



The Commission on
INDEPENDENT
Colleges & Universities
in New York

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The Value of International Students in New York State

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THE COMMISSION ON INDEPENDENT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
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Background

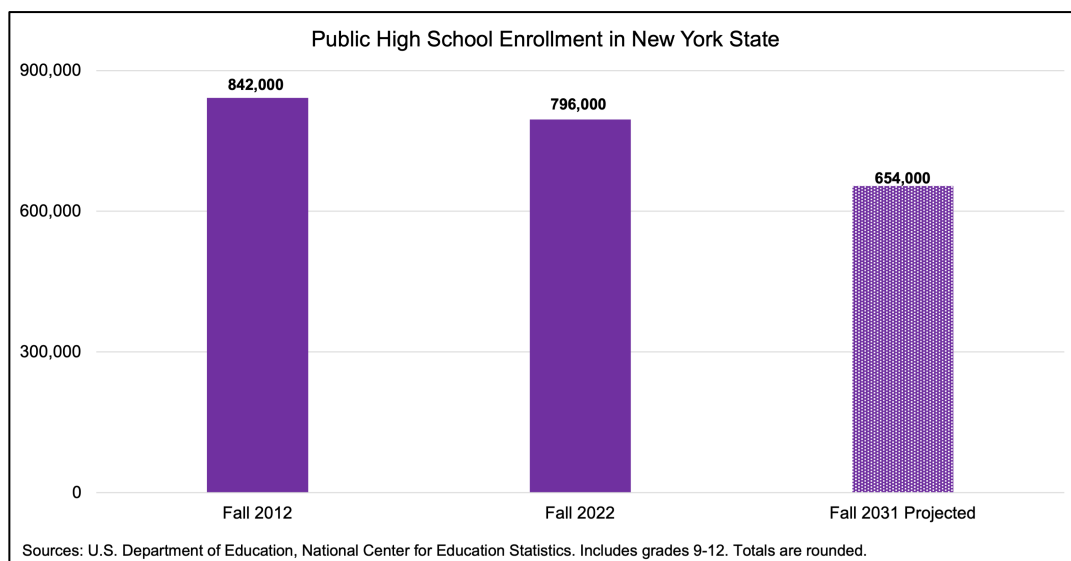
International students are a vital asset to New York State. They boost our economy, injecting billions of dollars and supporting thousands of jobs. Their presence in our colleges and universities helps to make up for enrollment declines related to domestic demographic shifts.

Beyond economics, these students enrich our cultural landscape, fostering global understanding and preparing New Yorkers for an interconnected world. Their contributions also drive academic excellence and cutting-edge research, solidifying New York's leadership in critical fields. This report highlights why international students are indispensable to the state's continued prosperity and vibrancy.

Increased Recruitment of International Students is Vital to Offset Demographic Trends

Given the projected decline¹ in the number high school graduates in New York State, enrolling international students has become an increasingly critical strategy for colleges to maintain enrollment levels and financial stability².

- High school enrollment in New York State declined by 5 percent between 2012 and 2022 (842,000 to 796,000).³
- High school enrollment in the state is projected to decline by an additional 18 percent between 2022 and 2031 (796,000 to 654,000).



As domestic demographic trends reduce the pool of traditional college applicants, international students represent a crucial demographic to fill classrooms and sustain campus operations. Their enrollment helps to replace revenue losses from declining domestic tuition, allowing institutions to continue funding diverse academic programs, supporting faculty, and investing in campus

¹ Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), public high schools only, accessed August 1, 2025.

² Singh, Rimjhim. "How international students help sustain the budgets of these US colleges." Business Standard.

https://www.business-standard.com/world-news/donald-trump-harvard-row-international-students-us-universities-125052400396_1.html, accessed May 27, 2025.

