

# PERCEPTIONS OF EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION COUNTRY REPORT: USA

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## **Executive Summary:**

This report discusses international students in the context of the U.S. higher education system and details the research findings of a survey conducted among international students in the United States. The overall objectives of this survey were to acquire a deeper understanding of students' motivations and criteria for choosing an international education and to identify the factors that come into play when a student is considering a study period in the United States.

The survey was conducted among international students at 24 institutions in the United States, ranging from large research institutions to small liberal arts colleges, as well as community colleges. The 420 survey respondents represented every region of the world and were representative of the overall diversity of the international student population in the United States.

## Key Findings:

- Enhancing career opportunities and gaining experience for future employment, whether at home or internationally, are major contributing factors in a student's decision to study abroad. 78% of survey respondents considered a period of study abroad as a way to better their career opportunities.
- 83% of all respondents agreed that the reputation of academic qualifications and degrees from the U.S. was important in their decision to study in the United States. Europeans were less likely than others to note this as a factor. 71% of Europeans agreed, while 95% of South Asians and 92% of students from North Africa and the Middle East agreed.
- In selecting a host campus, 77% of all respondents indicated that it was important or very important that the university offered a specific program or courses in their area of specialization. Only 33% of respondents indicated that diversity of the student body or the location of the campus in a particular city was important in their decision.
- Survey respondents indicated that their decision was affected by personal safety and security concerns in varying degrees. Only 14% of Europeans considered security to be an important factor in their decision to study in the U.S., while 45% of South Asian and 46% of Southeast Asian students found safety important.
- European survey participants were less likely to agree that the U.S. has a good reputation around the world. Only 32% of Europeans agreed, while roughly 70% of South and Southeast Asians and 65% of North African and the Middle Eastern respondents agreed.
- More than half (53%) of the survey respondents indicated that they encountered problems with complicated visa procedures or strict requirements in planning to study in the United States. It is important to note that this survey included students who have been enrolled at campuses in the U.S. for 1 to 4 years. Therefore, their responses reflect visa policy from 2001 to 2004 and do not reflect more current policy.

## **Part I: Country Information**

### **1. Introduction**

The United States higher education system is comprised of roughly 4,200 accredited postsecondary institutions, attended by 16 million students, of which 572,509 are international students, according to the IIE's *Open Doors* report in 2004 (an annual report on international educational exchange published by the Institute of International Education with support from the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs; see [www.opendoors.iienetwork.org](http://www.opendoors.iienetwork.org)). These international students play an important part in U.S. higher education, not only because they contribute roughly \$13 billion to the U.S. economy every year, but also because many academic programs rely on them to conduct research and serve as teaching assistants in key fields of science and technology. Given the highly decentralized nature of the higher education system in the U.S., there is no comprehensive national policy or strategic plan that guides the recruitment of talented students from abroad. As with the U.S. higher education system in general, the international component of postsecondary education in the United States is large, diverse, decentralized and competitive. The recent decline in foreign student enrollments has stimulated academic institutions, higher education groups and the U.S. Government to take pro-active steps to reverse the decline and to ensure that the United States retains its position as a destination of choice for internationally mobile students. This chapter provides a brief overview of higher education in the United States, and discusses how international students fit into this system and what academic groups and the U.S. Government are doing to continue to attract international students to its institutions, and to ensure that enrollment levels do not decline.

### **2. International Students in the Context of the U.S. Higher Education System**

#### ***The U.S. Higher Education System – Facts and Figures:***

The U.S. higher education system is large, diverse and decentralized. According to the U.S. Department of Education's most recent available data, there were 4,200 degree-granting postsecondary institutions in the United States, in 2001. Among the 4,200 colleges and universities, there were over 1,200 two-year institutions, known as community colleges, 630 public and 1,500 private four-year institutions, and roughly 820 for-profit institutions. In addition, there are approximately 4,000 non-degree granting (or certificate) institutions that are proprietary.

Enrollment in the year 2001 was roughly 16 million students (14 million undergraduate and 2 million graduate and professional students). Almost 40% were enrolled in community colleges. The 4,200 degree-granting institutions awarded approximately 2.4 million degrees, including 600,000 Associates Degrees, 1.3 million Bachelor Degrees, 500,000 Master's Degrees, 80,000 Professional Degrees and 44,000 Doctorate Degrees, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

The total expenditures for education (all colleges and universities) in 2001 were \$317 billion. This number represents 3.1% of the U.S. gross domestic product (GDP).

#### ***International Students in the United States***

With nearly 600,000 international students, the United States is host to about one quarter of all internationally mobile students, according to UNESCO data, which estimates that 2 million students currently study outside their home country. Among leading host countries, the U.S. share is 40%, and more than double the number hosted by any of the other leading hosts. IIE's Atlas of Student Mobility website

provides detail on the comparative enrollment figures of leading host countries (see [www.atlas.iienetwork.org](http://www.atlas.iienetwork.org)).

In the United States, unlike most countries hosting international students, these students represent a very small fraction (4%) of the overall higher education enrollments of 16 million, although in science and technology fields they represent a much larger percentage of enrollment, especially at the graduate level. The large higher education sector leaves the United States with an unrivalled absorptive capacity for international students.

It is hard to overestimate the importance of international students to U.S. higher education. The international students study at thousands of colleges and universities in all 50 U.S. states. They contribute to the diversity and internationalization of their classrooms, their campuses and their communities. They also contribute to the preeminence of U.S. research and development, and to the U.S. economy with expenditures estimated at \$13 billion. The U.S. Department of Commerce ranks international education as the 5th largest service sector export.

Since September 11, 2001, public awareness of the importance of international students has changed. While educators had called for a national policy on international education well before the events of September 11, they have certainly intensified this effort and have been joined by business and congressional leaders. In light of the recent decline in international student enrollments, there is now a consensus that a broad policy and strategies are needed if the United States wants to retain its market share of international students, and steps are being taken at the institutional, state and national level. These will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

### ***International Students: Facts and Figures***

According to *Open Doors 2004*, there were 572,509 international students enrolled in over 2,300 accredited U.S. institutions in the academic year 2003/04. A slightly larger proportion of international students is enrolled in graduate programs (49%) than in undergraduate programs (45%), with a balance of 6% enrolled in other non-degree and intensive English language programs.

The number of international students dropped by 2.4% in 2003/04, the first absolute decline in foreign enrollments since the early 1970s. The 2.4% drop follows a minimal increase the prior year (0.6% in 2002/03), preceded by five years of steady growth. The changes in international student enrollment were experienced differently, depending on the types of institutions, the level of study and the fields of study. Specifically, while there was a 5% decline in undergraduate enrollments, this decline was partially offset by a 2.4% increase in graduate enrollments, a trend that has been observed for the past several years.

The overall decline in international students enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities has been attributed to a variety of causes, including real and perceived difficulties in obtaining student visas (especially in scientific and technical fields), rising U.S. tuition costs, vigorous recruitment activities by other English-speaking nations, a growing home country higher education capacity among leading sending countries, and misperceptions abroad that international students may no longer be welcome in the United States. This will be discussed in more detail in Section 3 below.

