

OVERSEAS OVERWHELMED

LET'S GO CANADA

US Student Visas No Longer An Issue?

The United States has "turned a corner" in its student visa processing; issuances increased by 1 percent this year and the State Department expects greater growth in the future. This information was relayed to participants by Maura Harty, Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs, in last week's Colloquy Live, an online discussion forum organized by *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Other signs of success that Harty cited included the hiring of 350 consular officers since 2001 and the clearance of a backlog involving 2,000 cases.

While the statistics are certainly encouraging for the American higher education community, it was acknowledged that the perception that it is difficult to enter the US was a damaging factor that caused decline in numbers. According to Harty, "student applicants often assume that the delays ... apply to all students." In fact, the delays, which Harty assured had been reduced, really only apply to less than 3 percent of all the applications – these cases often involve "special interagency clearances."

Throughout the discussion, Harty repeatedly stressed that "attracting foreign students to America is good for this country" and that priority is given for student visa applications at American embassies and consulates. She also encouraged universities on recruiting trips overseas to ensure that prospective students understand that "the measures that have been taken are not hindering the possibility to study in the United States."

For a full transcript of the discussion, visit:
<http://chronicle.com/colloquylive/2004/10/foreign/>

ABROAD PERSPECTIVE

Cost Of An Education

How important is the cost of an education to an international student? In a report released at the recent 18th IDP Australian International Education Conference, Australia will now have to compete with countries that used to supply international students, such as China, India or Singapore. These Emerging Asian Study Destinations (which also includes Hong Kong, Malaysia and Thailand) are offering international students cheaper education. According to the report, the total cost (living costs plus tuition) of a Bachelor of Engineering in Hong Kong is nearly 2 times less than Canada, 2.5 times less than Australia and 3 times less than an American public institution. One factor in affordability was cost of living; the report stated that the cost of living in Australia made it the second most expensive study destination, after the United Kingdom.

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While still able to compete with traditional destinations such as the United States or Canada, Australia now has to watch its own geographic backyard. Regardless of how Australia and its universities respond to this challenge, Asian students will benefit the most, as more higher education avenues have been opened to them. Higher-Edge has covered this trend of source countries becoming study destinations in previous issues of *Overseas, Overwhelmed* (most recently in [4.25](#) and [4.07](#)).

Source: "[Comparative Costs of Higher Education for International Students 2004](#)," IDP Education Australia, September 2004 (PDF format).

OVER THE COUNTER

Opening Overseas Offices

For the past six years, Middlesex University has forgone the usual approach of recruiting Indian students. While other higher education institutions have relied on agents, fairs, tours or umbrella organizations (such as the CEC in Canada or IDP in Australia), the British university has preferred to use its own offices in New Delhi and Chennai. According to Pragyat Singh, manager of the New Delhi office, Indian students applying to Middlesex benefit greatly from his ability to issue admission letters immediately.

The entire point of opening an office in India, says Singh, was to avoid working with education agents. As Higher-Edge covered in [Overseas, Overwhelmed 4.26](#), the possibility of misinformation can hurt international student recruitment. A physical presence in India and an extremely fast response time can be vital for universities looking to increase their student recruitment efforts. For higher education institutions considering this option, Singh suggests that knowledge is very important; both the university and its representatives in the foreign country need to be fully aware of the various nuances of both education systems.

GLOBE TIPPING

Watching Out For Water

While perhaps it seems like a piece of common sense, in certain countries, it is best to avoid drinking tap water. There are a variety of diseases that you can catch, such as hepatitis A and B. In high-risk countries, even ice cubes should be avoided. Bottled water is usually safe, although some guides stress using it for every activity, including brushing your teeth. When ordering at a restaurant, you might want to request your waiter to open a bottle at your table, to ensure they are not simply filling a bottle with local water. We advise our readers traveling overseas to keep well informed of the various risks involved with drinking local water.