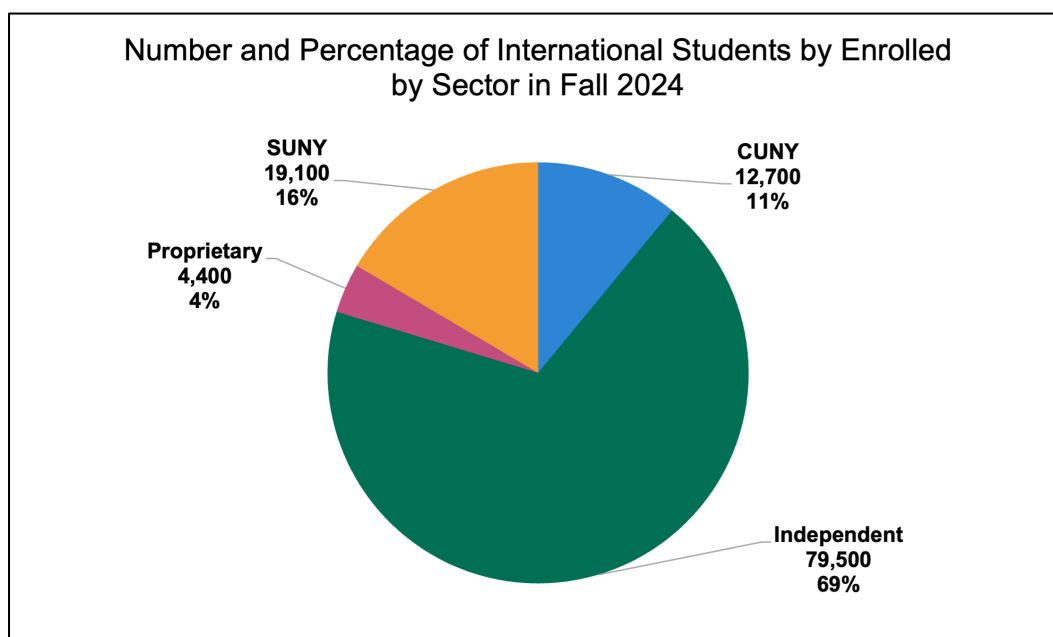
³ Totals are rounded for clarity throughout this report. In some instances, totals may not sum due to rounding.

infrastructure. This strategic imperative ensures the long-term viability and competitiveness of colleges in an evolving higher education landscape.

International Student Enrollment in New York

In fall 2024, New York's independent⁴ colleges and universities enrolled 79,500 international students. Students from other countries comprise 16 percent of total enrollment in the Independent Sector (79,500 of 492,000 total students enrolled).⁵

Considering both public and private colleges and universities, the international students enrolled in independent institutions represent 69 percent of all international students attending college in New York State (79,500 of 115,800 total international students enrolled).



Substantial Financial Contribution

New York's world-renowned educational institutions are highly sought after by international students. This makes higher education a significant export for the state, bringing in foreign capital. International students often pay higher tuition rates than in-state students, making them a major revenue source for U.S. colleges and universities.⁶

