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Graduate Admissions in a Time of Change: AI, Rankings, and Global Student Mobility

The logo for the Southwestern Business Deans' Association (SWBDA). The letters "SWBDA" are rendered in a large, bold, red, sans-serif font with a slight shadow effect.

Southwestern Business Deans' Association

Propelled by our mission

MISSION

Advance quality and equity in education by providing fair and valid assessments, research and related services.

FOCUS

Advancing the science of measurement to power human progress.

HUMAN PROGRESS COMMITMENT

To ready 100M people for the next generation of jobs by 2035.

SWBDA 2026 ETS Survey



Agenda



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1. Business School Advisory Committee Survey Overview
2. U.S. International Student Trends
3. AI-enabled Tools Recruitment Tools
4. Assurance of Learning Tools



Survey Summary

Has your graduate program(s) updated its application materials or processes in response to the integration of AI into admissions?

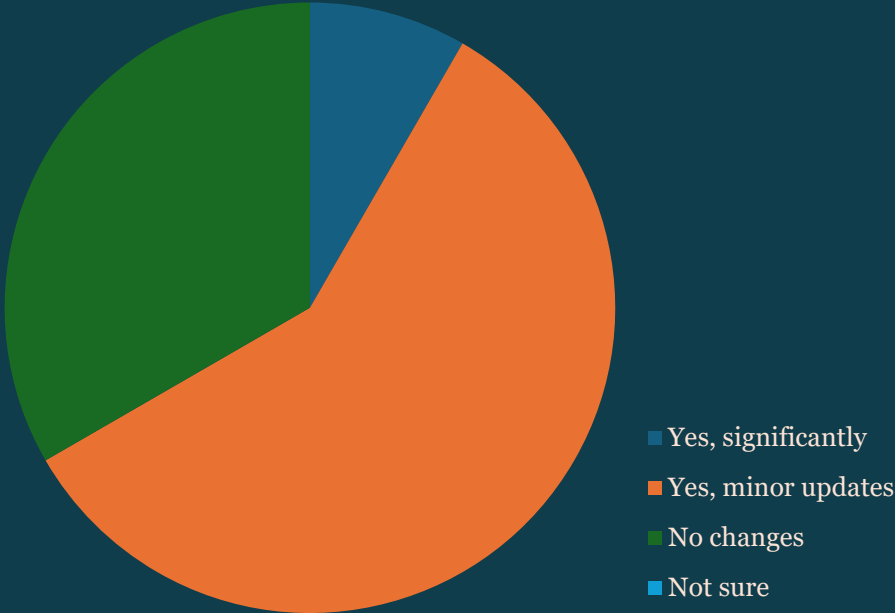
Most institutions have taken some modest measures to address AI in admissions

Survey Responses

- Yes, significantly
- Yes, minor updates
- No changes
- Not sure

58%

AI Updates



In your experience, how do admissions committee members address or mitigate the use of AI-generated content in application materials such as letters of recommendation and personal statements?

