

**International Student Trends in American Schools of Public Affairs:  
Results of a NASPAA Survey (Dec. 2007 – Jan. 2008)  
By Carmen R. Apaza and Laurel McFarland<sup>1</sup>**

## **Introduction**

This paper examines the enrollment of international students in American graduate schools of public administration and policy at the masters and doctoral level. For this purpose from December 2007 to January 2008, the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) conducted a survey of international student trends in American schools of public affairs. Overall, 112 American schools of public affairs responded to the survey. The results present an interesting perspective on international enrollment in public affairs education as well as its impact on the labor market: Asian countries dominate international enrollments both at the masters and doctoral level in American schools. This trend has become slightly more pronounced compared to five years ago.

Although international enrollment in masters and doctoral public affairs programs varies significantly from one school to another, overall it has been growing in numbers recently. While the majority of schools offering masters degrees differentiate between public administration and public policy (i.e. MPA/MPP), sometimes offering 3 or 4 different masters degrees, the schools that offer PhD programs tend to offer fewer specific doctoral degrees, but often with umbrella titles (PhD in public administration and policy) or that offer concentrations in several aspects of public affairs including public policy or public administration. We included all relevant public affairs masters degrees and PhDs in the survey emailing.

## **Methodology**

On November 27, 2007 the NASPAA research team e-mailed a survey to principal representatives of the 260 schools that are members of NASPAA. The principal contacts at those schools are usually the directors of the programs of public administration and policy. The e-mail advised principal representatives to complete the online survey about international students in their programs (8 questions if they had masters degree programs only, 15 questions if they also had a PhD program). Since most of the questions required a report of numbers, we asked representatives to estimate them when they did not have actual data.

By January 28, 2008 the number of responses totaled 112, which is nearly 50% of all the schools of public affairs members of NASPAA. While in total 112 schools responded, only 100 completed the whole survey.

---

<sup>1</sup> Carmen R. Apaza is a Project Assistant at the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA). Laurel McFarland is Executive Director of the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA). For any inquiries contact: [mcfarland@naspaa.org](mailto:mcfarland@naspaa.org). This paper does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA). It should not be quoted without permission of the authors.

## **Findings**

### ***Masters Enrollment***

The active enrollment in MPA/MPP programs appears in table 1. Overall among the survey respondents, there are 15,733 students enrolled in MPA/MPP programs in the USA. This makes an average of 164 students per school represented in the survey. However, there are a number of schools that significantly surpass that average. For instance, Troy University (1000), Harvard University (876), George Mason University (763), New York University (666), Baruch College - School of Public Affairs (490), and University of Colorado at Denver (402).

The figures vary significantly regarding international student enrollment. The average percentage of international students enrolled in MPA/MPP in the USA is about 8.7% (see table 2). However, as observed above, some schools greatly surpass the average. For instance, Illinois Institute of Technology (55%), Harvard University (43%), University of New Haven (30%), Texas A & M International University (25%), and East Tennessee State University (24%).

When asked for countries most heavily represented among their MPA/MPP programs, schools listed the names of the 3 countries most represented in their programs as well as the number of international students per country. From these data, China, Korea, and India are the most represented countries in MPA/MPP programs. 22 schools alone have 331 Chinese students, 11 schools have 118 Koreans, and 6 schools have 29 students from India (see table 3). Among the schools reporting high enrollment from China, Korea and India, the schools with more students from those countries are the following: Illinois Institute of Technology (104 Chinese), Harvard University (36 Koreans), and New York University (11 students from India).

### ***PhD Enrollment***

When asked about whether they had PhD programs, 35 schools reported that they did have a doctoral program, while the great majority, 77 schools, stated they did not have a doctoral program. This reflects roughly the same ratio of overall NASPAA member schools with doctoral programs. Among the schools that reported having doctoral programs, 50.5 % of their students were focusing on public administration and/or public policy. From this portion 20.6% were internationals (See table 4 and 5).