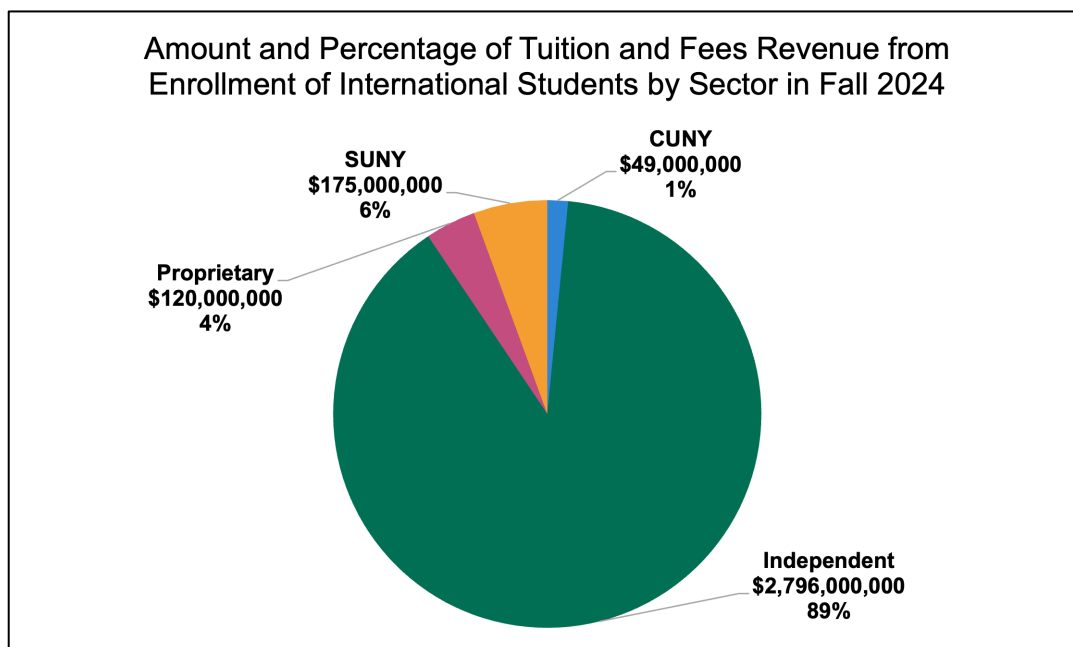
Across all sectors (public and private), international students are responsible for \$3.1 billion in tuition and fees revenue, which makes them a major revenue source for New York's colleges and

⁴ Private, nonprofit colleges and universities are also referred to as independent colleges. Collectively, these institutions are often referred to as the Independent Sector of higher education. This analysis excludes private colleges with a religious mission, such as rabbinicals and seminaries (Carnegie code 24).

⁵ Source: The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). In IPEDS, a U.S. nonresident student is defined as a person who is not a citizen or national of the United States and is in this country on a visa or temporary basis. Total enrollment in this report refers to the headcount of full-time and part-time undergraduate and graduate/first professional students.

⁶ Knox, Liam. "International Enrollment's Precarious Moment." Inside Higher Ed. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/global/international-students-us/2025/03/19/colleges-fear-decline-international-student>, accessed August 1, 2025.

universities. Independent colleges and universities receive 89 percent of the revenue generated by international students (\$2.8 billion of \$3.1 billion). This financial injection supports campus operations and helps colleges keep tuition prices lower for domestic students by making more campus-based financial aid available.⁷