*Where do they come from?*

Asia is the largest sending region to the U.S. by a wide margin. The *Open Doors* report shows that almost 57% of international students studying in the U.S. in 2003/04 came from Asia, followed by Europe (13%), Latin America (12%), Africa (6.7%), the Middle East (5.6%) and North America (5.5%). India remains the largest sending country for the third consecutive year, with a total of 79,736 Indian students enrolled in U.S. institutions in 2003/04. China is the second leading place of origin with 61,765 students, followed by Korea (52,484), Japan (40,835) and Canada (26,513).

*What are they studying?*

Nearly 50% of all international students studying in the United States were enrolled in just three fields of study: business and management (19%), engineering (17%) and mathematics and computer sciences (12%). Other major fields of study include Social Sciences (9%), Physical and Life Sciences (8%), and Fine and Applied Arts (5%).

*Where are they studying?*

International students study in all regions and states in the United States, but tend to be highly concentrated in certain states, cities, and universities.

U.S. States: California is the leading host state for international students with 77,186 in 2003/04, followed by New York (63,313), Texas (45,150), Massachusetts (28,634), and Florida (25,861). Some states or regions within the United States tend to be particularly popular among students from certain world regions. For example, many students from Asia prefer to study in West Coast states whereas Southern states (such as Florida or Texas) tend to host a large number of students from Latin America.

Cities: Ten metropolitan statistical areas hosted over one third (36%) of all international students. New York City is the most popular metropolitan area hosting over 52,000 international students. The Los Angeles area hosts the second highest number of foreign students (35,062), followed by Boston (24,266), Washington DC (19,552), Chicago (16,061), San Francisco (13,460), Dallas-Ft. Worth (13,448), Philadelphia (12,593), Miami (11,900) and Houston (9,778).

Institutions: More than 2,300 U.S. institutions hosted international students in the academic year 2003/04. The highest number of international students (62%) studied in Doctoral/Research institutions, both at the undergraduate and graduate level, while 16.4% studied in Master's institutions, 4.4% in Baccalaureate institutions, 13.2% in Associate's (two-year) institutions, and 4% in Specialized institutions (categories are based on the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education).

International students are concentrated in a relatively small percentage of U.S. host institutions. 143 U.S. colleges and universities hosted 1,000 or more international students - with 27 of these campuses hosting more than 3,000 international students each. The leading host institution was the University of Southern California, with 6,647 international students, followed by Columbia University (5,362), Purdue University Main Campus (5,094), New York University (5,070), University of Texas at Austin (4,827), and University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (4,769).

### *How are they paying?*

Attending college in the United States can be expensive when compared to home country higher education costs. In the past decade, average tuition costs have increased by 36% at private and by 51% at public four-year institutions, which has made it increasingly challenging for incoming students to come up with the necessary funding. Average tuition costs are now approximately \$12,000 at public and \$20,000 at private four-year institutions. Total college costs, including books, supplies, room and board, transportation and other costs, add up to \$21,000 and \$30,000, respectively.

The United States offers a high degree of financial support to U.S. students. Roughly 40% of U.S. students receive financial aid from the federal government in the form of loans and grants, and many also receive financial aid directly from the host institution. (The proportion is much higher at private institutions than at public institutions and higher at four-year institutions than at community colleges).

The U.S. government, however, does not provide financial assistance to non-U.S. citizens, except through federally funded exchange programs, such as the Fulbright Student and Scholar Programs. Generally, international students are expected to have sufficient funds to pay for tuition and living expenses either through personal or family funds or through home government sponsorships. There are also opportunities for international students to work on campus as discussed below.

International students pay for their education in the United States in a variety of ways. Over two-thirds of all international students in the U.S. receive the majority of their funds from family and personal sources. When other sources of funding from their home countries (such as assistance from their home country governments or universities) are added in, nearly 75% of all international students report that the majority of their funding comes from sources outside of the United States. International undergraduate students (82%) rely on personal and family funds much more heavily than graduate students (51%).

While the U.S. government does not provide significant direct funding to international students, federal research funds do support international graduate students through their host institutions. Campus funding options include fellowships and international awards/scholarships, research or graduate assistantships, teaching assistantships, on-campus employment (as Resident Hall Advisor or Administrative Assistant) or, less commonly, through loans or financial aid. Most loan schemes require U.S. citizenship or co-signatories in the United States, so many international students are ineligible for this kind of aid.

If available, financial support for international students from U.S. colleges and universities are typically reserved for international graduate students. As *Open Doors* statistics show, 23% of all international students relied primarily on funding from U.S. campuses, mostly in the form of graduate assistantships or research grants. Graduate students are much more likely to be hired as RAs or TAs. About 41% of the international graduate students received this type of financial support, while only 10% of international undergraduate students received support from their U.S. host institutions.

At the undergraduate level, community colleges provide a less expensive alternative to most public or private four-year institutions. The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) estimates that average cost for tuition and fees for international students at public community colleges is approximately \$5,000 annually. For that reason, among others, community colleges have become increasingly

popular among international students. In the past decade, the rate of international students studying at two-year institutions has increased by about 24%. However, after years of steep increases, *Open Doors* found that international enrollments in community colleges dropped by almost 8% in the past academic year.

### **3. International Education in the United States: Policy and Marketing**

With its historically decentralized and competitive higher education sector, the United States lacks a coordinated international education policy to attract and recruit internationally mobile students, scholars and scientists to pursue higher education in the U.S. Wide-spread and growing concern over declining international enrollments, and its impact on U.S. global competitiveness in key science and technology fields, has encouraged U.S. campuses, Congress and several U.S. government agencies and educational not-for-profit organizations to take pro-active steps to attract new and increasing numbers of students from abroad. Efforts have been mostly decentralized in a way that typifies the U.S. higher education system and its relation to the federal government, but public statements by the U.S. Secretary of State, the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Education have made clear the federal commitment to keeping America's doors open to international students.

While there is no federal agency to fund or regulate the recruitment of foreign students, the U.S. government supports communications and advising resources for foreign students, working with the colleges and universities in a decentralized way through its EducationUSA network, a global network of approximately 450 advising and information centers in 170 countries supported by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Department of State. These centers promote United States higher education by offering free and unbiased information about educational opportunities in the United States. Almost 25 million prospective international students come to the advising centers each year to seek information and guidance on educational opportunities in the United States, on scholarships and grants, on the visa application process, and on general information about the U.S. higher education system.

The international activities of U.S. postsecondary institutions are not regulated by the government, except through the accreditation process which assures quality for all enrolled students. U.S. campuses are responsible for their own recruitment and admission of international students, and there is strong competition for the best and brightest international students. However, there are a number of examples of coordinated marketing approaches at the state or regional government level, and there are promising signs that governmental, non-governmental and academic institutions are cooperating more closely with the goal to develop a national strategy that will ensure that the U.S. remains competitive in the global market of higher education.

#### ***On the Way to a National Policy?***

Calls for an international education policy are not new to the post-September 11 environment, but they have certainly intensified since then.

In 1999, the Alliance for International Educational and Cultural Exchange, an association of non-governmental international education groups in the United States, and NAFSA: Association for International Educators, released a policy statement urging the federal government to take steps to promote international education and to work towards a national policy on international education. To highlight the importance of international education, the U.S. government has proclaimed "International Education Week" in November 2000 and has held activities in the U.S. and abroad

each year since then. The Institute of International Education, in cooperation with many higher education institutions and associations, has worked closely with congressional leaders and the Departments of State and Homeland Security to develop streamlined procedures to promote international education and exchange.

