

Summary of Student Perspectives Series Meeting, February 25, 2021

Trustees in Attendance: Michael J. Klingensmith, Thomas A. Cole, Rika Mansueto, Gregory W. Wendt

Students in Attendance: Steven Wendeborn (2nd Year MBA student, Chicago Booth, Graduate Liaison), Itzel Velázquez (4th Year, College, Undergraduate Liaison), Eliana Fram (2nd Year MA student, Harris School), Ronit Ghosh (3rd Year PhD student, Humanities Division), Leigh Grant (4th Year PhD student, Social Sciences Division), Matt Lowenstein (6th Year PhD student, Social Sciences Division), Rohail Premjee (3rd Year MBA/MPP student, Chicago Booth and Harris), Alexandra Salgado (3rd Year MBA/MPP student, Chicago Booth and Harris)

Guest in Attendance: Katie Hrinyak, Assistant Vice President, Global Initiatives and Strategy

The topic of the February 25 meeting centered on the University's global presence and strategy, particularly with respect to the impact on graduate and professional student recruitment and scholarship. In advance of the meeting, the liaisons prepared a memorandum for the trustees that included background information on activities associated with UChicago's global centers, recruitment and admission of graduate and professional students from abroad, and outreach and engagement with international alumni.

Mr. Klingensmith opened the meeting by welcoming everyone in attendance and inviting them to introduce themselves. Following introductions, he then briefly described the role and responsibilities of the Board and how they are distinct from those of the University's senior leadership and administration. Mr. Klingensmith summarized the purpose of the Student Perspectives Series and noted that comments made by the trustees at SPS meetings reflect their own views and not those of the Board as a whole.

The discussion started with the observation that while the University of Chicago has always been international, the last twenty years have seen real momentum in the carving out of a strategy and footprint around the world. The students in attendance were asked to describe their view of UChicago's global presence and how it has affected them?

The University's reputation as a leader in the field of economics was mentioned as being well-known and a major source of its reputational prestige, especially throughout Asia. It was noted that while many of the University's professional degree programs could be characterized as "international," there is a distinction between the curriculum (which is frequently theoretical and not defined as taking a "global" approach *per se*) versus the lived experience of many students (who were born, have lived and/or worked internationally). This is in contrast to programs at other institutions such as Harvard or Columbia where international content and topics are baked into the academic program.

The global centers were commended as being important resources for students conducting research and other scholarly activities abroad. The Beijing Center, for example, provides office space, VPN access, storage and a venue for meeting fellow scholars including graduate students from other divisions and programs. The global center staff members are also very helpful and knowledgeable.

The trustees were asked to share their thoughts on what the next ten to twenty years hold in store for the University's global strategy. The momentum cited earlier was attributed to the combined forces of aspiration and strategy and a belief that having a global presence adds to the University's strengths. Operating globally is not a risk-free endeavor, however; recent political developments in Hong Kong, for instance, such as the 2020 passage of the Hong Kong security law potentially pose challenges for University scholarship at the Yuen Campus, particularly with respect to academic freedom/freedom of expression. Another observation was that institutions of higher education will be impacted by global forces whether they possess a global strategy or not – the COVID-19 pandemic, world politics, the economy and climate change are examples of phenomena that affect U.S. colleges and universities irrespective of their global reach. There is also a need to track what is happening globally to be exposed to innovation and new ideas. In terms of core University values, cross-cultural exposure is intrinsic to perspective gathering and understanding, which is another reason why UChicago is necessarily "global."

The conversation included the observation that there are many facets of international activity at UChicago that are needed to support scholarship and research. There is an extensive infrastructure and knowledge base, for instance, around immigration services, acquiring visas and travel. The University has a special obligation to provide this platform to faculty, students and staff.

Not every American college and university takes the same approach to global engagement and activity. Some have made the deliberate choice not to sponsor international programs or establish centers or campuses abroad because the potential risks (e.g., quality control, non-friendly governments) are too high. It was agreed that quality control is important for sustaining an institution's reputation and "brand," which is why the College's study abroad programs are led and taught by UChicago faculty and why the University does not co-brand degrees with other academic institutions.