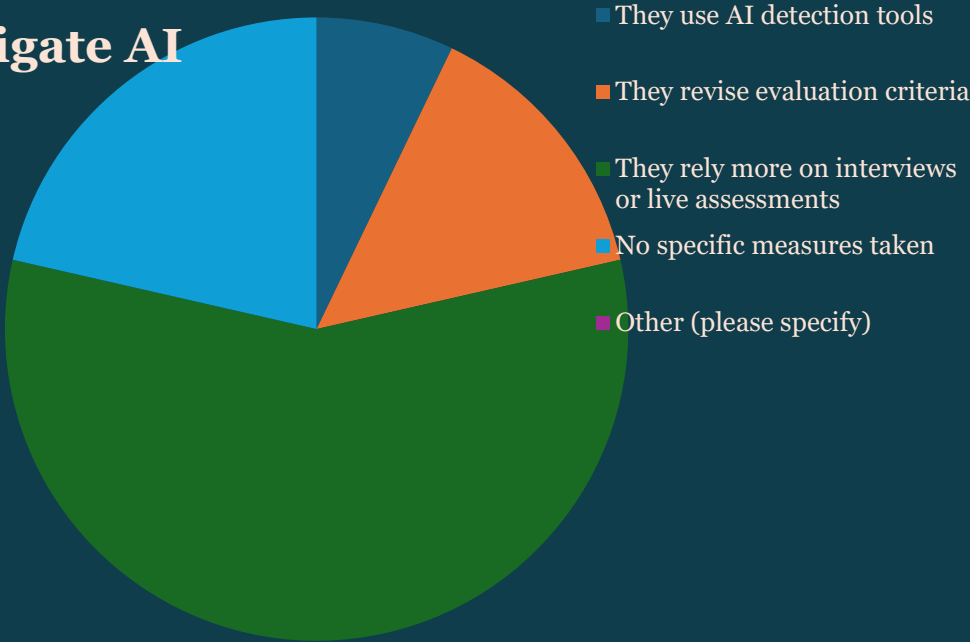
Most of your institutions rely on interviews or live assessments to mitigate the use of AI

Survey Responses

- Use AI detection tools
- Revise evaluation criteria
- Rely more on interviews or live assessments
- No specific measures taken
- Other (please specify)

57%

Address/Mitigate AI



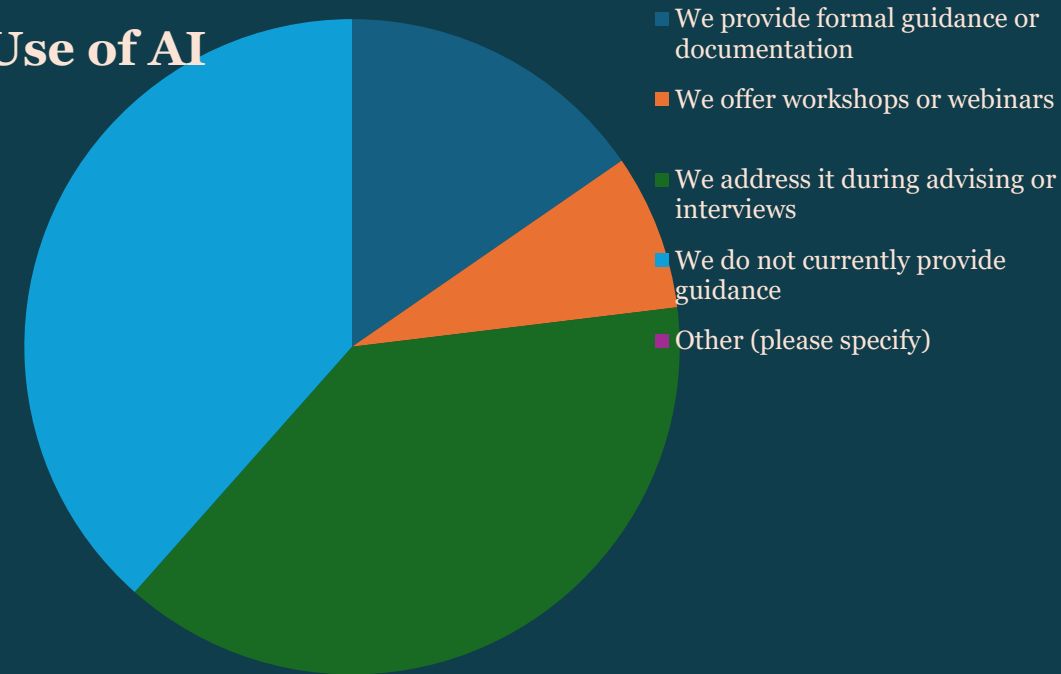
How does your program(s) help applicants understand appropriate and inappropriate uses of AI in the admissions process?