After the events of September 11, international educators have pushed more strongly for a comprehensive international education policy. International exchanges are seen as an essential part in contributing to U.S. national security by dispelling negative perceptions of the United States, broadening mutual respect, understanding peoples and building long-lasting relationships between the United States and other nations.

In 2003, the Alliance re-issued its statement, calling upon the U.S. government to "renew and strengthen the U.S. commitment to international education." Educators in the United States felt that without a pro-active policy to recruit students from abroad, the U.S. "risks losing its market dominance to the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and other countries that have launched aggressive recruitment strategies."

According to the 2003 policy statement, "what is needed is a policy that promotes the internationalization of learning in the broadest sense, including supporting the learning of foreign languages and knowledge of other cultures by Americans, promoting study abroad by U.S. students, encouraging students from other countries to study in the United States, facilitating the exchange of scholars and of citizens at all levels of society, and enhancing the educational infrastructure through which we produce international competence and research."

In 2004, a group of 25 higher education, scientific and engineering groups warned again that the United States could become isolated and that top talent from abroad might go elsewhere. In a letter to the White House, the group proposed various steps to improve the visa process and to facilitate the entry of foreign students, scholars and scientists to the United States.

While noting that many visa related problems had been largely resolved and progress has been made, a group of 40 leading academic, science and engineering associations issued a new statement a year later in May 2005, proposing visa reforms to boost economic competitiveness and scientific leadership. In their statement, the group went beyond proposing technical improvements to the visa system and urged the U.S. government to accelerate its effort to reform the visa process for international students, scholars and researchers. One of the six, key recommendations was to develop a "national strategy to promote academic and scientific exchange and to encourage international students, scholars, scientists and engineers to pursue higher education and research opportunities in the U.S."

In July 2005, the U.S. House of Representatives approved legislation to authorize spending levels for educational and cultural exchanges. For the first time, this bill includes an amendment, titled "Opening Doors for Foreign Students Act of 2005", that calls for the "development of a comprehensive strategy by the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Secretaries of Homeland Security, Education and Commerce, to attract foreign students to study in the United States."

### ***What the U.S. Government Is Doing***

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State spearheads the U.S. Government's international educational exchange activities abroad. Currently, the federal government is engaged in many activities related to promoting U.S. higher education abroad, including:

- The Department of State provides support to its EducationUSA network of 450 educational advising centers around the world. These centers are usually housed within U.S. embassies, Fulbright commissions, non-governmental educational organization or even universities and, as mentioned above, give free and unbiased advice to prospective international students on higher education and study and research opportunities in the United States.
- The U.S. Government sponsors large exchange programs, such as the Fulbright Program. The Fulbright Program is designed to "increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries..." and provides grants for graduate students, scholars and professionals, as well as teachers and administrators from around the world.
- At embassies around the world, visa review procedures have been streamlined and students and scholars have been given ongoing priority in their visa interview appointments. In some cases, embassies have even added separate lines for students in order to expedite the process.
- The U.S. Department of State recently added 350 new consular staff to help with the backlogs, cut the special Visa Mantis security clearance times dramatically (the Visa Mantis security checks are designed to protect against the transfer of sensitive technology), has begun to provide more and better training to consular officers, and added the ability for visa applicants to check the status of their applications online. Recent statistics show that, for example, in China, the visa approval rate has increased by 15% in early 2005 (compared to the same time the previous year), after four years of declining numbers.
- A recent government report noted that problems with SEVIS, the student visa tracking system, have been largely resolved, (although there is still ongoing concern at the campus level about lack of mechanisms for timely correction of data entries).
- There has been an expansion of public diplomacy efforts by U.S. Embassies and educational advising offices abroad and public statements are being issued from the U.S. Secretary of State on the importance of international students. U.S. Ambassadors and Public Affairs Officers have been reaching out to university audiences through speeches and the media, assuring them that America's doors are still wide open to qualified students from around the world.
- The government continues to negotiate reciprocal visa agreements with key countries to allow multiple entry visas for students and scholars.

### ***What are campuses doing?***

As mentioned above, postsecondary institutions in the United States are responsible for the recruitment and admission of foreign students. Some institutions enter into consortia or use resources from state or regional government or trade organizations, but the number of broader-scale, coordinated efforts or strategies beyond the level of those of individual institutions is limited.

One example of a coordinated approach is "Destination Indiana," which was initiated in 2001 by the International Trade Division of the Indiana Department of Commerce and the Indiana Consortium for International Programs (ICIP). Destination Indiana is a consortium of public and private, small and large colleges and universities in the state of Indiana ([www.destinationindiana.org](http://www.destinationindiana.org)).

With the goal of increasing diversity on their campuses and the number of international students who study in the state of Indiana, the member institutions in the Destination Indiana consortium created a "partnerships which make educational opportunities available in Indiana known to interested students, their families, and their schools and advisors around the world." The group has organized recruitment trips to Asia, works extensively with the U.S. Overseas Educational Advisers, organizes a seminar for 10-15 overseas advisers in Indiana each year, and uses the 12 overseas office of the Economic Development Corporation of the State of Indiana to promote international education in Indiana.

So far, this partnership seems to be successful: international student enrollments in Indiana have continued to increase in 2003/04, despite the decline in U.S.-wide international student enrollments. Since 2001, the state of Indiana has moved up from 13<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> most popular U.S. state among international students.

There are a number of other U.S. states that have formed State international education consortia similar to "Destination Indiana":

- California: The Education Training & Export Consortium (ETEC)/Destination Southern California ([www.educationsocal.com](http://www.educationsocal.com))
- Illinois: Study Illinois International Education Consortium ([www.studyillinois.org](http://www.studyillinois.org))
- Iowa: Study Iowa ([www.studyiowa.org](http://www.studyiowa.org))
- Oregon: Study Oregon ([www.studyoregon.com](http://www.studyoregon.com))
- Washington: Study Washington ([www.studywashington.org](http://www.studywashington.org))

According to the U.S. Commercial Services, the "goals of these consortia are to increase the name recognition of their respective states and educational institutions, to promote their states as study destinations for international students, to facilitate partnerships between educational institutions in their states and those in other countries, and to capitalize on the services and support of state and federal government agencies."

"Destination Indiana", along with the other State international education consortia are excellent examples of how educational institutions can cooperate to maximize their international student recruitment and marketing efforts/activities by pooling limited resources and to tap into support from State legislatures and departments of trade and commerce.

U.S. colleges and universities have stepped up their marketing and recruitment efforts globally through increased participation in higher education and recruitment

fairs around the world and through more and re-invigorated in-country recruitment by alumni and U.S. campus representatives.

Many campuses have also reviewed their marketing materials and websites aimed at potential international students to insure that the message is strongly welcoming and contains all the necessary information, including a suggested timeline for the application steps. In addition, many colleges have expedited their admissions process and are sending early notifications to international students – an important development in light of the tighter visa application process.

Institutions continue to develop various types of linkage programs or joint degree programs with universities around the globe to facilitate the exchange of students and scholars and encouraging future applications from abroad for full degree study. Fearing that high tuition costs might be deterring international students from coming to the United States, many campuses have started to offer special foreign student scholarship or 'in-state tuition' rate.