The students were asked to comment on UChicago's international reputation; if the University is perceived as an "upstart" relative to older and/or more well-known American universities, does that impact the quality of students who are recruited and admitted from abroad? The students present generally did not think that the quality of admitted students is compromised. In some regions of the world and areas of scholarship, selection bias favors UChicago: for example, in China the top 10-20% of students know about the University and its reputation, even if the vast majority of the Chinese population at large does not. Additionally, the path to UChicago can be very filtered in terms of applicants being part of the same networks and taking the same pathways to the institution. This may result in some very talented applicants missing out because

they are not part of those networks or lack access to the same pathways. Chicago Booth has become aware of this recently in its efforts to reach international talent.

It was noted that there are some master's students in the graduate divisions, specifically Humanities and Social Sciences, who feel that the institution views them primarily as sources of revenue rather than invested member of the scholarly community. This is partly due to the short-term nature of their programs and their high cost relative to funded doctoral programs. Even within master's degree programs, some students perceive discrepancies in how the program is experienced based on financial circumstances and/or the extent of one's prior professional experiences.

Students also shared their thoughts on what led them to find their way to UChicago from overseas. Many are very self-driven and discovered UChicago through their own scholarly interests and curiosity rather than through any general exposure from their undergraduate institution or awareness of UChicago in their home country. In India, for instance, UChicago is very well known and highly regarded by those seeking academic careers, especially in India's major cities. In contrast, in parts of western Europe, Ivy League institutions are often seen as a "surer bet" than UChicago. According to one student, UChicago's eminent reputation in India was extremely advantageous in brokering partnerships with local cultural institutions that were essential to faculty research projects in which he was involved.

The students agreed that UChicago's physical presence around the world helps with building awareness of the institution and burnishes its reputation. This can be particularly impactful when considering recruiting and connecting prospective and current students with alumni. Yale's School of Management was mentioned as having a strong student ambassadors program that UChicago schools and divisions could emulate. Ambassadors can host events and gatherings for prospective students and local alumni in many parts of the world and help raise the profile of the program and university. Beyond physical presence, institutional policies can also be crucial to successful recruitment of scholars and students. Many grants for international research require the inclusion of a collaborator from the country or region where the research will take place. This ends up being mutually beneficial in terms of building resources and networks, in addition to getting the University's name more widely known.

Outside of professional degree programs, positive "brand" recognition is not a first order goal for most prospective doctoral students and faculty. UChicago's strong reputation for academic excellence is what draws talent more than awareness of the institution in general or the particular physical footprint it may have abroad.

The final minutes of the meeting were spent discussing the impact of the pandemic on UChicago's global activities and presence. The flexibility afforded by Zoom and similar platforms to simultaneously engage people in multiple time zones offers several advantages. For example, earlier this academic year Professor Chuan He (Department of Chemistry) led a non-credit/non-certificate lecture series that was open to students at UChicago and Peking University,

which gave PKU students a unique opportunity to learn “alongside” UChicago students and, in turn, opened up a potentially valuable talent pipeline from that institution. Nevertheless, there was consensus that the University’s physical presence overseas will always be necessary and valuable. One of the graduate students in attendance cited the major benefits of being able to utilize spaces at the Yuen Campus in Hong Kong, the Paris Center and the Beijing Center to interview human subjects for behavioral science research. Trying to find spaces in those cities for such interviews would have been extremely difficult, so having the centers available is a huge asset to the University.



STUDENT PERSPECTIVES SERIES: WINTER 2021 MEMORANDUM

TO: Student Perspectives Series Trustees
FROM: Steven Wendeborn, Graduate Liaison to the Board of Trustees
DATE: February 16, 2021
SUBJECT: Strategic Themes and Question Prompts for the February 25th SPS Meeting

We look forward to meeting with you soon to discuss **the University's international presence, reputation, and long-term strategy**. In advance of our meeting, we are proposing the following themes and question prompts for your consideration, which we hope can instigate a robust and productive conversation:

