Methodological Notes

Click here to access the full report.

The *Undergraduate Degree Earners Report* provides a demographic and education credential profile for all students who graduate with an undergraduate-level credential, encompassing undergraduate certificates and associate and bachelor's degrees. In this report, we profile students who earned undergraduate credentials during the most recent academic year (2022-23), focusing on first-time completers versus those with a prior award. We also examine change over time in student demographics (gender, age, race/ethnicity), major field, and credentials attained (certificates, and associate, bachelor's and master's degrees) since the 2013-14 academic year. The report presents trend data nationally, as well as by state and region. All data prior to the 2022-23 academic year reflect any newer and additional data that participating institutions have reported to the Student Clearinghouse since last year's publication.

New this year, the report is presented as an interactive data dashboard. New variables for analysis include race/ethnicity and major field of students' credentials. Additional information can be found in a downloadable data appendix.

Definition of *First-Time Completer*

Students are considered first-time completers if the credential attained during the reported academic year (in this report July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023) is their first postsecondary award from a Title IV, degree-granting institution in the U.S. Each student is counted as a first-time completer only once, in the academic year of their first postsecondary credential. A student who earned two credentials in the academic year of their first credential is counted only under the highest level of credential attained in that year (e.g., a student with no prior postsecondary credential who earned a bachelor's degree and a certificate in 2022-23 is counted as a first-time bachelor's degree completer).

Degree Data Coverage and Weighting

The National Student Clearinghouse collects graduation information from its participating institutions via two data reporting services: Enrollment Reporting (ER) and DegreeVerify (DV). Enrollment Reporting has slightly higher coverage rates among institutions, but DV has more complete degree details such as title and CIP code, particularly prior to 2015-16. DV includes enhanced information on completions, including degree title, major, level, and CIP code, and comprised 90 percent of completers granted awards by Title IV, degree-granting institutions in the U.S. as of the 2021-22 academic year. ER records are used to supplement DV data to determine both the overall undergraduate credential earner numbers each year and prior award status. If a completer-year combination is present in ER records but not in DV (approximately 4.2% of the 2022-23 bachelor's degree earners, 4.7% of associate degree earners, and 7.8% of certificate earners), that completer is added to the report dataset. In cases where the prior award did not appear in a DV record (approximately 0.2% of the 2022-23 bachelors' degree earners, 0.4% of associate degree earners, and 0.5% of certificate earners), the level of the prior award was imputed based on the institution level and related enrollment records.

National Student Clearinghouse™
Research Center™

To adjust for the combined ER and DV participation rate, weights were applied to each completer record included in this report. To obtain completer data coverage for each combination of year, sector, and award level, Clearinghouse completer counts were divided by IPEDS completer counts within each combination of categories for all Title IV, degree-granting U.S. institutions. Then the inverse of these coverage rates was used to weight completer counts. Our analysis shows that many private 2-year institutions report fewer completers, most of whom are associate degree and certificate earners, to the Clearinghouse than they report to IPEDS. When this difference is extreme (i.e., the reported completer count is less than 20% of the corresponding IPEDS count), we opt to not use those completers, rather than show heavily weighted counts that may not be representative of the population at those institutions. We do not include state-level results for certificate earners, and we footnote certain states' bachelor's and associate degree completers where institutional reporting behavior to the Clearinghouse is particularly inconsistent with IPEDS.

Institutional Sector Classification

This report uses IPEDS and the Carnegie Classification to define institutional sector. IPEDS sector was assigned for academic years 2013-14 through 2016-17, and the Carnegie classification was applied from 2017-18 onward. 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 below) as well as institutions (33 in 2022-23) that are classified as 4-year by IPEDS and 2-year by Carnegie. Most institutions in the latter case (30 in 2022-23) are public. The 2015 Carnegie Classification was used to assign sectors for 2017-18, the 2018 Carnegie Classification for 2018-19 to 2020-21, and the 2021 Carnegie Classification for 2021-22 to 2022-23. Where the institutions' Carnegie Classifications carry no information as to 2- versus 4-year status, or are not included in the Carnegie Classifications, IPEDS sectors are used. All sector classifications are at the main campus level, meaning branches are assigned to the sector of their main campus.

Primarily Associate Degree Granting Baccalaureate (PAB) Institutions

As more and more institutions that previously focused solely on granting associate degrees have begun to offer bachelor's degree programs, there has been a surge in IPEDS reclassification of two-year institutions as four-year institutions, since IPEDS assigns two- or four-year designations based on program offerings. However, many of these reclassified institutions still confer most awards at the associate degree level. These are considered primarily associate degree granting baccalaureate (PAB) institutions. We identify PABs from 2017-18 onward using the Carnegie Classifications. Specifically, those institutions classified as Baccalaureate/Associate Colleges: Associate Dominant (code 14) or Baccalaureate/Associate Colleges: Mixed Baccalaureate/Associate (code 23). Institutions with a 14 designation award 90 percent or more of degrees at the associate level while those with a 23 designation award more than 50 percent but less than 90 percent of degrees at the associate level. This method identifies institutions across control groups.

National Student Clearinghouse
Research Center™

In this report, we show completer trends separately for public PABs only, while private PABs are not shown but are included in totals. Public PABs account for about 80 percent of all PAB completers in 2017-18, and about 90 percent between 2018-19 and 2022-23. One drawback of the Carnegie approach is that years in which a new classification is released are subject to large sector reclassifications between PABs and other sectors. Because of this, readers are encouraged to exercise caution in evaluating PAB completer trends between 2017-18 and 2018-19 and between 2020-21 and 2021-22.

Primarily Online Institutions (POIs) and Multi-State Institutions

Primarily online institutions (POIs) are identified based on the IPEDS fall enrollment survey data, specifically, from the distance education enrollment survey items. Any institution that reports more than 90% of its total enrollment as exclusively distance education enrollment prior to the pandemic era is considered a POI. This applies as long as the entire institution—rather than a single branch campus—meets this enrollment threshold. This method results in 19 to 33 institutions identified and participating with the Clearinghouse depending on the year. POIs are predominantly for-profit four-year institutions. POIs are grouped with multi-state institutions. Multi-state institutions are defined using the IPEDS institutional characteristics survey for each respective academic year through 2021-22. The 2021 survey was used for 2021-22 and 2022-23.

Imputation of Gender

Institutions reported student gender to the Clearinghouse for about three-quarters of all students included in this report. Gender data for the remaining students were imputed using a table of name-gender pairs that the Research Center developed using data publicly available from the Census Bureau and the Social Security Administration as well as the institution-reported data. The imputation used only those pairs in which the name had at least two instances and was associated with a single gender in at least 95 percent of the instances. The imputation is accurate in 99.6 percent of the cases where gender was reported by institutions. For a detailed document describing this approach, see "Working With Our Data."

Degree-Granting Status

When referencing IPEDS postsecondary awards data, it is important to distinguish degree-granting institutions from non-degree-granting institutions. Clearinghouse certificate and degree data, as well as the IPEDS comparison data used for the weighting calculation in this report, are limited to degrees and certificates awarded by Title IV, degree-granting U.S. institutions.

Major Field of Study

Major fields of study across all years have been harmonized to reflect the 2020 NCES Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP).

National Student Clearinghouse
Research Center™

Acknowledgements

Suggested Citation

Berg, B., Holsapple, M., Ibrahim, M., Randolph, B., & Shapiro, D. (April 2024), *Undergraduate Degree Earners*: *Academic Year 2022-23*, Herndon, VA: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.

National Student Clearinghouse
Research Center