

## Methodological Notes

The *Stay Informed* series is designed to track the impact of COVID-19 on postsecondary enrollments, using the latest data available and the historical data from the two most recent years (2018 and 2019) as pre-pandemic baselines. It updates enrollment data dashboards on a monthly basis, disaggregated by various subgroups of students, programs, institutions, states or regions.

### NATIONAL COVERAGE OF THE DATA

Clearinghouse data track enrollments nationally and are not limited by institutional and state boundaries. As of fall 2019, institutions actively submitting enrollment data to the Clearinghouse account for 97 percent of all enrollments at Title IV, degree-granting institutions in the U.S.

Unlike the regular Current Term Enrollment Estimates report series, where enrollments are weighted by data coverage rates, the *Stay Informed* series focuses on unweighted enrollments. This is because the emphasis of this series is on year over year changes in enrollment patterns due to the pandemic rather than estimating the current number of postsecondary enrollments.

### PRE-PANDEMIC BASELINE DEVELOPMENT

To accurately assess the impact of COVID-19 on postsecondary enrollments, the analyses focused on a fixed panel of institutions that submitted data to the Clearinghouse during the same time frame across all comparison years. We created the panel to control for year-to-year variations in institutional coverage as well as the variations in data submission dates.

To control for institutional coverage, only the institutions that submitted enrollment data in all three years (2018, 2019, and 2020) were included in the analyses. Institutions that discontinued or started submitting enrollments at any point within those three years were excluded. To control for submission timing among these institutions, only Summer Term data that was submitted within the Data Submission Window (specified in Term Definition, below) across the three years was included. This controlled for the year-to-year variations of when institutions submit enrollment data. However, it is important to note that even with these controls, enrollments at some institutions in the panel may still have been overcounted or undercounted for 2020 due to unusual file submission patterns. Our investigations suggest that this data noise is minor.

### TERM DEFINITION

For Clearinghouse reporting, institutions provide the start- and end-dates for each enrollment, rather than formally designating a term. Each iteration of the monthly updates contains the latest enrollments submitted by institutions within the same time frame (see below).

Updates	Term Start Dates	Submission Window	Institutional Coverage*
Summer**	4/15 – 8/10	5/1 – 7/30	91% for 2020 (2,244/2,461); 89% for 2019 (2,244/2,511)
Fall #1	8/1 – 8/31	8/1 – 8/27	
Fall #2	8/1 – 9/30	8/1 – 9/24	
Fall #3	8/1 – 10/31	8/1 – 10/22	

\*Number of institutions in the fixed panel as a share of all Institutions that submitted data in the submission window for a given year. Coverage is slightly lower in summer 2019 due to accounting for institutions that had not submitted enrollments in summer 2020.

\*\*Not all colleges hold summer terms, and Summer enrollment reporting is optional for the Student Clearinghouse member institutions. Typically, about 70 percent of the 3,600 members submit summer files. Of those, about 90 percent met the criteria for inclusion in the panel for our analyses of summer 2020.

## **RACE AND ETHNICITY**

It includes White, Black (of non-Hispanic origin), Hispanic, Asian, and other (inclusive of American Indian/Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, multi-race, and non-resident alien). Missing or unknown data accounts for an average of 20 percent.

## **ENROLLMENT INTENSITY**

The current analysis broadly categorizes enrollment intensity into full-time and part-time. The part-time category includes three-quarter time, half-time and less-than-half-time. Withdrawn students are those who ended their enrollment in a given term with a withdrawal status. Leaves of Absence are those who have met the requirements for an approved student loan leaves of absence and, therefore, are not required to attend classes for a specified period (up to 12 months).

## **PRIMARILY ONLINE INSTITUTIONS**

Primarily online institutions are identified based on the IPEDS 2018 fall enrollment survey data, specifically, from the distance education enrollment survey items. Any institution that reports more than 90 percent of its undergraduate and graduate enrollments combined enrolling exclusively in distance education courses is considered a primarily online institution. Following this method, a total of 34 institutions in the Clearinghouse data are identified as primarily online institutions as of spring 2020, and 28 of these are included in the analysis of summer 2020. Primarily online institutions are predominantly for-profit four-year, multi-state, institutions.

## **URBANICITY**

It refers to the geographic location of a college categorized on an urban continuum ranging from city to rural. The original codes from [IPEDS](#) incorporate the population size and distance from an urbanized area resulting in 12 different urbanicity codes, regrouped into the following four areas:

- City: Territory inside urbanized area and inside a principal city.
- Suburban: Territory outside a principal city and inside an urbanized area.
- Town: Territory inside an urban cluster and outside an urbanized area.
- Rural: Territory outside of an urban cluster and outside an urbanized area.