An equal number of institutions report addressing AI during advising that don't provide any guidance at all

Survey Responses

- Formal guidance or documentation
- Workshops or webinars
- Addressed during advising or interviews
- No guidance currently provided
- Other

Appropriate Use of AI



Rankings Perceptions

What rankings are the most important rankings to you and your institution?

Ranking Name	Institutional Priority	Key Influence
US News	Highest	Domestic reputation, applicant volume
Financial Times (FT)	High	Global mobility, salary outcomes
QS Rankings	High	International reach, employer reputation
Poets & Quants	Medium	Niche marketing, program strengths
Forbes / Princeton Review	Medium	Specific program highlights

Which rankings are the most important for your prospective student pool?

Ranking Source	Student Usage	Perceived Value
US News	High	Domestic credibility, easy comparison
Financial Times (FT)	Moderate	Global perspective, career outcomes
QS Rankings	Moderate	International reputation, diversity
Poets & Quants	Growing	Editorial insights, aggregation
Program Outcomes / Salary Value vs. Cost	Very High	Direct impact on ROI, career planning, Affordability, scholarship availability

U.S International Student Trends

A glance at the latest student mobility trends in the U.S.



What application trends did you find this year in terms of countries going up/down, visa challenges, etc.? (FT MBA & Specialized Masters)

International Application Trends & Barriers

Barriers for International Applicants



Visa Concerns

Frequently cited as a major barrier, especially for U.S.



Political & Safety Concerns

Linked to immigration policies and sentiment toward studying in the U.S.



Financing

Securing funding is a significant challenge for many international applicants

Application Volume Trends



Declines

Several schools reported significant drops in applications, particularly from China



Increases

Some programs noted growth in applications from other Asian countries

- China:
Specific mention of reduced applications
- Asia (excluding China):
Growth in applications from other regions

Shifting Global Student Flows

North America is losing international enrollments while Europe and Asia gain ground

What's Changing

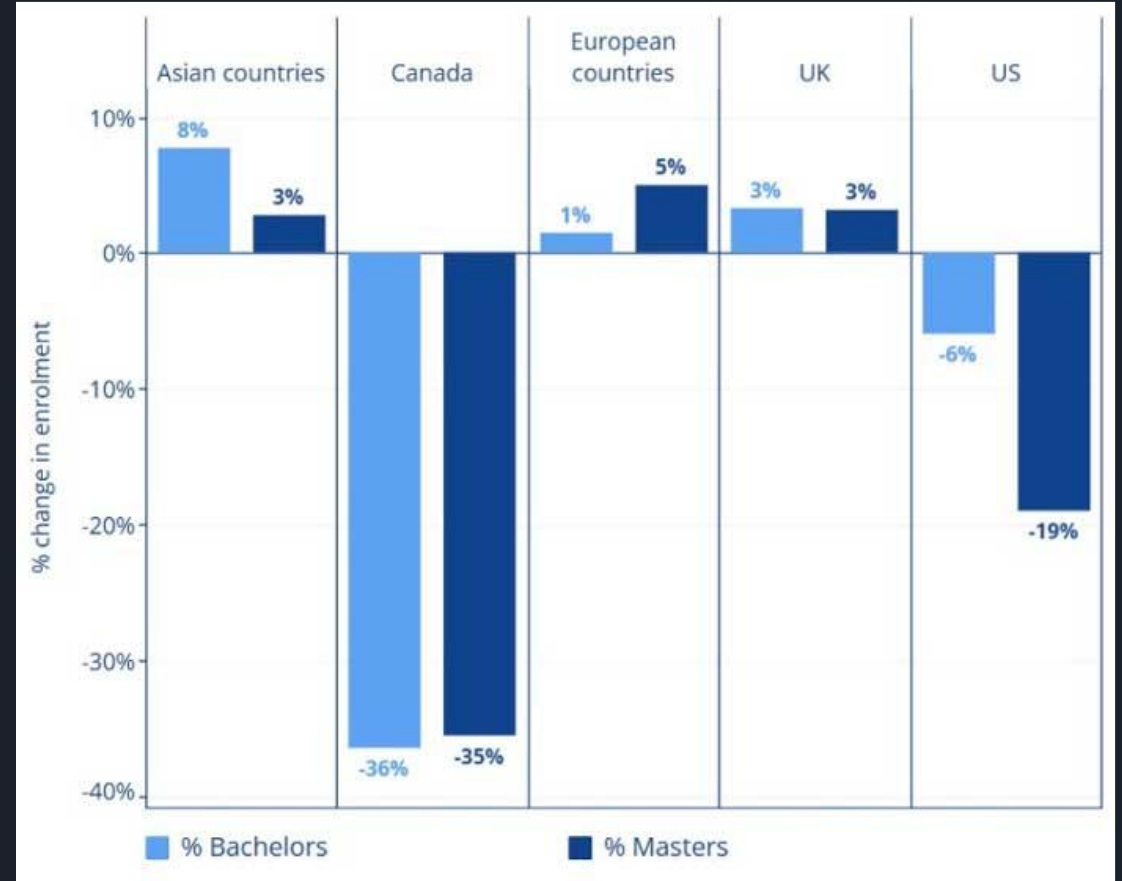
- U.S. and Canada enrollment declines, mostly at the master's level
- Europe and parts of Asia gaining ground with international students
- Government policies and enrollment caps accelerating these shifts

