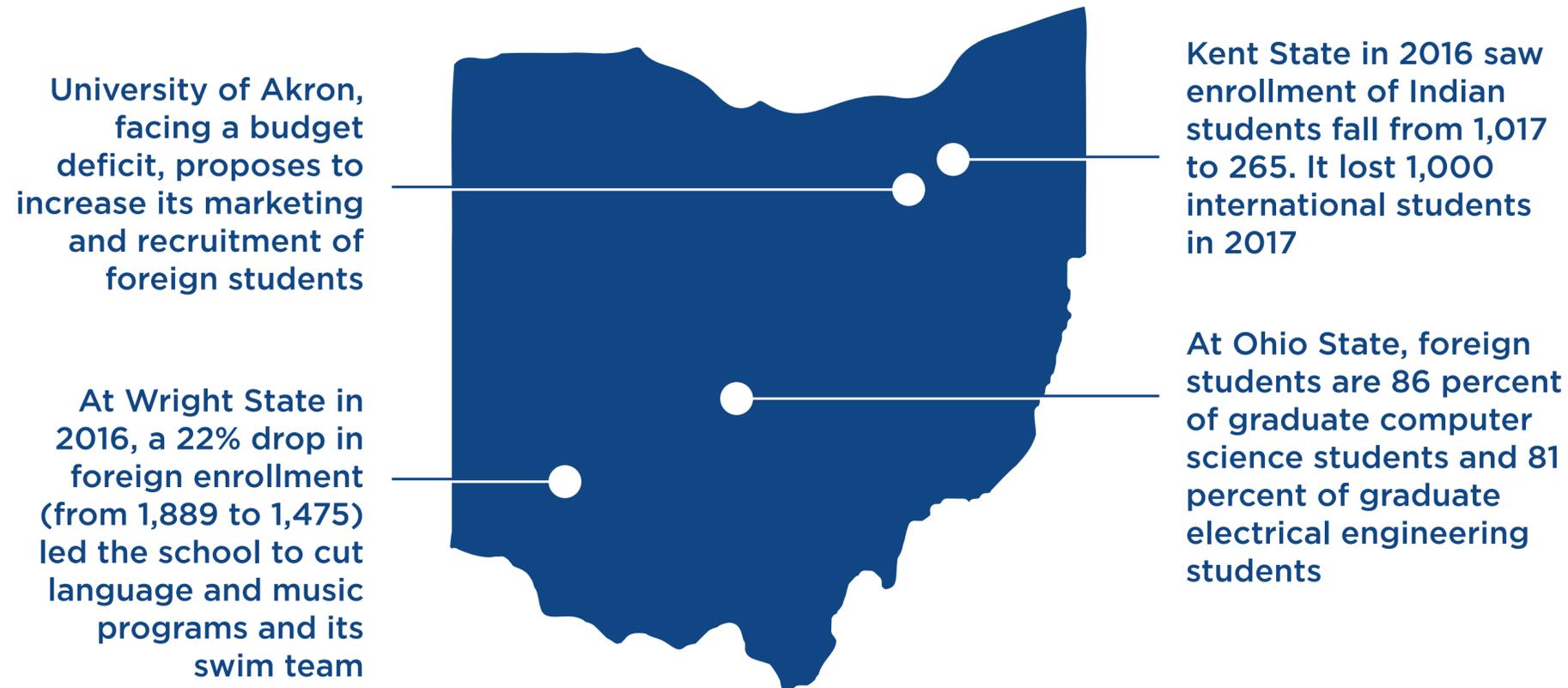
August 9, 2018  
By Jon Marcus

“[T]here are nearly 3 million fewer college students to go around than there were at the last peak in 2011...”

 THE HECHINGER REPORT

# CASE STUDY: OHIO

Foreign students contribute \$1.2 billion and nearly 15,000 jobs to Ohio's economy.



University of Akron, facing a budget deficit, proposes to increase its marketing and recruitment of foreign students

At Wright State in 2016, a 22% drop in foreign enrollment (from 1,889 to 1,475) led the school to cut language and music programs and its swim team

Kent State in 2016 saw enrollment of Indian students fall from 1,017 to 265. It lost 1,000 international students in 2017

At Ohio State, foreign students are 86 percent of graduate computer science students and 81 percent of graduate electrical engineering students

“

Professors require a significant number of graduate students and there are not enough domestic students alone in certain fields.

”

- STUART COOPER  
PROFESSOR,  
OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

“

I think with some of the federal policies and some of the actions they've taken have put the U.S. in a somewhat negative light.

