

Global Expansion Timelines

Facebook began expanding internationally very early, but its **major globalization happened in stages**:

- **2004**: Facebook launched at Harvard.
- **2005**: Expanded to universities in the U.S. and Canada, then to high schools.
- **September 2006**: Facebook opened registration to **anyone aged 13+ with a valid email address**. This was the major **turning point** from a U.S. college network into a global social network.
- **2007**: Facebook introduced versions in other languages, beginning with **Spanish and French**, followed by additional languages through its translation program.
- **2008**: Facebook became available in **more than 20 languages** and surpassed MySpace in global traffic around this period.
- **2009–2010**: International users became a majority of Facebook's user base. By 2010, Facebook had hundreds of millions of users worldwide.
- **2012**: Facebook reached **1 billion monthly active users**, making its global reach firmly established.

*When Facebook changed from primarily an American college platform into an international platform open to the general public, **September 2006 is the key date**, with **2007–2010 being the period of rapid international expansion**.*

More Context:

1980s–1990s — Economic globalization accelerates

- **1991** — World Wide Web becomes publicly available
- **1995** — Commercial Internet expansion accelerates
- **1998** — Google founded
- **2000–2005** — Broadband Internet expands substantially
- **2001** — Wikipedia launched
- **2003** — LinkedIn launched
- **2003** — Myspace launched
- **2004** — Facebook launched
- **2005** — YouTube launched
- **2006** — Facebook opens to general users
- **2006** — Twitter launched
- **2007** — iPhone introduced
- **2007** — Facebook Platform launched
- **2007–2008** — Facebook significantly expands internationally
- **2008** — Global financial crisis
- **2008** — Android smartphones begin entering the market
- **2009** — Facebook reaches 350+ million users
- **2010** — Instagram launched

- **2010** — Facebook reaches roughly 500 million users
- **2012** — Facebook reaches 1 billion monthly users

University globalization

- **1980s** — International student enrollment was already significant; U.S. institutions had about **312,000 foreign students in 1980–81**. ([National Center for Education Statistics](#))
- **1990–1995** — International enrollment continued growing, reaching about **454,000 by 1995–96**. ([National Center for Education Statistics](#))
- **1995–2000** — Internationalization accelerated alongside the expansion of the Internet and international economic integration.
- **2000–2002** — International enrollment passed **500,000**, reaching about **583,000 in 2001–02**. ([National Center for Education Statistics](#))
- **2004–2005** — About **565,000 international students** were enrolled in U.S. higher education. ([National Center for Education Statistics](#))
- **2006–2008** — International enrollment began rising again, reaching about **624,000 in 2007–08**. ([Government Accountability Office](#))
- **2010s** — Internationalization became a much more established component of university strategy, including international recruitment, partnerships, study abroad, and globally oriented programs.

The longer-term trend is substantial: researchers estimate that the number of students from abroad at U.S. colleges and universities **quadrupled over the four decades beginning in 1980**. ([AEA Publications](#))

Private ownership / investment

This has a different timeline:

- **1980s–1990s** — For-profit higher education develops and expands.
- **1990s** — Growth of large publicly traded for-profit education companies.
- **2000–2005** — Increasing consolidation and investment in for-profit colleges.
- **2004** — TA Associates bought Florida Career College for **\$53 million**, an example of private-equity involvement in higher education. ([OUP Academic](#))
- **2006** — Goldman Sachs took Education Management Corp. private. ([OUP Academic](#))
- **2007** — KKR and SAC Capital took Laureate Education private in a **\$3.8 billion** transaction. ([OUP Academic](#))

- **2000s–2010s** — Private-equity ownership became a significant feature of the **for-profit higher-education sector**. One study found PE-owned schools represented roughly **35% of for-profit enrollment** in its dataset. ([OUP Academic](#))

The useful combined timeline

1980–1990: Internationalization grows

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1990–2000: Globalization + Internet expansion

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2000–2005: International enrollment + for-profit higher education expand

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2004–2007: Significant private-equity transactions in education

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2006–2010: Social media + smartphones + international university recruitment + private investment accelerate simultaneously

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2010s: Globalized digital higher-education environment becomes well established