Methodological Notes

The **Stay Informed** series is designed to track the impact of COVID-19 on postsecondary enrollment, 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.

As the second update for fall 2020 enrollment, this report is based on 54 percent of Title IV degree-granting institutions in the U.S. that are participating in the Clearinghouse. These institutions have a combined enrollment of 9.2 million students as of September 24. Analyses focus on year-over-year percent changes in enrollment from 2018 to 2019 and from 2019 and 2020, based on the same institutions reporting as of Sept 24, 2019 and Sept 24, 2018.

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 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 same-institution enrollment patterns rather than estimating the total enrollment numbers.

PRE-PANDEMIC BASELINE DEVELOPMENT

To accurately assess the impact of COVID-19 on postsecondary enrollments, the analyses focused on a fixed panel of all 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 across the three years 2018-2020 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 among these institutions, only fall 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 2020 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 Start Dates	Submission Window	Institutional Coverage	Enrollment Coverage
Summer 2020	4/15 – 8/10	5/1 – 7/30	91% (2020); 89% (2019)	N/A
First Look Fall 2020	8/1 – 10/31	8/1 – 9/10	21.7%	19% (3.6M/18.7M)
Fall 2020 #2	8/1 – 10/31	8/1 – 9/24	53.9%	49% (9.2M/18.7M)
Fall 2020 #3	8/1 – 10/31	8/1 – 10/22		

Note: Both institutional and enrollment coverages are based on fall 2019 data.

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) account for an average of 25 percent of all enrollments, combined. Not all institutions that report race and ethnicity data populate the *Non-Resident Alien* category, and not all international students may be non-resident aliens. This results in an undercounting of international students generally.

ENROLLMENT INTENSITY

Unlike the regular 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.

PRIMARILY ONLINE INSTITUTIONS

Primarily online institutions (POIs) 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 prior to the pandemic era is considered a POI. Following this method, a total of 34 institutions in the Clearinghouse data are identified as POIs, and 20 of these are included in this report. POIs are predominantly for-profit four-year, multi-state institutions.

URBANICITY (CAMPUS SETTING)

Refers to the geographic location of a college categorized on an urban continuum ranging from city to rural, as defined by IPEDS. The IPEDS codes incorporate the population size and distance from an urbanized area, resulting in 12 different codes, grouped into the following four categories:

- 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.

HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (HBCUs)

The current report includes enrollment trends in historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), using the preliminary data. Defined by the Higher Education Act of 1965, HBCUs were established prior to 1964, with the principal mission to education black Americans and are accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association determined by the U.S. Secretary of Education to be a reliable authority as to the quality of training offered. Currently, there are 101 HBCUs (List of Schools). For this report, only 25 institutions are included in the analysis and the results should be considered preliminary.