

# China grows as a study hotspot for US students

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Paris

## Beijing connect

China's rise as an economic powerhouse is resulting in a rapid expansion of its system of higher education, making it the fastest-growing destination for American foreign exchange students, a study has found. The number of American students seeking higher education in China has never been greater, increasing by 90 per cent from 2002 to 2004, according to the study by the Institute of International Education, a research organisation based in New York.

At the same time, increasing numbers of Chinese students are attracted by university training in the US, solidifying America's position as the top destination for Chinese students abroad, according to the study, which was financed by the US State Department. Alan Goodman, president of the institute, ties the phenomenon to the pace of change in China, which is spending billions of dollars to expand and transform its higher educational facilities into world-class institutions.

"This is a real measure of the impact of globalisation," Goodman said during a recent visit to Paris during which he highlighted the study's results on China. "The only way an American student is going to understand what a Chinese student might think about our country and its policies is to sit next to one in class." The building spree in China is helping fuel student visits by Americans and other foreigners, drawn by the better facilities now available and by the prospect of gaining expertise in the world's most populous country.

The jump in enrollment stems in part from a rebound in study in East Asia following the SARS epidemic, which closed down several programs in spring and summer 2003. Just before that severe acute respiratory syndrome outbreak, however, the number of American students studying in China increased at a faster rate than any of the

In the 2004-2005 academic year, China sent more than 62,000 students to the United States, nearly 60 per cent more than a decade earlier, the study showed.

The Chinese now represent 11 per cent of foreign students in the United States, the second-largest group behind students from India, according to the study.

4,737 US students enrolled in Chinese universities in the 2003-2004 academic year, the institute's study found, up from 2,493 students the previous year.

Nationwide in China, the number of students enrolled in higher education has more than doubled in less than five years. In 2000, the country counted 5.8 million university students; by 2004, that number had rocketed to 13.3 million.

other top 15 destination countries, rising 33 per cent from 2000 to 2001. The enrollment figures this year are 21 percent higher than the pre-SARS mark. China now ranks ninth as a host destination for American students, advancing from the No 12 spot a year earlier.

Jobs are an important consideration for American students heading to China, according to Chih-Ping Chou, professor of East Asian Studies at Princeton University. "China is a job market," Chou said. "Twenty years ago only those interested in Chinese literature would study Chinese language. Now all professions have opened up."

For Chinese students in America, training in the US has benefits beyond exposure to a new culture. "The Chinese government has a lot of incentive programs to recruit Chinese students once they've studied in the US," Denise Chu, overseas program manager for the Centre of East Asian Studies at Stanford University, said by telephone. —HT

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