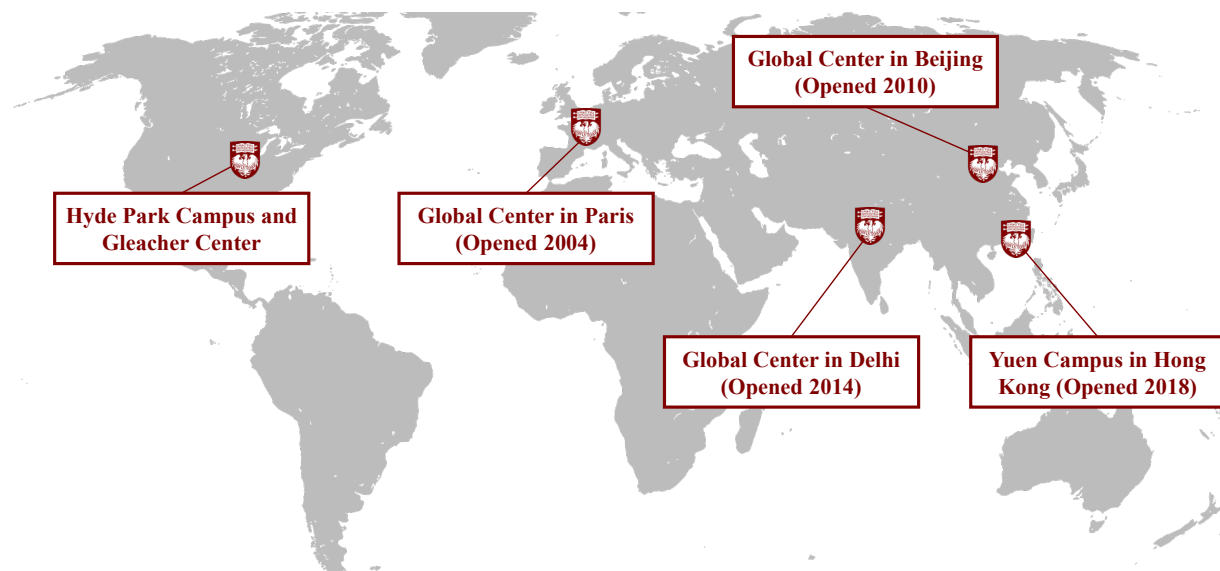
1. Plans for long-term international development and growth: The University of Chicago has been international since its inception, but our international presence has been strengthened recently by the establishment of the Global Centers in Paris, Beijing, Delhi, and most recently the Yuen Campus in Hong Kong. How is the University planning to maintain and strengthen its reputation globally, especially compared to its domestic peer schools? How will partnerships with other leading academic institutions in other countries contribute to this effort?

2. Strategies to identify and recruit top international candidates for graduate programs: International recruitment of top talent is critical to supporting ongoing faculty research here in Chicago, as well as the creation of diverse classes at the professional and graduate schools. The newest and most groundbreaking academic insights are also increasingly associated with cross-border collaboration between research institutions. What systems are in place for UChicago to solicit applications from candidates in other countries, and how can those systems be improved? How can we leverage the Global Centers to expand our talent pipelines and create new links with other universities?

3. Outreach and engagement with international alumni: UChicago alumni in other countries are extremely important in terms of strengthening the University's local recognition and awareness. How does the University engage with and leverage the alumni communities abroad? How does the alumni base factor into the University's long-term plans for brand-building and development? In what ways will this differ between the various graduate divisions at UChicago, especially in the professional versus academic schools?

As we move through our conversation, we look forward to learning how the Trustees' experience in their respective fields of expertise inform their opinions on these questions. The students selected to attend the meeting are excited to share their perspectives with the representatives from the Board. We sincerely appreciate the time and energy of all parties involved in making this SPS meeting a success and look forward to a productive conversation.

Plans for long-term international development and growth.



UChicago Global's mission is "to enhance the reach of the UChicago community in a constantly evolving landscape by activating and energizing partnerships, capturing and disseminating knowledge, and providing strategic and operational support abroad."¹ While this spirit has defined the University over the past 140 years, the most recent decades have seen the creation of three Global Centers in Europe and Asia, as well as a new campus in Hong Kong. In addition to the Global Centers, many of the respective graduate divisions maintain an international presence through individual outposts such as the Booth Executive Education Campus in London, or the Oriental Institute's Chicago House in Egypt. The University's commitment to international outreach is mirrored by the composition of the on-campus graduate student body in Chicago, in which a significant portion of our classmates are from overseas. Importantly, neither the application nor matriculation rates of international students have declined significantly over the last few years, in which recent national-level decisions have increased the uncertainty surrounding the possibility of graduate-level study in the United States for international candidates.

