

ABROAD PERSPECTIVE

New Numbers Warn of Looming "Crunch" in Australia

Australia's spectacular growth as an educator of foreign students has "ground to a halt," the country's opposition party claimed this week.

The party was commenting on enrollment numbers released last week by the Australian government. The figures show total foreign enrollments in 2005 up by 8.3 per cent over 2004—but new commencements up by only one per cent. Andrew Norton, a research fellow at the Centre for Independent Studies, said the trend will mean a "crunch" in the next few years for Australian universities used to ever-climbing revenues in the form of tuition from foreign students. The trend has some Australian university officials blaming government for not funding them enough, and others considering new strategies, such as catering to the special needs of foreign graduate students.

Sources: [Undated news release](#) from the Australian Education International web site (which makes no mention of the one-per-cent new enrollments figure) and ["Overseas Intake Faces Downturn,"](#) *The Australian*, March 8, 2006

OVER THE COUNTER

Two U.K. Giants to Offer Joint Online Degrees

Britain's two largest universities, the Open University and the University of Manchester, have joined forces to offer combined degrees overseas. Manchester vice-chancellor Alan Gilbert said the move is partly in response to growing demand from countries like China, which can't build brick-and-mortar universities fast enough to fill their needs. Higher education, he also said, is on the verge of being transformed into a much more competitive industry, in which only the largest players will survive. Some experts, however, think that U.K. schools will find it increasingly difficult to attract Chinese students.

Source: ["On the Brink of a Revolution,"](#) *The Guardian*, February 28, 2006

THE PLAYING FIELD

Bush Speech to Indian Students Signals Hotter Competition

President Bush's visit last week to India heralded a new era of intensified US-Indo relations, and education is a big piece of the American pie on offer.

The number of Indians studying in the U.S., which now stands at some 80,000, is already America's largest foreign student contingent. That figure is sure to climb after the president's speech before students in the southern Indian city of Hyderabad. Mr. Bush urged Indians to study in the U.S., and also announced a new consulate in Hyderabad to process visas—news very much welcomed in an area so focussed on U.S. education and job opportunities. While the U.S. global share of foreign students has slipped, its share of Indian students hasn't, and the recent news will only heat up the most competitive international student marketplace in the world. The U.K. and Australia already spend tens of millions of dollars in promotion and will now have to contend with a reinvigorated American presence. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice recently discussed giving "top priority" to the processing of student visas. The "game" is on.

Source: [March 3, 2006 news release](#) (with full text of Mr. Bush's speech and his (short) question-and-answer session with Indian students) from the U.S. Department of State web site

Globe Tipping

Not All Bottled Water is Pristine

Guidebooks frequently advise travelers to avoid drinking tap water. In some countries, however, bottled water may be no better--or worse.

A scam that has cropped up in some countries--India, for example--is to re-fill used water bottles with tap water and then re-sell it as bottled water. It can pay to get advice from trusted locals about which kinds of bottled water to buy and which to avoid. You might also want to take an extra-close look and make sure the seal around the cap hasn't been broken before you buy bottled water.

Tips on dealing with water and other issues overseas can be found on the [web site](#) of Arthur Blessitt, an avid world traveller.