International students enrolled in PhD programs in both public administration (PA) and public policy (PP) come mostly from China, Korea and Turkey. 10 schools have 62 Chinese students, 8 schools have 51 Koreans, and 3 schools have 28 Turkish (see table 6). Among the schools reporting high enrollment from China Korea and Turkey, the schools with more students from those countries are the following: University of Southern California (17 Chinese students), University at Albany, State University of New York (12 Korean students), and The University of Texas at Dallas (9 Turkish students).

### ***Changes Since 2002***

Comparing these data with the one five years ago, there is a modest increase in the number of international students enrolled in PA/PP masters as well as in doctoral programs. For instance, five years ago, 7.1% of masters students were internationals. This was about 1.6 percentage points less than the 8.7% in 2007. In the same vein, five years ago, 19.2% of doctoral

students were internationals. This was about 1.4 percentage points less than the 20.6% recorded in 2007 (see tables 7 and 8).

Five years ago, the countries most represented in MPA/MPP as well as in PA/PP doctoral programs were similar to 2007. For instance, five years ago Korea, China, and India were the most represented in doctoral programs, while China, Korea, and Thailand were the most represented in masters programs (see table 9 and 10).

### ***Employment of International Graduates***

When asked about how many of their international students in MPA/MPP programs return to their home country, schools report that 45.6% of their international students return to their countries. However, 36.1% stay and seek employment in the USA. Only 3.8% look for employment in a third country (see table 11). On the contrary, when asked about their *American* students, schools stated that only 7.5% took employment outside the United States upon graduation (see table 12).

### **Conclusion**

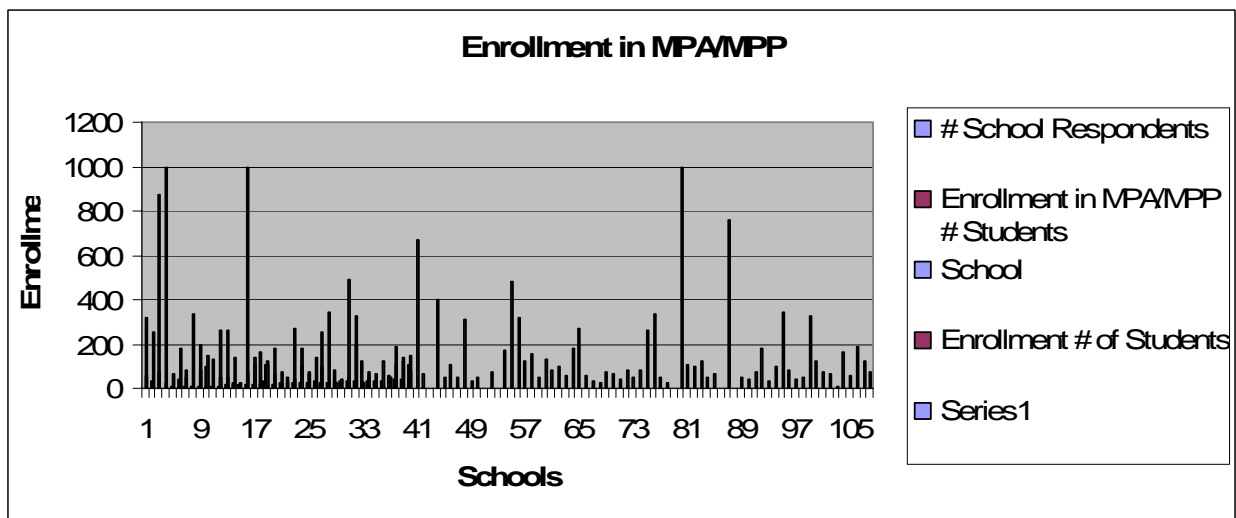
Current international students' enrollment in both masters and doctoral programs in public administration and policy in the United States shows a modest increase versus 5 years ago. Estimated enrollment for master programs grew from **7.1% to 8.7%** while for doctoral programs it increased from 19.2% to 20.6%. A big portion of those international students in both programs come primarily from China followed principally by Korea, Turkey, India, and Thailand. Five years ago, China was also the most heavily represented country among masters programs. Interestingly, Korea was the most significantly represented among doctoral programs. Other countries significantly represented in both masters and doctoral programs in public administration and policy are: Kazakhstan, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Japan, and Rumania.