Regional Snapshot

- Declines: United States, Canada
- Gaining Share: Europe, Asia
- Holding Steady: United Kingdom

Why This Matters

- Long-term effects on the global standing of North American higher education and impact on institutional revenue



Average change in new international enrollments for bachelor's and master's programs, by region

Full Time MBA Application Trends



FT MBA Demand Is Softening Globally, Led by International Headwinds

Visa and post-study work uncertainty are major deterrents

-including appointment delays, H-1B concerns, and fear about the ability to enter or remain in the U.S.

International applications are declining more sharply than domestic

-with consistent softness from India, China, Southeast Asia, and parts of Africa

Applicants are increasingly price- and scholarship-sensitive

-actively comparing funded offers and forcing programs to adjust strategies to sustain volume.

Some programs report tactical shifts to sustain volume

-including admitting less experienced domestic applicants or relying more heavily on domestic pipelines as international yield weakens.

Specialized Masters Application Trends



Specialized Masters Demand Is Uneven and Highly Sensitive to International Access

Programs with heavy international reliance (especially analytics and STEM-adjacent degrees) are struggling more

-while growth is more stable in programs fed by domestic or internal pipelines.

Country trends are mixed but volatile

-with declines from India, Nigeria, Ghana, and China offset only partially by pockets of growth in Southeast Asia, Saudi Arabia, and Taiwan.

Testing flexibility and affordability are now critical levers

-as test-optional policies expand, and limited scholarship capacity constrains yield—especially for domestic students.

International softness continues to pressure Specialized Masters programs

-particularly those reliant on STEM, analytics, and globally mobile applicants, with visa uncertainty a recurring constraint.

AI-enabled Recruitment Tools

*ets /graduate search service

Graduate Search Service

A smarter, high-intent lead generation tool



- 800,000+ prospective graduate student **opt-ins**
- New, viable leads added **5X week** M-F
- **Easy to use:** Filter by 30+ criteria - country, academic performance, ug major, intended graduate field, and geo-target by location
- Cost-effective: Just **\$1.25** per lead
- Programs do **not need** to require GRE scores to use the service
- **Free** to set up an account and search
- AI-enabled search recommender