#### **4. Conclusion**

While the United States still has the largest share of international students worldwide, U.S. colleges and universities, educational associations and the Government are taking pro-active steps to ensure that the United States maintains its market share and to keep doors open to international students. The commitment of U.S. campuses, educational and scientific associations and the Government, as well as growing recognition in the U.S. Congress of the importance of international students and the vital contributions they make to classrooms, communities and the economy, will only help this goal.

## **PART II: SURVEY FINDINGS**

### **Introduction**

This report details the research findings of a survey conducted among international students in the United States. The overall objectives of this survey were to acquire a deeper understanding of students' motivations and criteria for choosing an international education and to identify the factors that come into play when a student is considering to study in the United States. This U.S. survey is part of an overall study on the perceptions of European higher education compared to other study destinations among international students.

The survey was conducted among international students at 24 institutions in the United States. These institutions reflected the diversity of institutional types, ranging from large research institutions to small liberal arts colleges, as well as community colleges. The 420 survey respondents represented every region of the world and were representative of the regional diversity of the overall international student population in the United States.

### **I. Profile of Survey Participants**

#### **1. Demographics**

##### **1.1 Places of Origin and Nationality**

Students participating in this survey represented every region of the world and reflected the diversity of the overall international student population in the United States. 46% of the survey participants are from Asian places of origin, followed by 26% from Europe, and 13% from Latin America (Table 1).

**Table 1: Region of origin (percentages)**

	Total
Europe	26
Latin America	13
Africa Sub-Sahara	7
North Africa and Middle East	6
East Asia	19
South Asia	15
South East Asia	12
Other (Canada, Australia, Oceania)	2
Total	100
Count (n)	(423)

Source: Survey on international students in the United States Question 3: What is your home country (country were you lived prior to studying in the United States)?

## 1.2 Gender

Fifty-five percent of the survey participants indicated that they were male, and 45% female. There were some considerable differences for survey participants from South Asia, where 72% were male. Slightly more (56%) participants from Africa were female. Also interesting to note is that at the graduate level, 59% of participants were male, whereas at the undergraduate level, only 44% were male.

## 1.3 Age

The mean age of survey participants was 27 years. (Table 2)

**Table 2: Mean age of the students in 2005 - by level of study**

	Level of study				Total
	Bachelor student	Master student	Doctoral student	Not specified	
Age	23,0	27,4	29,6	24,3	26,7
Count (n)	(120)	(130)	(146)	(23)	(419)

Source: Survey on international students in the United States Question 1: Year of birth

## 1.4 Highest Educational/Academic Degree and Main Activity Prior to Study in U.S.

34% of the survey participants held a Master's or similar degree at the time of the survey. 32% held a Bachelor's Degree. Interesting to note is that nearly 40% of students enrolled at the Master's level already hold another Master's degree, most likely from their home country. (Table 4)

**Table 4: Highest educational/academic degree - by level of study (percentages)**

	Level of study				Total
	Bachelor student	Master student	Doctoral student	Not specified	
Completion of secondary school	74	8	7	48	28
Bachelor degree or similar	18	50	25	48	32
Master degree or similar	2	39	59	5	34
Doctorate/PhD	0	1	8	0	3
Other degree	6	2	1	0	3
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Count (n)	(119)	(131)	(151)	(21)	(422)

Source: Survey on international students in the United States Question 7: What is the highest educational/academic degree you hold?

Fifty-one percent of the participants indicated that they were a student on the undergraduate, graduate or postgraduate level prior to studying in the United States. 18% were secondary school students and 26% were employed. (Table 5)

**Table 5: Status / main activity prior to studying in the U.S. - by level of study (percentages)**

	Level of study				Total
	Bachelor student	Master student	Doctoral student	Not specified	
Pupil at secondary school	50	5	5	10	18
Student on an undergraduate course programme	35	29	21	67	30
Student on a postgraduate course programme	3	19	20	10	15
PhD student	0	0	18	0	6
Employed	6	42	30	10	26
Unemployed/seeking employment	0	2	3	0	2
Other status	6	2	3	5	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Count (n)	(119)	(129)	(149)	(21)	(418)

Source: Survey on international students in the United States Question 6: What was your status / main activity prior to studying in the United States?

## 1.5 Field of Study

The most popular fields of study, much like the overall international student population in the United States according to *Open Doors*, were Management, Business and Finance (21%), Computer Science, Engineering, Technology (19%) and Information Technology (13%). Other fields of study included Social Sciences (12%), Natural Sciences (11%) and Medical Sciences (6%).

## 1.6 Sources of Funding

As is the case in overall international student enrollments, the survey participants at the undergraduate level relied significantly more on family contributions, with 63% rating family contributions as a large portion of their funding. Only 9% of respondents at the doctoral level, on the other hand, indicated that they relied on family contributions. (Table 6)

Much less of a significant contribution at all levels and in each region were home country grants and scholarships, with the exception of North Africa and the Middle East. 37% of respondents from this region rated home country grants and scholarships as a major source of funding, while only 15% of respondents from this region rated U.S. scholarships and grants as a major source of funding.

Students from Southeast Asia relied heavily on family contributions with 63% rating this category as a major funding source. Students from East Asia, on the other hand, relied more on U.S. scholarships and grants.

**Table 6: Sources of funding - by level of study (percentages\*)**

	Level of study				Total
	Bachelor student	Master student	Doctoral student	Not specified	
Parents, relatives	63	42	9	43	36
Own money (work, savings etc.)	13	34	15	13	20
Home country grant/ scholarship	11	10	9	22	10
U.S. grant/ scholarship	21	31	66	9	40
Loan scheme	5	8	2	9	5
Other source of funding	8	6	10	0	8
Count (n)	(120)	(131)	(151)	(23)	(425)

Source: Survey on international students in the United States Question 12: How do you finance your study in the U.S.?

\* Points 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "Full funding" to 5 = "No contribution at all"

## 1.7 Exchange Students or "Free Movers"?

In total, 91% of the respondents are studying in the United States independently as opposed to an organized study tour or institutional exchange program between the home university and the U.S. host campus. 100% of students from Asia were studying in the United States independently, whereas 21% of European students were in the United States on an organized exchange program. (Table 7)

**Table 7: Exchange students and "free movers" - by level of study (percentages)**

	Level of study				Total
	Bachelor student	Master student	Doctoral student	Not specified	
Organised exchange / joint degree programme	8	5	5	61	9
Individual mobility	92	95	95	39	91
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Count (n)	(120)	(131)	(150)	(23)	(424)

Source: Survey on international students in the United States Question 9: Are you studying in the United States on an organised exchange / joint degree programme established between your home university and a U.S. university?

## **II. Reasons for Studying Abroad**

### **2.1 Reasons for the Decision to Study Abroad**

There are many factors that come into play when a student is considering a period of study abroad. A section of this survey was aimed at uncovering the process through which students selected a study abroad destination, once they had made the decision to study abroad. The survey sought answers on subjects ranging from how the students researched various study abroad options to how they eventually made their decision on a location and institution in which to study.

Students were asked whether they first chose a destination institution, region of the world, or country. Table 8 indicates that nearly one third (32%) of respondents reported having first decided on a destination country, then an institution within that country, with the region of the world not being as important in their decision. 23% reported having first decided on a region, then a country, and then an institution. 21% reported having first selected a host university; this figure being slightly higher among doctoral students.