”

- DAVE GARCIA  
SENIOR ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT,  
KENT STATE

## KSU anticipates decline in enrollment this fall

August 26, 2018

By Valerie Royzman

“Drop in international students mostly to blame.”

**KENTWIRED.com**

## Wright State looks to other schools for ways to lure more students

June 25, 2018

By Max Filby

“Keeping and attracting international students has been particularly difficult for WSU in recent years as foreign enrollment declined by around 779 since 2015. The school is trying to compete more in the international landscape by targeting more countries with specified scholarships and partnerships.”

**Dayton Daily News**

# THE BIG PICTURE

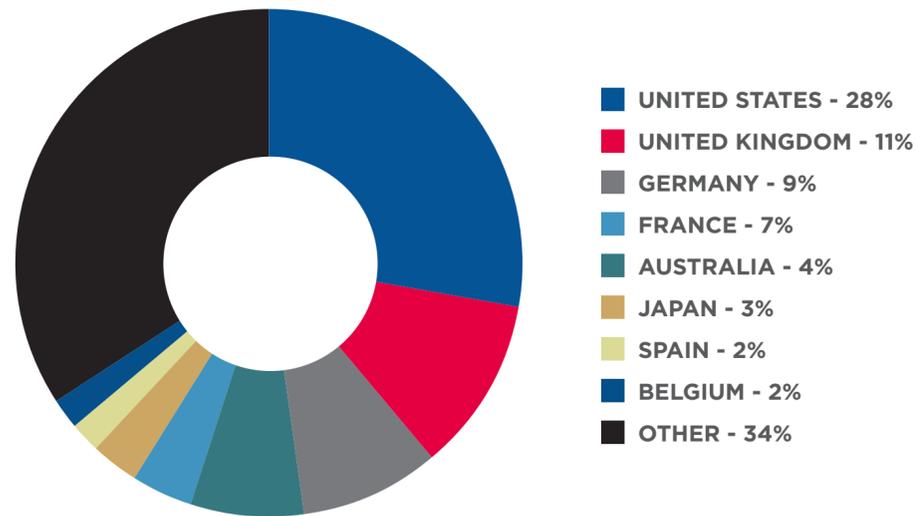
For decades, American universities have attracted the world's best talent, educated them, helped American companies hire them, and helped them start new businesses. Those foreign students created millions of new jobs - and inspired future generations of talent to come to the U.S.

In business, it's called a "virtuous cycle," a reinforcing feedback loop that drives innovation, growth, jobs, and wages.

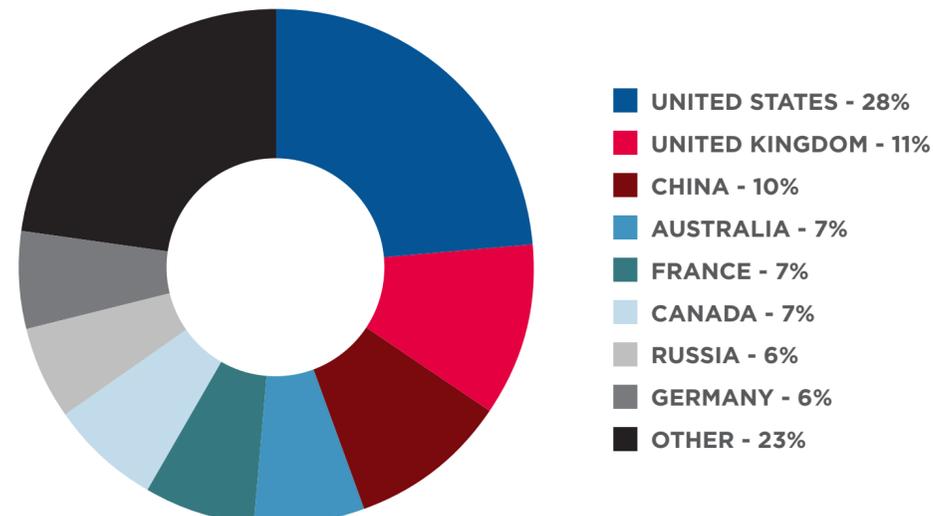
But competition for talent is growing more intense (particularly in science, math and engineering). While the size of the higher

education industry has grown, the U.S.'s share has shrunk. As the U.S. discourages foreign students, the UK, Canada, Germany and Australia are making it easier for them to study there - and stay in the country after they graduate.

Top Host Destinations



2001  
2.1 MILLION STUDENTS



2017  
4.6 MILLION STUDENTS

“

I don't know if this country is really where I want to stay, especially if there are so many questions about what could happen to foreign people here

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- EMILY HUANG  
SENIOR, UCLA



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