

*The following article, published in the January 2007 issue of Connections, outlines best practices for using locator reports.*

Making Effective Use of Locator Reports

By Rajika Bhandari, Ph.D. and HeyKyung Koh

To kick off International Education week, the Institute of International Education (IIE) released the *Open Doors 2006 Report on International Educational Exchange*. Though the data reveals that the total number of international students studying in the United States has remained essentially the same as the previous year, the number of new international students increased by 8%, suggesting that total international enrollment has stabilized and is poised to rebound. The possibility of an increase in future international student enrollment is reinforced by a U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs report which reveals a strong rise in the number of student visas issued in the year ending September 2006. Equally encouraging, 52% of U.S. campuses reported increases in new enrollments for Fall 2006 in an on-line survey conducted jointly last month by IIE and seven other national higher education associations.

Locator Reports

As overseas advisors, you have access to **Locator Reports**, containing a list of colleges and universities that reported enrollments of students from particular places of origin. IIE produces these reports from the data collected from the International Student Census component of the Open Doors survey. The data contained in the locator report do not appear in the Open Doors publication or on the website. Because the reports contain detailed institutional data, they are considered confidential and should not be posted or published, distributed electronically, or shared widely or in detail (especially the academic level and overall totals per institution). Institutions provide this data to us with the understanding that the information will not be shared outside of the REACs and Education USA Advising Centers. Despite their restricted use, the Locator Reports remain an empowering advising tool.

A thorough understanding of the distribution of students from your country will enhance your ability to advise students and set future targets. What part of the United States do students from your country tend to study in? At which universities are students from your region well-represented? Additionally, compare this year's report to prior years and assess the trends. Do you notice any shifts or changes? Are more or less students studying at X university than previously? What are the trends for your region as a whole?

Once you have interpreted the data, use it to guide your students. Kristen Cammarata, REAC for the Middle East, North Africa and Southern Europe, suggests discussing Locator Report data with students once they decide which institutions they are interested in and especially when they start researching scholarship opportunities. "We tell them to

look for places that might want someone from their country,” says Cammarata. In addition to helping students apply strategically, Cammarata notes that sharing general information from the locator report with students can help give them a feel for the environment they will live and study in. “If they see there is no one from their country or even their region, we tell them to think a bit more about how they might feel in this situation,” she says.

Locator Reports should also serve as key public relations resources, and summaries of the data “come in handy whenever a new ambassador or PAO wants a briefing, or when we’re making presentations at conferences,” says Nancy Keteku, REAC based in Ghana. To avoid breaching the data’s confidentiality, she suggests using a sentence like: “Students from X country are studying in 340 institutions in 38 states. Of the 63% who are undergraduates, nearly half (47%) are enrolled in community colleges. Minnesota and Oklahoma are the most popular states, with X number of students enrolled...”

For basic data tables from Open Doors, as well as analyses that don’t appear in the Open Doors printed report, and additional resources such as country sheets, press coverage, and data on International Scholars, Intensive English Programs, and U.S. study abroad data, please refer to: [www.opendoors.iienetwork.org](http://www.opendoors.iienetwork.org).

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