Current international graduate students at UChicago have noted that while the school maintains a very strong reputation both domestically and internationally, there is a discrepancy between the American perception of UChicago (an established institution at the forefront of progress) and UChicago's international conception (an upstart school that is rapidly expanding its global reach). While familiarity with UChicago's academic legacy is fairly common, the school is less regularly recognized for its professional development opportunities. More often, a comprehensive understanding of the school's stature is only developed once prospective graduate students seriously begin to evaluate the various institutions in the United States.

Strategies to identify and recruit top international candidates for graduate programs.

International graduate students are critical to the University's research enterprises, classroom perspectives, and community development. The way in which these students have charted their paths from abroad to UChicago looks markedly different, however, depending on the students' home countries and graduate divisions. Given the decentralized nature of the University and the independence with which each graduate division administers its own admission process, the Global Centers have been important venues for the University to present a unified point of entry for

¹ Global.uchicago.edu/uchicago-global-office as of January 2020.

international students to receive an initial introduction to the opportunities that UChicago can provide.

As the University seeks to continue the trend towards broader outreach to prospective international graduate students, the links with academic partnership institutions will also remain important. Professional divisions such as the Booth School of Business or the Harris School of Public Policy, themselves home to student populations that are over 25% international, not only provide exchange programs for overseas study, but also maintain institutionalized post-graduation placement opportunities with government offices² (e.g. the Ministry of Finance in Indonesia and the Bank of Japan) and corporate partners (e.g. Samsung, Suntory, and Tencent).

Graduate students specifically cited two areas of potential improvement with regard to the recruitment of international candidates. First is the possibility of engaging other areas of graduate programs beyond just the admissions department in the application process. Some schools do this better than others, and knowledge-sharing in this area would be beneficial. Second, there is very little contact between admitted and current students prior to matriculation – current students can serve as an important resource to ease the transition to the United States.

Outreach and engagement with international alumni.

The University's path towards international growth and development has been supported by the extensive networks of alumni communities across the world. These alumni can work to create positive feedback loops for their respective graduate programs, leading to greater recruitment and visibility for the University as a whole. Alumni are also critical for undergraduate recruitment as many of them will consider sending their children to study at the College. For graduate students seeking international post-graduate positions, either academic or professional, reaching out to the UChicago alumni network is often among the primary steps taken towards that goal. Similarly, students interested in coming to UChicago to study will start by contacting a local alum of that program. While the onus of outreach currently falls on students, formalized channels to connect with alumni within specific fields on interest can add value.

² [Harris.uchicago.edu/research-impact/initiatives-partnerships/international-partnerships](https://harris.uchicago.edu/research-impact/initiatives-partnerships/international-partnerships)



STUDENT LIAISONS TO THE BOARD 2020 – 2021

GRADUATE LIAISON: Steven Wendeborn



Steven is a second-year student at the Booth School of Business and an alum of the College. As an undergraduate at UChicago, he majored in Economics and Law, Letters & Society and was a member of the Maroon Key Society, as well as a recipient of the Howell Murray Alumni Award. After graduation, Steven joined J.P. Morgan's investment banking division in New York, where he will return next year as an associate in their Mergers & Acquisitions group.

Originally from Singapore, Steven has lived and worked in Seoul, Beijing, and Sydney in addition to Minnesota and New York. Outside of Booth, he enjoys open-water swimming, learning new languages, and travelling.

UNDERGRADUATE LIAISON: Itzel Velázquez



Itzel is a fourth year in the College majoring in Neuroscience and Psychology. She is involved in Peer Health Exchange, the Society for Scientists of Color, and is an author on publications in the Awh Vogel Lab, where she studies working memory capacity and visual attention. She plans to continue to graduate school post-graduation.

Outside of the rigorous academics UChicago brings, Itzel enjoys running along the lakefront, dancing, and finding new places to eat in Chicago.

STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN THE FEBRUARY 25 SPS MEETING

Eliana Fram

Eliana is a master's degree candidate in International Development and Policy at the Harris School of Public Policy focusing on information and communication technology policy. Prior to Harris, she worked as a communications advisor for Argentina's National Government and Buenos Aires City Government, covering equity in access to broadband, digital literacy, and governmental innovation. Eliana holds a BA in Social Communication and a graduate degree in Social and Political Anthropology.

Ronit Ghosh

Ronit is a third-year PhD student in the department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations working on the history of modern Bengali music during the early twentieth century, especially with the entry of radio and gramophone in India. His larger interests lie in the philosophy of aesthetics, media studies, ethnomusicology and popular music studies. He has been associated with two faculty-led projects sponsored by the UChicago Center in Delhi: one on the archiving of ephemera related to modern Bengali music (in collaboration with Victoria Memorial Hall, Kolkata) and the other called *Chicago Dialogues*. He is a classical violinist and an aspiring music composer.

Leigh Grant

Leigh is a fourth-year doctoral candidate working under Dr. Boaz Keysar in the Department of Psychology. Her research to date has examined the impact of making decisions through a native language, as compared to a nonnative language, and has specifically studied how language influences health-related decision making, conflict resolution, and negotiation processes and outcomes. Throughout her time at the University of Chicago, she has conducted research at the University of Chicago Centers in Beijing and Paris, recruiting and collecting data from a diverse sample of bilingual participants not otherwise easily accessible from within the United States. Data collected for her projects at the Centers has resulted in a number of publications in journals such as *Psychological Science* and *Cognition*.

Matt Lowenstein

Matt is a PhD student in the History Department and has spent extensive time researching in China using the Center in Beijing as a base. His research interests are in modern China and transnational history; financial, business, and social history; and the history of Sichuan. Previously, he worked as a financial analyst in Beijing and New York. His dissertation is "Mao Money, Mao Problems: Sichuan Bankers, Manchukuo Colonialism, and the origins of the PRC Financial Apparatus, 1927-1958."