**Table 8: Sequence order of world region, destination country and host university when choosing where to study abroad - by level of study (percentages)**

	Level of study				Total
	Bachelor student	Master student	Doctoral student	Not specified	
Region-country-university	25	24	21	30	23
Region-university-country	6	12	6	9	8
Country-Region-University	14	13	12	30	14
Country-University-Region	37	31	30	17	32
University-Region-Country	4	2	2	4	3
University-Country-Region	13	16	27	9	18
Other sequence	2	2	2	0	2
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Count (n)	(117)	(128)	(145)	(23)	(413)

Source: Survey on international students in the United States Question 20: Once you knew that you wanted to study abroad, did you first choose the world region (i.e. North America in your case), the destination country, or the host university? Please fill in the corresponding sequence number (1,2,3).

As shown in Table 9a, respondents were asked to rate a list of reasons for deciding to study abroad as to whether they were an important factor their decision, ranging from “1=very important” to “5=not important at all”.

The most popular factors, in order of importance, influencing a student’s choice in selecting a study destination were:

- Experience new ways of thinking and acting in the field of study (mean rating=1,8)
- Improve chances for international career (mean rating=1,8)
- Get a broader/more flexible education than offered in home country (mean rating=2,1)
- Opportunity to develop the personality/become more independent (mean rating=2,1)

- Improve career prospects/chances of getting a job in the home country (mean rating=2,1).

Enhancing career opportunities and gaining experience for future employment, whether at home or internationally, is a major contributing factor in a student's decision to study abroad. Respondents from Africa, Latin America and Asia are more likely to place importance on improving career prospects in the home country than Europeans. However, European survey respondents do place significant importance on improving chances for an international career.

**Table 9a: Reasons for the decision to study abroad - importance by region of origin (Mean\*)**

	Region of origin								Total
	Europe	Latin America	Africa Sub-Sahara	North Africa and Middle East	East Asia	South Asia	South East Asia	Other (Canada/Australia/Oceania)	
Limited places available to study at (highly prestigious) universities in the home country	4,2	3,4	3,1	3,7	3,5	2,8	3,2	3,4	3,5
Specialise in an area which is not offered in the home country	3,7	2,6	2,2	3,0	3,0	2,6	3,0	3,8	3,0
Get a broader / more flexible education than offered in home country	2,4	2,5	1,6	2,2	1,6	1,7	1,8	3,7	2,1
Get a more practice-oriented education than offered in home country	2,9	3,1	2,1	2,8	2,2	2,1	2,3	3,8	2,6
Have access to specific laboratories/ equipment/ libraries not available/ accessible in home country	3,4	2,8	2,1	3,2	3,1	2,4	2,7	4,9	3,0
Experience new ways of thinking and acting in the field of study	1,9	2,2	1,9	2,1	1,4	1,6	1,6	3,4	1,8
Improve chances for an international career	1,7	1,9	1,7	2,2	1,8	1,7	1,8	2,0	1,8
Improve career prospects/ chances of getting a job in the home country	2,4	2,0	2,2	2,0	2,0	2,2	2,0	2,8	2,2
Learn or improve knowledge of a foreign language	2,3	3,1	3,7	2,6	1,9	3,8	1,8	5,0	2,7
Interest in foreign culture, history and landscape	2,5	2,9	2,8	3,1	2,3	2,8	2,1	3,9	2,6
Possibility to build up networks/ friendships in an intercultural context	2,3	2,5	1,8	2,4	2,4	2,2	2,1	2,8	2,3
Opportunity to develop the personality/ become more independent	2,0	2,5	2,0	2,3	2,1	1,7	1,9	2,8	2,1
Number (n)	(112)	(53)	(29)	(27)	(78)	(65)	(49)	(9)	(422)

Source: Survey on international students in the United States

Question 13: How important were the following reasons for your decision to study abroad?

\* Scale from 1 = "very important" to 5 = "not important at all"

As Table 9b indicates, 95% of respondents from East Asia rated "experience new ways of thinking" as an important reason in their decision to study abroad. This rate is notably lower, at 64%, for respondents from Latin America.

**Table 9b: Reasons for the decision to study abroad - importance by region of origin (percentages\*)**

	Region of origin								Total
	Europe	Latin America	Africa Sub-Saharan	North Africa and Middle East	East Asia	South Asia	South East Asia	Other (Canada/Australia/Oceania)	
Limited places available to study at (highly prestigious) universities in the home country	11	36	41	25	30	49	35	33	30
Specialise in an area which is not offered in the home country	27	58	62	38	44	55	41	33	43
Get a broader / more flexible education than offered in home country	58	60	86	69	84	81	85	22	72
Get a more practice-oriented education than offered in home country	47	42	79	48	66	70	63	11	57
Have access to specific laboratories/ equipment/ libraries not available/ accessible in home country	31	49	66	36	32	64	49	0	43
Experience new ways of thinking and acting in the field of study	73	64	76	78	95	84	88	22	79
Improve chances for an international career	78	77	83	73	78	77	80	67	78
Improve career prospects/ chances of getting a job in the home country	60	75	66	80	74	66	73	44	68
Learn or improve knowledge of a foreign language	65	36	24	58	72	22	78	0	53
Interest in foreign culture, history and landscape	53	42	45	32	55	48	71	22	51
Possibility to build up networks/ friendships in an intercultural context	59	50	79	60	53	67	73	56	61
Opportunity to develop the personality/ become more independent	72	58	79	69	68	79	73	44	71
Number (n)	(112)	(53)	(29)	(27)	(78)	(65)	(49)	(9)	(422)

Source: Survey on international students in the United States

Question 13: How important were the following reasons for your decision to study abroad?

\* Points 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "very important" to 5 = "not important at all"

Master's students and students from Sub-Saharan Africa were more likely than other respondents to rate as important in their decision the possibility to build up networks/friendships in an intercultural context (Table 10). Doctoral students were notably less interested in "foreign culture, history and landscape," than Bachelor and Master's students. Respondents from North Africa and the Middle East were also notably less likely to place importance on this category; as opposed to respondents from Southeast Asia, 72% of which placed importance on this category in their decision to study abroad.

**Table 10: Reasons for the decision to study abroad - importance by level of study (percentages\*)**

	Level of study				Total
	Bachelor student	Master student	Doctoral student	Not specified	
Limited places available to study at (highly prestigious) universities in the home country	38	32	24	18	30
Specialise in an area which is not offered in the home country	30	49	51	32	43
Get a broader / more flexible education than offered in home country	76	73	72	35	72
Get a more practice-oriented education than offered in home country	56	67	51	39	57
Have access to specific laboratories/ equipment/ libraries not available/ accessible in home country	34	43	54	9	43
Experience new ways of thinking and acting in the field of study	71	83	81	82	79
Improve chances for an international career	81	84	70	78	78
Improve career prospects/ chances of getting a job in the home country	64	72	69	64	68
Learn or improve knowledge of a foreign language	56	56	46	64	53
Interest in foreign culture, history and landscape	56	57	38	70	51
Possibility to build up networks/ friendships in an intercultural context	68	72	46	59	61
Opportunity to develop the personality/ become more independent	79	69	63	87	71
Count (n)	(120)	(131)	(150)	(23)	(424)

Source: Survey on international students in the United States Question 13: How important were the following reasons for your decision to study abroad?

