Many foreigners earn PhDs

Feature

By Meredith L. Dear
and Thomas T. Huang

Engineering students who earn their doctorates at American universities are now more likely to come from other countries than the United States.

The nation's universities awarded more than half of their engineering PhDs to international students last year, according to a majority of foreigners with PhDs in the United States. The percentage of foreigners with PhDs in the United States was 41 percent in 1985, according to an MIT graduate school report.

That number fell over the next ten years, to nearly 170 in 1981, according to a National Science Foundation and National Research Council report. Back in 1960, over 75 percent of American doctors were US citizens, compared to just under 45 percent in 1981.

A majority of students with PhDs went to foreign students in 1960, according to the MIT graduate school report. MIT awarded foreign students 28 percent of its science degrees, 32 percent of its humanities and social sciences degrees, and 23 percent of its architecture degrees. The Sloan School of Management awarded 61 percent of its degrees to international students.

Do they stay or do they go?

Associate Dean Jeanne E. Chamberlain described the factors that affect a student's decision to stay in the United States:

- The economic situation in the student's home country may be better than that in the United States, Chamberlain said. The job market for PhDs in the United States may be better than that in the home country, he said. The job market for PhDs in the United States may be better than that in the home country, he said.
- The political situation in the United States may be better than that in the home country, he said. The political situation in the United States may be better than that in the home country, he said.
- The student's family may want to return to their country if they want to avoid the military draft. The student's family may want to return to their country if they want to avoid the military draft.
- Students may get an extension of their visas if their employing firms support them, he said. Some foreign students can apply for permanent residency if a company wants to employ them. Some foreign students can apply for permanent residency if a company wants to employ them.
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