Rohail Premjee

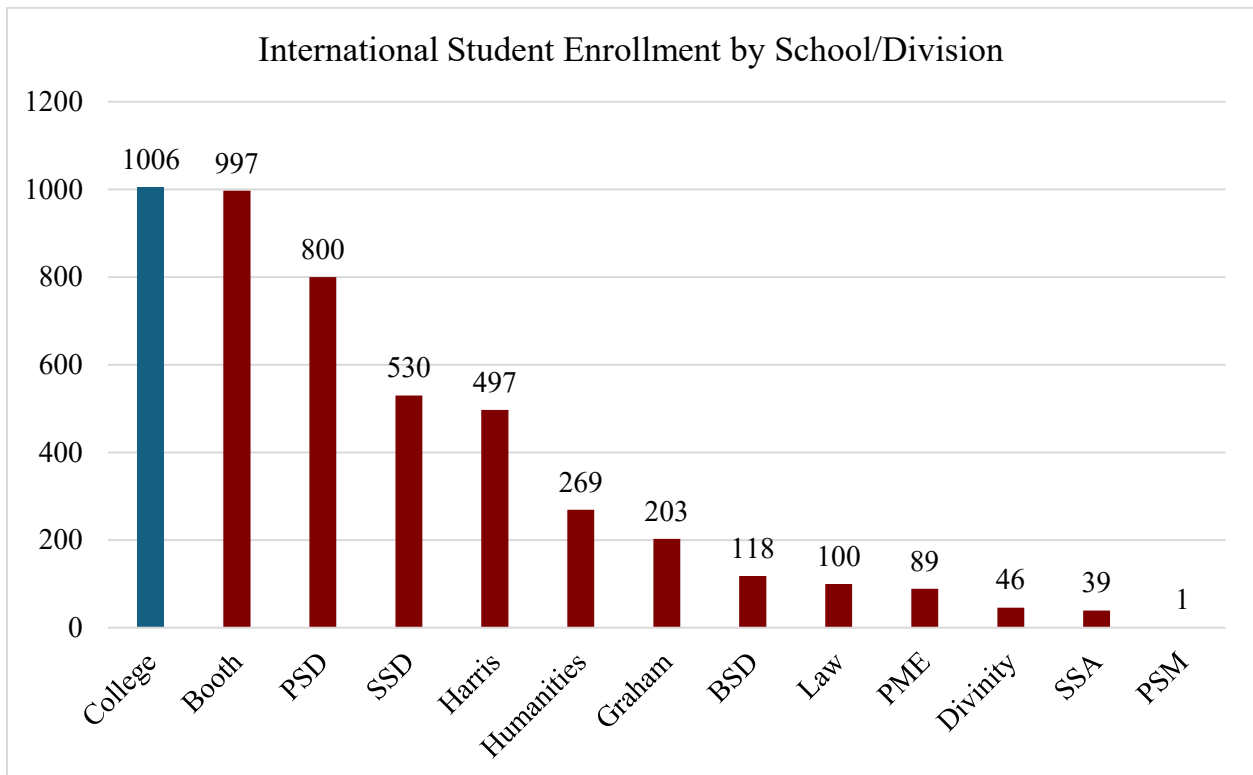
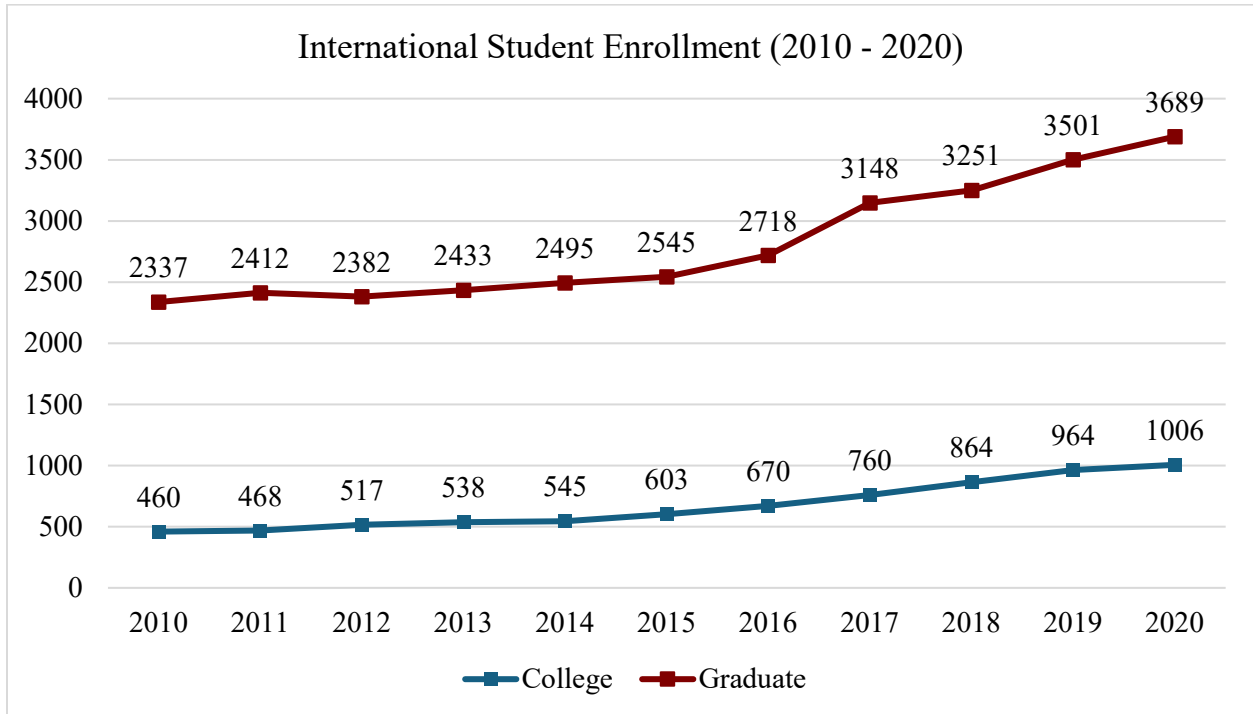
Rohail is currently the UChicago Graduate Council Co-President and a third-year graduate student currently pursuing a joint MBA/MPP degree candidate at the Booth School of Business and Harris School of Public Policy. Prior to attending the University of Chicago, Rohail earned his undergraduate degrees in government and philosophy from Dartmouth College, graduating cum laude. After graduation, Rohail was awarded the Dartmouth Presidential Fellowship to work in the President's Office at Dartmouth on strategic planning for new initiatives. Rohail plans to transition to management consulting for social and public sector organizations and interned as a Consultant at Accenture's Public Service practice in Boston, where he plans to return after graduation.