\* Points 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "very important" to 5 = "not important at all"

### **III. Perceptions of the United States as Destination Country**

#### **1. Selection of Host Country and Host Institution**

##### **1.1 Selection of the United States as Destination Country**

Given that the study was conducted among international students in the United States it is not surprising that 100% of respondents reported having fluency in the English language. In addition, 17% reported fluency in French, 13% in Spanish, and 10% in German. Students were asked to rate possible reasons for having chosen to study in the United States on a scale of 1="very important" to 5="not important at all." The fact that the student had "proficiency in English" was given an importance score of 1 or 2 by 68% of respondents. This is the second highest indicated reason for deciding to study in the U.S.

**Table 11: Reasons for selecting the U.S. as destination country - importance by region of origin (percentages\*)**

	Region of origin								Total
	Europe	Latin America	Africa Sub-Sahara	North Africa and Middle East	East Asia	South Asia	South East Asia	Other (Canada/Australia/Oceania)	
Reputation of academic qualifications/degrees	71	79	82	92	91	95	90	44	83
Home qualification are accepted and allows to pursue the studies wanted	47	42	57	46	55	72	58	56	54
Proficiency in English	67	58	59	46	68	78	86	44	68
Affordability of cost of living and tuition fees	27	26	38	22	46	48	44	22	36
Personal safety and security while studying in the U.S.	14	27	41	35	37	46	45	22	32
Lifestyle, cultural opportunities, e.g. art, fashion, nightlife	27	19	28	35	45	53	22	35	
Compatriots, friends or family are living in the U.S.	20	23	54	42	24	29	31	22	27
Prior visits to the U.S.	30	36	25	29	17	13	24	22	25
Number (n)	(112)	(53)	(29)	(27)	(79)	(65)	(49)	(9)	(423)

Source: Survey on international students in the United States

Question 14: How important were the following aspects for selecting the United States as a destination country?

\* Points 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "very important" to 5 = "not important at all"

The most important reason for deciding to study in the United States, rated as a 1 or 2 in importance by 83% of respondents, was the reputation of academic qualifications or degrees in the United States. Students from Africa, Asia and the Middle East found it comparatively more important than students from Europe. This will be addressed again later.

Master's students were more likely than undergraduate or doctoral students to place importance on the fact that home qualifications are accepted and on lifestyle, cultural opportunities and nightlife. (Table 12)

**Table 12: Reasons for selecting the U.S. as destination country - importance by level of study (percentages\*)**

	Level of study				Total
	Bachelor student	Master student	Doctoral student	Not specified	
Reputation of academic qualifications/degrees	84	86	84	61	83
Home qualification are accepted and allows to pursue the studies wanted	39	66	56	48	54
Proficiency in English	57	73	69	87	68
Affordability of cost of living and tuition fees	32	37	41	18	36
Personal safety and security while studying in the U.S.	32	37	29	18	32
Lifestyle, cultural opportunities, e.g. art, fashion, nightlife	31	52	23	45	36
Compatriots, friends or family are living in the U.S.	29	39	18	9	27
Prior visits to the U.S.	34	22	19	23	25
Count (n)	(120)	(131)	(150)	(23)	(424)

Source: Survey on international students in the United States Question 14: How important were the following aspects for selecting the United States as a destination country?

\* Points 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "very important" to 5 = "not important at all"

As shown in table 12, respondents indicated that personal safety and security while studying abroad in the United States was only moderately important, giving it a mean rating of 3,1. There were, however, some distinct regional differences. While 45% of South Asian and 46% of Southeast Asian students found safety important, only 14% of Europeans found it important, giving it a mean rating of 3,9 (fairly unimportant).

## 1.2 Selection of the host institution in the United States

As noted earlier, 21% of respondents chose their destination first by deciding on a university. So what were students looking for in an institution? The top answer: 77% indicated that it was important or very important that the university offered a specific program or courses in their area of specialization. More Master's students (85%) indicated that this was important. Students from East and Southeast Asia placed more importance on the general prestige of the institution and the quality of education and research than on the actual programs or courses.

72% of all respondents placed importance on the "general prestige of the institution / quality of education and research." Also in the top five reasons given importance were: "possibility to receive financial aid from host university," "modern and technologically advanced teaching and learning methods," and "level of support/advice given to international students."

PhD students place higher importance on the possibility of receiving financial aid from the host university, compared to Bachelor and Master's students. (Table 14)

Less important were diversity on the host campus, or the location of the campus in a particular city.

**Table 14a: Reasons for selecting the host university - importance by level of study (percentages\*)**

	Level of study				Total
	Bachelor student	Master student	Doctoral student	Not specified	
General prestige of the institution/ quality of education and research	68	79	72	57	72
Offers of specific programmes/ courses in the area of specialisation	66	85	79	73	77
Offers of well-organised study programmes of limited duration	50	69	41	41	52
Transparent and simple admission procedures to study programmes	42	60	44	23	47
Level of support/ advice given to international students	56	64	56	32	57
Modern and technologically advanced teaching and learning methods	62	66	54	27	58
Students are from many different nationalities	42	51	26	23	38
Affordability of the course/ tuition fees	48	54	35	36	45
Possibility to receive financial aid from the host university	50	65	79	18	63
Attraction of living in the city where the institution is located	33	42	35	36	37
Easy to get suitable accommodation on or near the campus	38	44	28	14	35
Count (n)	(120)	(130)	(151)	(23)	(424)

Source: Survey on international students in the United States Question 15: How important were the following aspects for selecting your host university/a higher education institution in the United States?

\* Points 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "very important" to 5 = "not important at all"

**14b: Reasons for selecting the U.S. as destination country - importance by region of origin (percentages\*)**

	Region of origin								Total
	Europe	Latin America	Africa Sub-Saharan	North Africa and Middle East	East Asia	South Asia	South East Asia	Other (Canada/ Australia/ Oceania)	
Reputation of academic qualifications/degrees	71	79	82	92	91	95	90	44	83
Home qualification are accepted and allows to pursue the studies wanted	47	42	57	46	55	72	58	56	54
Proficiency in English	67	58	59	46	68	78	86	44	68
Affordability of cost of living and tuition fees	27	26	38	22	46	48	44	22	36
Personal safety and security while studying in the U.S.	14	27	41	35	37	46	45	22	32
Lifestyle, cultural opportunities, e.g. art, fashion, nightlife	27	19	28	35	45	45	53	22	35
Compatriots, friends or family are living in the U.S.	20	23	54	42	24	29	31	22	27
Prior visits to the U.S.	30	36	25	29	17	13	24	22	25
Number (n)	(112)	(53)	(29)	(27)	(79)	(65)	(49)	(9)	(423)

Source: Survey on international students in the United States

Question 14: How important were the following aspects for selecting the United States as a destination country?

\* Points 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "very important" to 5 = "not important at all"

## **2. Attitudes toward Higher Education in the United States (Table 18)**

In order to establish an idea of perceptions of the United States by international students, respondents were asked to identify their level of agreement on a list of statements about the United States. Each statement could be rated on a scale from 1="completely agree" to 5="completely disagree." As table 15 indicates, the top five statements with which students agreed are: "The United States is a modern, technologically advanced country," "The quality of higher education/ reputation of universities is excellent," "It has a high standard of living," "People are welcoming of foreigners/ people of different ethnicities," and "The U.S. has a good reputation around the world."

