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# US back on top as global magnet

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THE predicted resurgence of US universities in the global talent wars has occurred earlier than expected, with international student recruitment hitting a record high, the latest statistics show.

After plateauing for years in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, the number of overseas students in the US increased by 7 per cent this year to a record 623,805, Institute of International Education and US State Department figures show.

Students from the top five countries of origin — India, China, South Korea, Japan and Canada — comprised 49 per cent of international students in the US, according to the annual Open Doors report.

Compared with the previous year, the number of students from India was up 13 per cent, China 20 per cent and South Korea 11 per cent.

The US confirmed its premier status as a destination for overseas students by capturing 20 per cent of the estimated 2.9 million-strong global market.

It was followed by Britain with 13 per cent, France and Germany 8 per cent each, Australia and China 7 per cent each, Canada

5 per cent and Japan 4 per cent.

Geoff Garrett, chief executive of the US Studies Centre at the University of Sydney, said “the big story is that the US has rebounded as a destination for students since 9/11”.

He attributed the doubling in growth during the past two years to several factors, including “the prospect of turning the page on the Bush administration”. The US Government also had realised the visa barriers it had created were too high. American universities were “much more aggressive” about recruiting foreign students now, Dr Garrett said. “Having [Barack] Obama as president will [also] make the US more attractive.”

Tim Zak, executive director of Carnegie Mellon University’s Heinz College branch in Australia, attributed the resurgence to “a combination of a very aggressive effort to recruit the best and brightest from across the world, and a flight to quality”.

Crucially, more than half of the US recruits were postgraduates. Expanded support for US educational advisory centres across the world improved outreach in China, India, Vietnam and Brazil.