Alexandra Salgado

Alexandra (Alex) is currently UChicago Graduate Council VP of Community Initiatives and a third-year joint MBA/MPP degree candidate at the Booth School of Business and the Harris School of

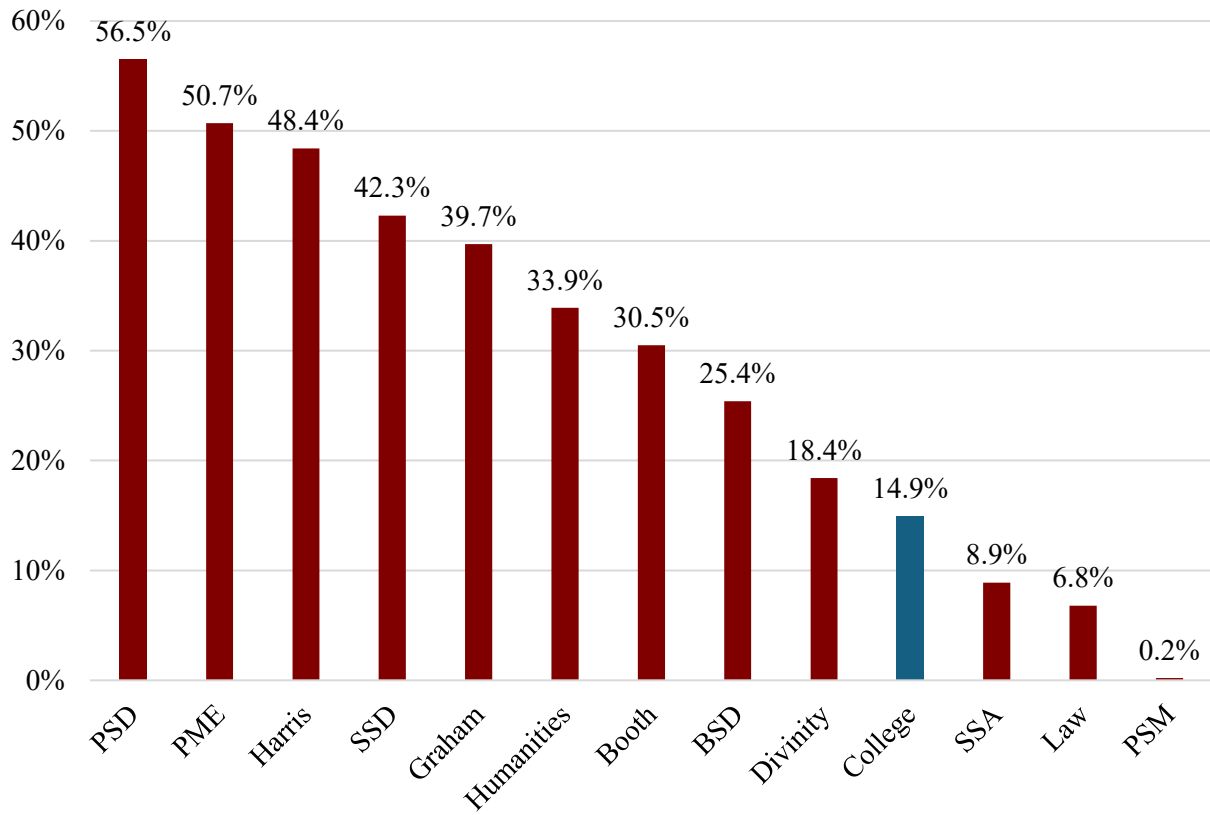
Public Policy, pursuing concentrations in economics, strategic management, and behavioral science. Prior to graduate school, Alex served as a senior political and policy advisor to the President of the California State Senate, specializing in public safety, housing, and transportation. Upon graduation, she will be going into management consulting with the Boston Consulting Group in Los Angeles. She received her B.A. from Stanford University, majoring in Political Science.

APPENDIX A: SELECT DATA ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS³



³ Source for all data is the Office of the University Registrar, February 2021

Percent of International Students by School/ Division



International Students: Top 10 Countries