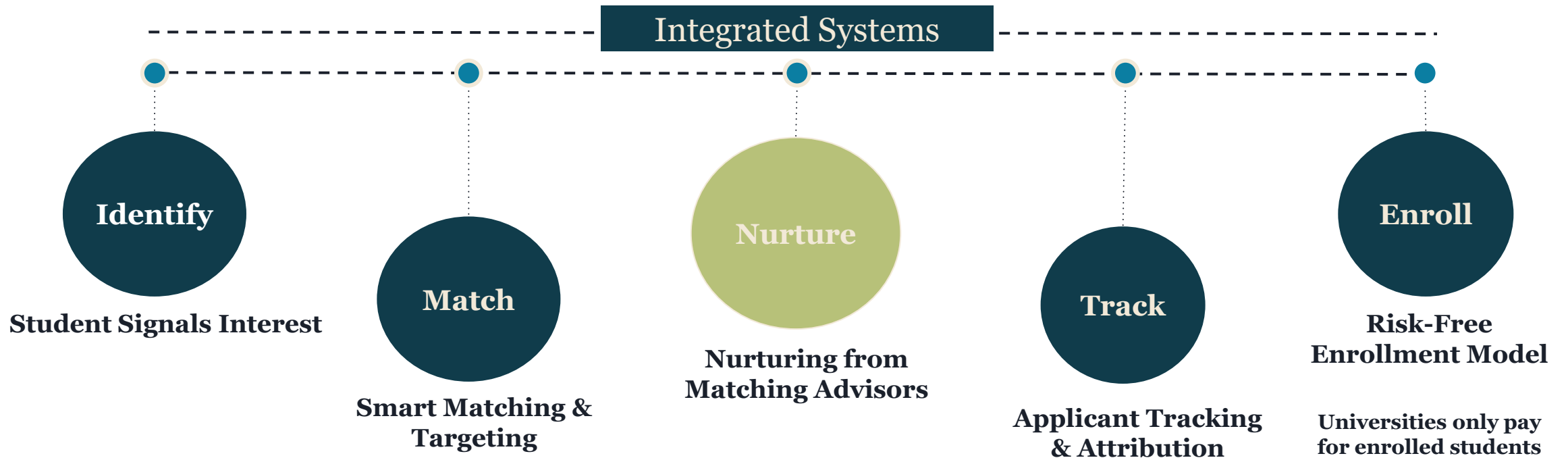


It's hard to argue against success.

P. Andrew Sleeth
Graduate Admissions Manager

“By allowing the computer science department to **target specific individuals**, it circumvents the pitfalls common to display ads or recruiting fairs, which are a little better than scattergun approaches to reaching people of interest.”

The GEMS Model: Aligned. Advised. Outcome-Driven.



WHY CHOOSE KIRA

Trusted by 1100+ Programs Worldwide

Over 1.5 million assessments completed by applicants



6x

Evaluate applicants up to six times faster than traditional interviews

140+

Accessed by applicants in 140+ countries

800hrs

Up to 800 hours saved (Roseman University's College of Dental Medicine)

2 in 3

2 in 3 applicants prefer Kira assessments over admissions essays

90.7%

90.7% of applicants rated their Kira experience either "Great" (4/5) or "Exceptional" (5/5)

92%

Over 92% of applicants who left feedback on support rated their experience as "Great", given the options of "Great", "Okay", and "Not Good"

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Generate Leads with our 10-question GRE mini quiz!



Students get a quick benchmark of their skills with the GRE Mini Quiz. It's free and includes:

- Five Verbal Reasoning questions
- Five Quantitative Reasoning questions
- Correct answers and explanations

Find it at ets.org/gre/quiz

You get free leads!

ETS® Major Field Tests

Meet accreditation requirements with an outcomes-based assessment

Continuous Improvement. The school demonstrates a commitment to a culture of continuous improvement that yields high-quality outcomes. Consistency of performance over time, stability of oversight, and clear accountability for operations of the accredited school or unit are key elements of continuous improvement. The school demonstrates financial vitality, sustainability, and financial resources sufficient to achieve its operational and strategic goals for the foreseeable future.

-2020 Guiding Principles and Standards for Business Accreditation – Updated Feb 28, 2025

https://www.aacsb.edu/-/media/documents/accreditation/_2020-aacsb-business-accreditation-standards-_final--july-1-2024.pdf



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