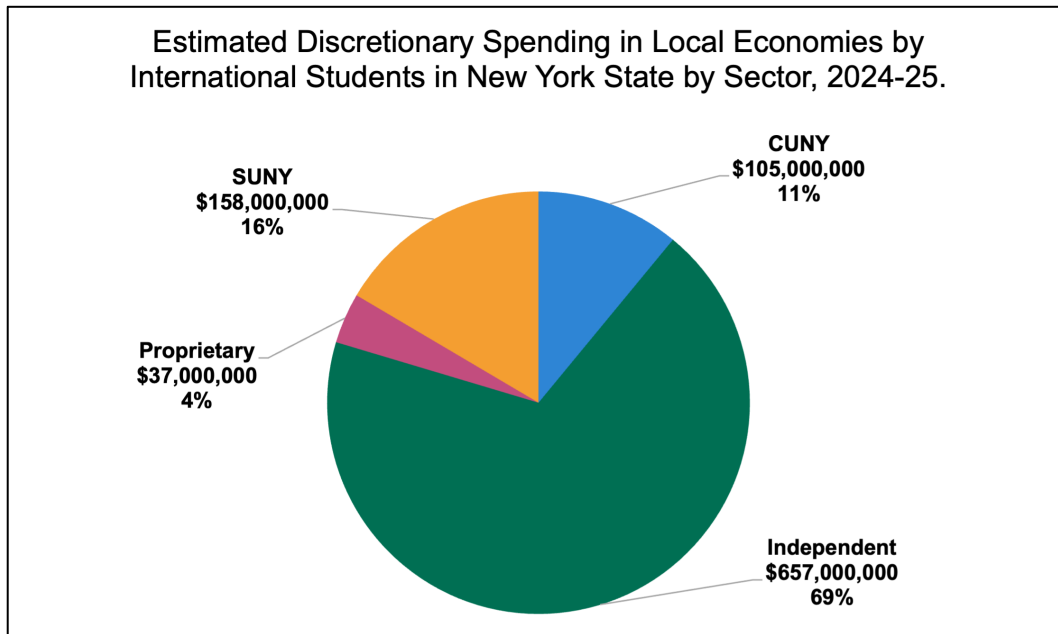


New York consistently ranks among the top states for international student enrollment.⁸ New York's diverse regions, from bustling New York City to upstate college towns, all feel the economic ripple effect. In the 2024-25 academic year alone, international students attending independent colleges and universities in New York are responsible for \$657 million in discretionary spending and spillover impacts at local retail stores, restaurants, electronics stores, and other businesses.⁹

⁷ Source: IPEDS. This amount includes estimated tuition and fee revenue per full-time equivalent student in fall 2024.

⁸ "Open Doors." Institute of International Education. <https://opendoorsdata.org/infographic/u-s-states-hosting-international-students-2023-24/>, accessed May 27, 2025.

⁹ Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities (CICU). "Economic Impact of New York State's Independent Sector." <https://www.cicu.org/economic-impact/>, accessed August 1, 2025.



Jobs

The Independent Sector employs 65 percent of the people working at institutions of higher education in the state (196,000 of 302,000).¹⁰ Nearly 90 percent of independent higher education jobs are faculty or professional positions.¹¹ Nearly 32,000 of these jobs are directly attributable to the enrollment of international students.

The Value of International Students

The total value of international students in New York's Independent Sector of higher education alone is \$3.5 billion, including tuition and fee revenue and student spending. In addition, jobs supported by these students account for \$3.6 billion in salaries and wages, which ripple through New York State's economy.

Aside from the economic value to New York, international students enrich our state in a variety of ways.

Cultural and Social Enrichment

- **Enhancing a Global Hub:** New York City is one of the most diverse and globally connected cities in the world. International students naturally fit into this multicultural tapestry and further enrich it. Their presence on campuses throughout the state, from urban centers to more rural settings, fosters an even greater understanding of global cultures and perspectives.
- **Preparing New Yorkers for a Globalized World:** New York is a leader in global finance, arts, and media. Interacting with international students on campus provides New York

¹⁰ Source: New York State Department of Labor and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) fall 2022 headcount employment. Includes SUNY, CUNY, for-profit, and independent institutions.

¹¹ Source: IPEDS, fall 2022, 87% professional, 13% non-professional.

students with invaluable cross-cultural communication skills and a broader worldview, essential for success in the state's highly interconnected industries and for contributing to its global leadership.

- **Soft Diplomacy and Global Connections:** Many international students who study in New York go on to become leaders in their home countries. Their positive experiences in the state can foster lasting ties, promoting goodwill, and strengthening New York's international relationships in trade, diplomacy, and cultural exchange.

Academic and Research Advantages

- **Attracting Top Talent:** New York's universities are magnets for the "best and brightest" from around the globe. International students often bring unique academic strengths, particularly in STEM fields, which are crucial for innovation and research. New York's position as a research and technological hub relies heavily on this influx of diverse intellectual talent.
- **Driving Innovation:** International students are frequently involved in groundbreaking research at New York's universities, especially at the graduate level. Their contributions can lead to scientific advancements, technological breakthroughs, and the development of new industries within the state. Many founders of successful U.S. startup companies were former international students, and New York is a prime location for such entrepreneurial activity.
- **Maintaining Academic Competitiveness:** In an increasingly competitive global education landscape, attracting international students helps New York's colleges maintain their reputation for academic excellence and attract leading faculty. It ensures a vibrant and intellectually stimulating environment for all students and researchers.

Conclusion

International students are not just a financial boon for New York's colleges and the state's economy; they are vital to enhancing the state's cultural dynamism, preparing its workforce for a globalized future, and maintaining its position as a leading center for education, research, and innovation.