

Back to School

In its first Signature Report, *“National Postsecondary Enrollment Trends: Before, During, and After the Great Recession,”* the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center documented a period of accelerated growth in community college enrollments that peaked in 2009-10. In this follow-up analysis, we see that the enrollment increases were followed by a corresponding increase in the number of degrees awarded through 2010-11.

Growth in the number of degrees awarded to adult learners outpaced that of traditional-age students in the three years following the economic downturn. From 2007-08 to 2010-11, the number of degrees awarded to students aged 25 and older increased by 22 percent, compared to 17 percent for those under age 25.

The number of degrees awarded to each age group decreased in 2011-12, but totals remained well above pre-recession levels.

With data current through September 2012

Rate of Change in Degrees Awarded by Two-Year Public Institutions (by Age Group)



NUMBER OF DEGREES AWARDED					
Age Group	2007-08	2010-11	2011-12	Growth to Peak (2010-11)	Total Growth (to 2011-12)
Less Than 25	283,477	332,192	328,589	17%	16%
25-39	253,857	306,637	305,528	21%	20%
40 and Over	109,039	134,669	129,816	24%	19%
Overall	646,373	773,498	763,933	20%	18%

Note: This analysis is limited to institutions that participated with the Clearinghouse over the entire timeframe. The institutional level is based on IPEDS institutional characteristics, with the Florida College System being the only exception. The 28 schools in that system offer four-year degrees, but all are categorized as two-year institutions for this analysis. This is in keeping with their traditional role as a primary point of access to higher education.