As noted earlier, 83% of all respondents agreed that the reputation of academic qualifications and degrees from the U.S. was important in their decision to study in the U.S. Europeans were less likely than others to note this as a factor. 71% of Europeans agreed while 95% of South Asians and 92% of students from North Africa and the Middle East agreed.

European students were also less likely than others to agree that the U.S., in general, has a good reputation around the world (giving it a mean rating of 3,1). Only 32% of Europeans agreed or completely agreed, while roughly 70% of South and Southeast Asians agreed. 65% of North African and Middle Eastern survey respondents agreed.

**Table 15: Level of agreement to statements about the U.S. - by region of origin (percentages\*)**

	Region of origin								Total
	Europe	Latin America	Africa Sub-Sahara	North Africa and Middle East	East Asia	South Asia	South East Asia	Other (Canada/Australia/Oceania)	
The quality of higher education/ reputation of universities is excellent	63	77	86	72	90	86	84	33	77
It is easy for international students to get work permissions	20	10	34	12	34	58	24	11	28
Good chances to live and work in the U.S. after my studies	37	14	41	31	44	65	35	38	39
Cost of living is affordable	37	19	31	30	31	40	35	11	32
Cost of study programmes/ tuition fees are low	6	0	17	15	10	21	15	0	11
People are welcoming towards foreigners/ people from different ethnic backgrounds	64	40	66	70	59	60	51	11	57
The U.S. has a good reputation around the world	32	50	52	65	58	70	71	0	52
It is a safe country to live in	36	53	38	56	21	60	47	22	41
It has a high standard of living	61	72	79	69	45	75	73	67	65
It is a modern and technologically advanced country	80	87	100	85	77	88	82	78	83
I like the climate/ weather in the U.S.	54	42	24	56	40	49	57	33	47
The U.S. has a rich history/ culture/ cultural heritage	16	23	34	33	23	35	35	11	26
It has an attractive lifestyle, e.g. music, fashion, nightlife, food	30	30	66	65	21	52	51	56	39
The geography/ landscape is fascinating	56	33	52	60	40	50	52	33	48
Number (n)	(112)	(53)	(29)	(27)	(79)	(65)	(49)	(9)	(423)

Source: Survey on international students in the United States

Question 18: To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the United States?

\* Points 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "completely agree" to 5 = "completely disagree"

Other notable findings include:

- Only 26% of the respondents think that the U.S. has a rich history, culture or cultural heritage (only 11% of Europeans think so).
- Among Bachelor's students, only 17% agreed or somewhat agreed that it is easy for international students to get permission to work in the United States. 65% of students from South Asia agreed with the statement that "there are good chances to live and work in the United States after my study.'
- While 57% of all survey respondents agreed that people in the United States are welcoming towards foreigners or people from different ethnic backgrounds, only 40% of Latin Americans agreed, the lowest percentage in that category among respondents.

### **3. Pre-Departure Preparations**

#### **3.1 Pre-Departure Sources of Information**

How did students get information on studying in the United States as well as other world regions? An overwhelming 77% of respondents listed both the Internet and institutional websites as major sources of information. Students in every region and at every level of study rated the Internet as a major information source.

**Table 16: Sources of information on studying in the U.S. and in other world regions/countries - importance by level of study (percentages\*)**

	Level of study				Total
	Bachelor student	Master student	Doctoral student	Not specified	
Personal visits/ journeys	57	48	41	52	49
Family (parents, siblings, spouse, etc.)	53	43	30	30	41
Friends/ fellow students in my home country	50	67	51	30	54
Family members/ friends living abroad	43	65	37	35	47
Foreign exchange students at my home school/university	19	26	12	9	18
Teachers/professors at my home school/university	35	38	49	26	40
Professors at universities in my destination country	29	43	49	17	40
Student associations	22	26	17	9	21
Education events/exhibitions/student fairs	29	32	24	17	27
(Commercial) education agents	19	20	11	9	16
Guides and directories of agencies in charge of student mobility	30	24	14	22	22
TV, newspapers, magazines, etc.	29	42	29	35	33
Foreign embassies in home country	24	29	14	17	21
Local offices/websites of organisations from the U.S. / EU in home country	28	52	31	30	36
Website of individual universities	68	87	78	74	77
Internet in general	74	83	76	70	77
Count (n)	(120)	(131)	(150)	(23)	(424)

Source: Survey on international students in the United States Question 22: How important are / were the following sources of information in contributing to your current knowledge on studying in the United States and in other world regions/countries? \* Points 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "very important" to 5 = "not important at all"

54% of respondents listed "friends/fellow students in my home country," as major sources of information on studying in the U.S. and various institutions. This figure is significantly higher, at 72%, among students from South Asia and somewhat higher, at 67%, among Master's students.

Less important were commercial education agents, student associations, foreign exchange students at the home campus, and foreign embassies.

#### **3.2 Pre-Departure Problems and Difficulties**

What difficulties did students encounter in planning their period of study in the U.S.?

Over half (53%) of respondents indicated that they encountered problems with complicated visa procedures or strict requirements when they were planning their study period in the United States. East Asian students (67%) and doctoral students (60%) were more likely to encounter problems with visa procedures than others. It is important to note that this survey included students who have been enrolled at campuses in the U.S. for 1 to 4 years. Therefore, their responses reflect visa policy from 2001 to 2004 and do not reflect more current policy and procedures.

38% of respondents reported having had some level of difficulty in getting financial resources for studying abroad. Only 20% of students had some level of difficulty with the recognition of credits/academic qualifications obtained in home country.

**Table 17: Problems encountered when planning the stay in the U.S. - by region of origin (percentages\*)**

	Region of origin								Total
	Europe	Latin America	Africa Sub-Sahara	North Africa and Middle East	East Asia	South Asia	South East Asia	Other (Canada/Australia/Oceania)	
Complicated visa procedures/ strict requirements	46	46	45	52	67	51	60	75	53
Difficulties with the recognition of credits/ academic qualifications obtained in home country	26	11	23	5	21	17	26	29	20
Lack of agreements between the home university and universities in the U.S.	20	12	11	14	11	20	19	17	16
The study programme wanted was not available	2	2	13	10	6	4	7	14	5
Getting the financial resources for studying abroad	37	35	38	36	36	40	41	50	38
Limited English language proficiency	2	4	0	14	16	4	9	17	7
Fear of social exclusion as an international student	4	6	11	4	22	10	19	13	11
Personal difficulties to stay far from home/ homesickness	14	13	15	24	12	21	17	13	15
Parental opposition against study abroad	3	2	4	8	12	7	6	13	6
Number (n)	(112)	(53)	(29)	(26)	(79)	(65)	(49)	(9)	(422)

Source: Survey on international students in the United States

Question 19: Were/ are any of the following issues a problem when planning your stay in the United States?

\* Points 4 and 5 on a scale from 1 = "no problem at all" to 5 = "to a very large extent"

## **V. Perceptions about European Higher Education**

### ***1. Consideration of Study in the European Union***

When selecting a destination for study abroad, only slightly more than half (58%) of respondents reported having considered study in one or more member states of the EU. A very significant number, 90%, of respondents from Africa had considered study within the EU. Of those who considered

study in the EU, the United Kingdom was the most popular destination by a wide margin (53%), followed by France (14%), Germany (13%) and Spain (7%).