Among the responding graduate programs, 36% of them offer doctoral degrees. The number of students pursuing PhDs in public administration and/or policy averaged 51 at each doctoral-granting institution. Interestingly enough, **20.6%** of those doctoral students were estimated to be international.

So, in general the enrollment of international students is modestly increasing in American schools of public affairs, but the labor market effect is varied. At some schools, nearly all of the overseas students return to their home country after completing their degree, but at others, significant numbers desire to stay in the United States: the data show that on average 36% of MPA/MPP international students decide to seek a permanent, full-time position in the United States upon graduation. Very small numbers take jobs in third countries (neither their home country nor the United States). On the other hand, American students are still largely staying put after completing their degree: an estimated 7.5% of MPA/MPP American students took employment outside the United States upon graduation, though obviously many are now taking jobs that involve various degrees of "internationalization" in what they do.

**Table 1**  
**Enrollment of MPA/MPP Degree Programs**

# School	Enrollment in MPA/MPP # Students	Mean
108	15,733	164



**Table 2**  
**Average % of International Students Enrolled in MPA/MPP**

# Schools	Average %International Masters Students
109	8.7

---

**Table 3**  
**Countries Most Represented in MPA/MPP Programs**

---

<b>Countries Most Represented in MPA/MPP Programs</b>	<b># Schools</b>
China	22
Korea	11
India	6
Kazakhstan, Mexico, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, others	70
Total	109

---

**Table 4**  
**Schools with Doctoral Programs in Public Administration (PA) and Public Policy (PP)**

---

<b># Schools</b>	<b>Total # Students</b>	<b>Average '# Students in Public Administration / Policy Doctoral Programs</b>
35	1769	51

---

**Table 5**  
**Percentage of International Students in PA/PP Doctoral Programs**

---

<b># Schools</b>	<b>Average % International Students in Doctoral Programs</b>
35	20.6

---

**Table 6**  
**Countries Most Represented In PA/PP Doctoral Programs**

---

<b>Countries Most Represented in PA/PP Doctoral Programs</b>	<b># Schools</b>
China	10
Korea	8
Turkey	3
India, Romania, Mexico. Others	17
Total	38

---

**Table 7**  
**Five Years Ago, Percentage of Int. Students Enrolled in MPA/MPP Programs**

---

<b># Schools</b>	<b>Average % International MPA/MPP Students Five Years Ago</b>
109	7.1

---

**Table 8**  
**Five Years Ago, Percentage of Int. Students Enrolled in PA/PP Doctoral Programs**

---

<b># Schools</b>	<b>Average % International Doctoral Students Five Years Ago</b>
28	19.2

---

**Table 9**  
**Five Years Ago, Countries Most Represented In PA/PP Doctoral Programs**

---

---

<b>Country Most Represented in PA/PP Doctoral Programs Five Years Ago</b>	<b># Schools</b>
Korea	11
China	4
India	3
Mexico, Turkey, others	12
Total	30

---

**Table 10**  
**Five Years Ago, Countries Most Represented In MPA/MPP Programs**

---

---

<b>Country Most Represented In MPA/MPP Programs Five Years Ago</b>	<b># Schools</b>
China	19
Korea	7
Thailand	4
Japan, India, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, others	78
Total	108

---

**Table 11**  
**Employment of International MPA/MPP Graduates**

---

<b>Category</b>	<b>% Average Students</b>
a) return to home country	45.6
b) Seek position in US	36.1
c) employed in 3rd country	3.8
None of those	14.5
Total average	100.0
Total # schools	108

---

**Table 12**  
**International Employment of American Citizens and Permanent Residents MPA/MPP Graduates**

---

<b># Schools</b>	<b>Average % American (or permanent residents) Students taking job outside US</b>
108	7.5