

## Methodological Notes

The *Stay Informed* series began in the summer of 2020 to track COVID-19's impact on students and institutions. Three years later, even as the acute phase of the pandemic recedes, the enrollment dashboards will continue to be updated within the first two months of every term using the latest enrollment data available to highlight disparities in pandemic recovery across various subgroups of students, programs, institutions, states or regions.

The current report reflects 8.5 million enrollments reported as of February 23, 2023, by 54 percent of Title IV degree-granting institutions in the U.S. that are participating in the Clearinghouse. Analyses focus on year-over-year percent changes in spring enrollment from 2021 to 2023, based on the same institutions reporting at the same time across all three years.

### NATIONAL COVERAGE OF THE DATA

Clearinghouse data track enrollments nationally and are not limited by institutional and state boundaries. As of fall 2021, 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 to account for variation in data coverage rates by institution sector and state, the *Stay Informed* series uses unweighted enrollment counts. This is because the emphasis is on year-over-year changes in enrollment patterns rather than estimating total enrollment numbers.

### INSTITUTION PANEL SELECTION

To accurately assess year-over-year changes in postsecondary enrollment, the analyses focus 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 variation in data submission dates.

To control for institutional coverage, only the institutions that submitted enrollment data across the three years 2021-2023 were included in the analyses. Institutions that discontinued or started submitting enrollments at any point within these years were excluded. To control for submission timing variability among these institutions, only spring term data that was submitted within the data submission window (specified in Term Definition, below) in each of the three years was included. 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 2023 due to unusual file submission patterns. Our investigations suggest that such 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 *Stay Informed* updates contains the latest enrollments submitted by institutions within the time frames below.

Updates	Term Dates	Submission Window	Institutional Coverage	Enrollment Coverage
Spring 2023	Start between 1/15 – 4/5 or end between 2/15 – 4/30 or start before 1/15 and end after 4/30	1/1 – 2/23	53.6%	52.5% (8.5M/16.4M)

Note: Both institutional and enrollment coverages are calculated using the Spring 2022 data.

## **PRIMARILY ASSOCIATE DEGREE GRANTING BACCALAUREATE INSTITUTIONS (PABs)**

As more and more associate colleges have begun to offer bachelor's degree programs, there has been a growing number of the sector reclassifications by IPEDS, where two- and four-year colleges are determined based on program offerings. However, these reclassified four-year institutions often educate and award degrees primarily at the associate-degree level. These institutions are considered Primarily Associate Degree Granting Baccalaureate Institutions (PABs). PABs can be identified using the institutional category variable from the IPEDS Institutional Characteristics survey, which relies on both program offerings and degrees awarded. Alternatively, PABs can be identified based on an institution's Carnegie Classification, which similarly relies on program offering (there must be one bachelor's-level program offered) and degrees awarded. The IPEDS methodology identifies more institutions than the Carnegie methodology. This is because Carnegie excludes tribal colleges and special focus colleges (e.g., those focused on health sciences, arts, or religious instruction) from its PAB designation. IPEDS does not. We elect to use the more conservative Carnegie Classification.

PABs carry Carnegie Classifications of either 14 (Baccalaureate/Associate Colleges: Associate Dominant) or 23 (Baccalaureate/Associate College: Mixed Baccalaureate/Associate). In general, the difference between a 14 and a 23 designation lies in the share of degrees awarded at the associate degree level. Institutions with a 14 designation award 90% or more of degrees at the associate level while those with a 23 designation award more than 50% but less than 90% of degrees at the this level. To keep the panel methodology consistent, the 2021 Carnegie designations were applied across all years analyzed in this report.

## **RECLASSIFICATIONS OF INSTITUTION SECTORS**

This report defines institution sectors based on the 2021 Carnegie Classification. While the classification largely follows IPEDS sector designations, where there are differences between IPEDS and Carnegie, we follow the Carnegie Classification. These discrepancies primarily affect PABs (see above) as well as 34 institutions considered four-year schools by IPEDS but two-year schools by Carnegie. Most institutions in the latter case (30) are public institutions. Our reporting is restricted to the fixed panel of institutions, and the institution sector definitions are applied consistently across all comparison years 2021-2023 to enable us to calculate year-over-year enrollment changes without the disruption of sector reclassifications between years.

## **PRIMARILY ONLINE INSTITUTIONS (POIs)**

Primarily online institutions (POIs) are identified based on the IPEDS 2021-2022 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 prior to the pandemic era is considered a POI. Following this method, 17 institutions are identified as POIs in this report (60.7% institution coverage, 44.6% enrollment coverage). POIs are predominantly for-profit four-year, multi-state institutions; therefore, they are combined with multi-state institutions for state-level analyses.

## **URBANICITY (CAMPUS SETTING)**

Urbanicity refers to the geographic location of a college categorized on a continuum ranging from urban to rural, as defined by IPEDS. The IPEDS codes incorporate the campus location's population size and distance from an urbanized area, resulting in 12 distinct codes, grouped into the following three categories:

- Urban: Territory inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city
- Suburban: Territory outside a principal city and inside an urbanized area.
- Rural & Town (combined):
  - Town: Territory inside an urban cluster and outside an urbanized area.
  - Rural: Territory outside of an urban cluster and outside an urbanized area.

## MAJOR FIELD OF STUDY

Reporting on the field of study is based on the 2020 NCES Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP), first analyzing at the six-digit CIP level and categorizing into CIP families at the two-digit level. Science and Engineering majors are defined in accordance with the six-digit CIP levels used by the National Science Foundation, and the following disciplines are included: Biological and Agricultural Sciences; Computer Sciences; Earth, Atmospheric, and Ocean Sciences; Engineering; Mathematics; Physical Sciences; Psychology; and Social Sciences.

## ENROLLMENT INTENSITY

Unlike the Current Term Enrollment Estimates report series, enrollment intensity is identified based on the latest data submitted for a student in any given term. As a result, the intensity reflects the student's current workload as of the data cut-off date. 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.

## STATE-LEVEL DATA COVERAGE

Forty-six states and the District of Columbia have sufficient data to show in the interactive maps on the data dashboards, with at least three institutions reporting and at least 10% enrollment coverage at both the undergraduate and graduate level.

## RACE AND ETHNICITY DATA COVERAGE

Not all institutions report race and ethnicity data to the Clearinghouse. Missing data (for institutions that do not report to the Clearinghouse) and Unknown data (for students that do not report to their institution) combined account for an average of 15.9 percent of all enrollments across panel years analyzed in this report. Graduate-level enrollment tends to record a higher missing rate than undergraduate enrollment.

## SUGGESTED CITATION

Cohen, J., Karamarkovich, S., Ryu, M., and Shapiro, D. (March 2023), *Stay Informed with the Latest Enrollment Information - Spring 2023*, Herndon, VA: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.