Students from Latin America and Africa were more likely to consider studying in France than in any other EU member state, whereas students from Asia were more likely to consider studying abroad in Germany (Table 18).

**Table 18: Students' preferred destination countries in the EU - by region of origin (percentages)**

	Region of origin								Total
	Europe	Latin America	Africa Sub-Saharan	North Africa and Middle East	East Asia	South Asia	South East Asia	Other (Canada/Australia/Oceania)	
Austria	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Belgium	2	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	1
Denmark	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0
Finland	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
France	11	25	31	21	9	3	3	50	14
Germany	11	8	12	7	16	19	15	25	13
Greece	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Ireland	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Italy	6	3	0	7	3	0	0	0	3
Luxembourg	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0
Netherlands	0	0	4	0	3	3	0	0	1
Spain	11	19	0	7	0	0	6	0	7
Sweden	3	0	4	0	9	3	0	0	3
Switzerland	0	3	0	0	3	3	0	0	1
United Kingdom	47	42	50	50	53	65	76	25	53
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Number (n)	(64)	(36)	(26)	(14)	(32)	(31)	(33)	(4)	(240)

Source: Survey on international students in the United States

Question 16: Have you ever thought about studying abroad in one of the member states of the European Union?

## **2. Reasons for Deciding Against Studying the European Union**

Students who had at one point considered study in the EU were asked why they chose not to study in a EU member state. Responses were highly varied. Multiple responses were possible but only one category was listed by more than a third of respondents. 37% of students listed a lack of scholarships in the EU as a deciding factor. Lack of information was the second most often listed reason for deciding against study in the EU.

Students from Sub-Saharan Africa (54%) and from South Asia (60%), as well as Master's (45%) and doctoral students (47%) were more likely to indicate that lack of scholarships was an important reason for deciding against studying in the United States, than other students.

**Table 19: Reasons for deciding against studying in a EU member state - by region of origin (percentages, multiple response possible)**

	Region of origin								Total
	Europe	Latin America	Africa Sub-Sahara	North Africa and Middle East	East Asia	South Asia	South East Asia	Other (Canada/Australia/Oceania)	
U.S. was the favoured country	29	14	8	31	27	23	26	25	23
Cost of living is too high	12	31	23	13	19	38	26	0	22
Tuition fees are too high	6	17	19	13	24	33	24	0	18
Visa difficulties	6	6	12	13	3	13	0	0	7
Lack of scholarships	30	29	54	25	41	60	26	0	37
Type of courses available	7	14	19	19	14	13	6	25	12
Lack of information	20	29	27	25	27	38	38	0	28
I could not get a place on the course	1	3	4	0	3	3	0	0	2
I was not fluent enough in the language of tuition	10	11	8	13	19	20	18	0	14
Personal reasons	19	20	15	13	11	13	21	0	16
Other reason	23	29	23	25	11	10	29	75	22
Total	164	203	212	188	197	260	215	125	201
Number (n)	(69)	(35)	(26)	(16)	(37)	(40)	(34)	(4)	(261)

Source: Survey on international students in the United States

Question 17: You finally decided not to study in a EU country, but in the United States. Why?

### **3. Difficulties in Gathering Information on Studying in the European Union**

The survey listed 15 possible subjects for which students would need information in order to plan a study period in the EU. Students were asked to identify any of the subjects that they had difficulty finding information on. Half of all respondents indicated difficulty in finding a “ranking of universities by quality of education offered in my subject area.” The next three highest responses involved funding and scholarships from individual universities, EU member states, and EU scholarship programs. 39% of students found it difficult to find information on cost of living in the EU and 33% of students also indicated difficulty in finding general information about living and studying in individual EU member states.

**Table 20: Aspects linked to studying in the EU on which it was difficult to get information - by region of origin (percentages, multiple response possible)**

	Region of origin								Total
	Europe	Latin America	Africa Sub-Sahara	North Africa and Middle East	East Asia	South Asia	South East Asia	Other (Canada/Australia/Oceania)	
General information on living and studying in this country	23	38	15	36	45	40	32	0	33
Application procedures for visa / residence permit	22	36	31	18	39	27	32	29	30
Ranking of universities by quality of educational offers in my subject area	45	32	50	50	58	64	51	57	50
Where to find a suitable course programme in my subject area	25	28	38	27	30	40	30	14	30
Admission requirements	17	26	19	27	34	25	36	14	26
Academic degrees and teaching methods	12	28	31	14	19	25	23	0	20
Language teaching facilities	13	17	12	23	34	29	21	0	21
Courses taught in English (in non-English-speaking countries)	26	15	23	27	38	33	23	14	27
Availability of accommodation	20	21	23	27	12	25	21	14	20
Tuition fees	23	28	19	14	34	33	32	0	27
Living costs	39	36	38	32	49	36	38	0	39
EU scholarship programmes	24	34	50	41	50	58	34	14	39
Scholarship programmes supported by individual EU member states	28	43	54	32	46	62	30	14	40
Scholarships from individual universities	39	49	81	32	53	55	32	14	46
Other issues	6	4	12	0	4	5	0	14	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>434</b>	<b>496</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>543</b>	<b>558</b>	<b>436</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>454</b>
<b>Number (n)</b>	<b>(93)</b>	<b>(47)</b>	<b>(26)</b>	<b>(22)</b>	<b>(74)</b>	<b>(55)</b>	<b>(47)</b>	<b>(7)</b>	<b>(371)</b>

Source: Survey on international students in the United States

Question 23: If you had thought about studying in a member state of the European Union, for which of the following issues was it difficult to get information?

## **Annex: Websites**

### **General Information on U.S. Higher Education, Accreditation, Admissions and Educational System**

Accreditation in the U.S.

[www.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/index.html?src=gc](http://www.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/index.html?src=gc)

Alliance for International Educational and Cultural Exchange

[www.alliance-exchange.org](http://www.alliance-exchange.org)

Almanac of Higher Education, Chronicle of Higher Education

<http://chronicle.com/free/almanac/2004/index.htm>

American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers (AACRAO)

[www.aacrao.org](http://www.aacrao.org)

American Association of Community Colleges

[www.aacc.nche.edu](http://www.aacc.nche.edu)

American Council on Education

[www.acenet.org](http://www.acenet.org)

College Board

[www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org)

Council of Graduate Schools

[www.cgsnet.org](http://www.cgsnet.org)

Council for Higher Education Accreditation

[www.chea.org](http://www.chea.org)

Database of Accredited Institutions in the U.S.

[www.ope.ed.gov/accreditation](http://www.ope.ed.gov/accreditation)

EducationUSA

[www.educationusa.state.gov](http://www.educationusa.state.gov)

Institute of International Education:

[www.iie.org](http://www.iie.org)

NAFSA: Association of International Educators

[www.nafsa.org](http://www.nafsa.org)

National Association for College Admission Counseling

[www.nacac.org](http://www.nacac.org)

## **Statistics**

Atlas of Student Mobility:

<http://atlas.iienetwork.org>

National Center for Education Statistics, Department of Education

<http://nces.ed.gov>

*Open Doors* Report on International Educational Exchange

<http://opendoors.iienetwork.org>