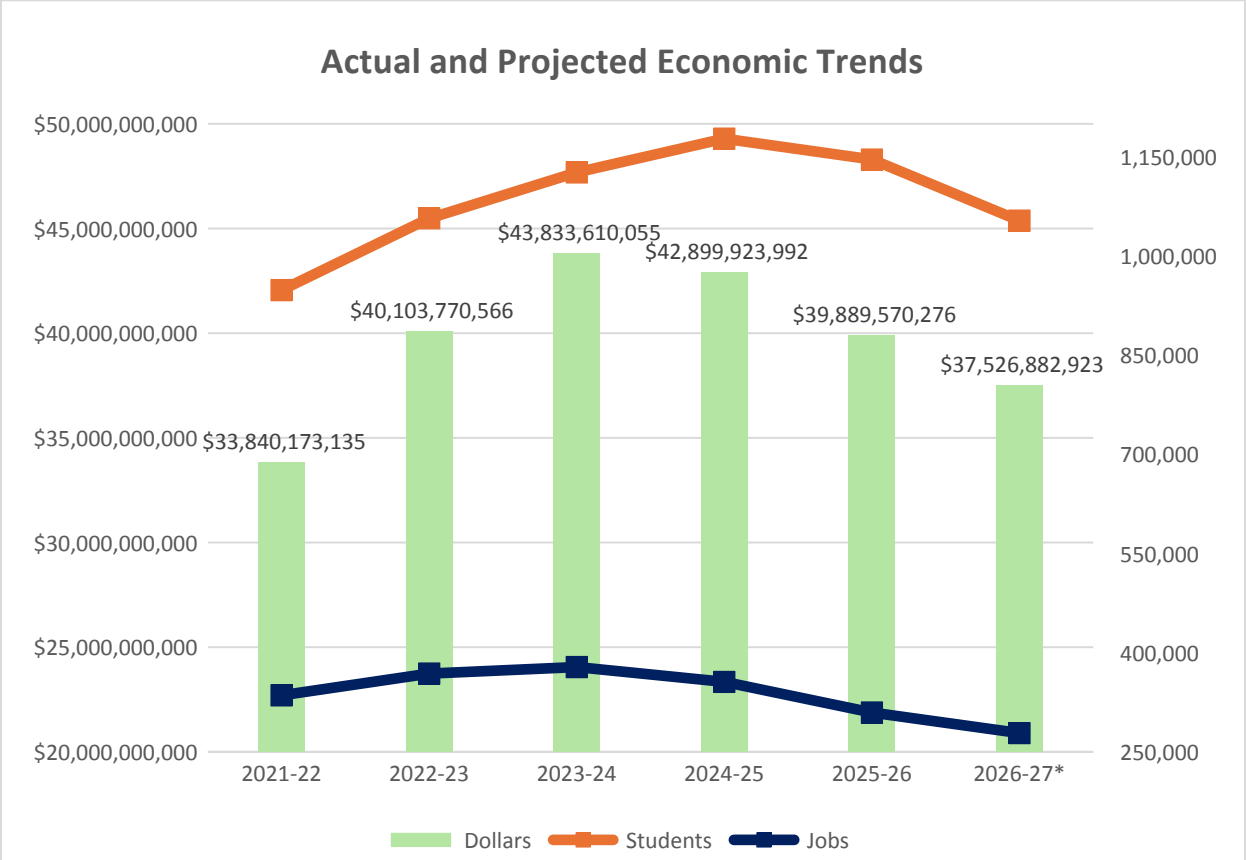
November 2026

Fall 2026 International Student Enrollment Snapshot & Economic Impact

15% decline in new international student enrollment contributes to lost revenue and jobs

Overview

Projections by NAFSA: Association of International Educators and JB International based on the Fall 2026 Snapshot on International Student Enrollment published by the Institute of International Education (IIE) along with the latest available SEVIS data show downward shifts in international student enrollment and their contributions to the U.S. economy for Fall 2026. IIE survey findings revealed a 15 percent decline in new student enrollment. This decline, combined with our analysis of October SEVIS data, produces a 9 percent decline in total enrollment—excluding students on Optional Practical Training (OPT). **Our analysis finds this translates into over $2.4 billion of lost revenue and over 31,000 fewer jobs.**



Projections

	Total International Students (incl OPT)	Dollars Contributed (billions)**	Jobs Supported**
2024–2025 Actuals	1,177,766	$42.9B	355,736
2025-2026 Actuals	1,146,163	$39.9B	309,409
2026-2027 Snapshot Enrollment*	1,053,668	$37.5B	278,208

*2026-2027 9 percent enrollment decline (minus OPT) based on IIE Fall 2026 International Student Enrollment Snapshot Survey and SEVIS by the Numbers data for active students.
**Dollars and jobs calculation does not include students on OPT.

What's Driving the Decline?

- **Graduate enrollment declines:** Graduate enrollment fell 15 percent cutting into higher-spending populations that typically contribute more through tuition, living costs, and accompanying dependents.
- **Overall US-based funding increases:** Comparing 2024 and 2025 Open Doors data, the composition of the international graduate-level population shifted. The overall graduate enrollment decline seen in 2025 was concentrated at the master's level, while doctoral enrollment held steady. Because doctoral students receive US-based funding at higher rates than master's students, this compositional shift caused the share of students with US-based funding to grow as a share of the overall population, even absent any change in funding behavior itself. Assuming this pattern persists, we project the increased share of US-based funding to continue in 2026.
- **Enrollment mix decreases spending:** We project that OPT participation will exceed 30 percent of total international student enrollment for the first time ever; this is despite declining 6 percent this fall, meaning a growing proportion of international students contributes zero dollars to tuition, housing, or dining revenue.
- **Larger undergraduate enrollment decline:** The Fall 2025 Snapshot conducted by IIE projected a 2 percent increase in international undergraduate enrollment; however, according to *Open Doors 2026*, it was effectively zero percent. Without that 2 percent cushion and with the Fall 2026 Snapshot projecting a decline of 3 percent, the loss is compounding.

Policy Solutions

To address this decline, NAFSA urges the administration to:

1) improve visa availability and processing for all F and M students and J exchange visitors;
2) exempt F and M students as well as J exchange visitors from the travel ban affecting nationals from 39 countries while maintaining background checks and vetting required for visa issuance;
3) protect F-1 student access to practical training (OPT and curricular practical training); and
4) preserve the Duration of Status policy.

For More Information

To explore a state-by-state analysis of the Fall 2026 international enrollment snapshot and economic analysis, visit nafsa.org/fall2026report.

Methodology

JB International based its Fall 2026 economic analysis using the following sources: SEVIS Data Mapping Tool, *Open Doors 2026* (academic year 2025-26), IIE Fall 2026 Snapshot on International Student Enrollment, and the NAFSA International Student Economic Value Tool powered by JB International.

About NAFSA: Association of International Educators

NAFSA: Association of International Educators is the world's largest and most comprehensive nonprofit association dedicated to international education and exchange. NAFSA promotes policies that ensure the continued growth and impact of global learning, cultural exchange, and mutual understanding through study abroad, international student services, and campus internationalization. With a network of more than 9,000 professionals in the field at more than 2,300 institutions, NAFSA is committed to fostering a more globally connected and peaceful world. nafsa.org.

About JB International

JB International is the team behind Trilby Suite, a modern case management platform that helps institutions manage international employees, scholars, and students while meeting complex regulatory requirements. With over 60 years of combined experience in international education and immigration compliance, JB International also leads research and data initiatives that support the field at large. jb.international/