

Higher Ed Spotlight

Basic Facts About U.S. Higher Education Today

In today's society, a postsecondary education is critical to individual opportunity and national and global competitiveness. Higher education in the United States comprises a wide range of institutions serving a diverse student population with a variety of academic preparation levels. As the demand for higher education grows, understanding this diversity has become important to inform public dialogue on how students can gain access to and succeed in higher education.¹



Institutions, Students, and Degree Production

Increases from 2005-06 to 2014-15

4,627 institutions currently offer postsecondary degrees

Over **20 million** students are enrolled in postsecondary education

4.8 million postsecondary credentials were conferred in 2014-15

up 8% 1

up **32**%

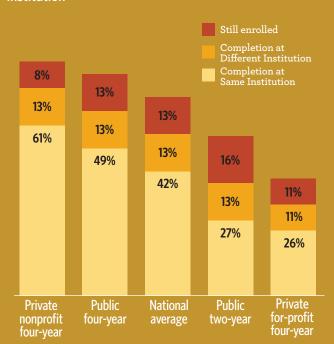
Remediation Rate
Students taking at least one remedial course after enrolling²

First-Year Dropout Rate
College freshmen not returning for their second year at any institution

Highly Mobile Learners
Students graduating from an institution different than their starting institution

Student Outcomes

Students obtaining an undergraduate degree or certificate, or are still enrolled after six years at any institution



Widespread Payoffs of College Education

Compared with those with a high school credential only, college-educated adults are:

earning more

more likely to work



more likely to participate in civic activities more likely to have healthy



less likely to rely on public assistance



Profile of College Students

Typical undergraduates are no longer 18-year-olds straight out of high school.

of students on U.S. campuses are post-traditional learners.3

SOURCES:

Baum, Sandy, Jennifer Ma, and Kathleen Payea. 2013. Education Pays: The Benefits of Higher Education for Individuals and Society. New York: College Board.

Shapiro, Doug, Afet Dundar, Phoebe Khasiala Wakhungu, Xin Yuan, Angel Nathan, and Youngsik Hwang. 2016. Completing College: A National View of Student Attainment Rates—Fall 2010 Cohort. Signature Report No. 12. Herndon, VA: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.

U.S. Department of Education. 2015. U.S. Digest of Education Statistics 2015. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

U.S. Department of Education. 2015. Web Tables: Demographic and Enrollment Characteristics of Nontraditional Undergraduates: 2011-12. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

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- ¹ All data are most recent publicly available data.
- ² Data reflect the 2011-12 academic year, the most recent publicly available data.
- This definition of post-traditional students includes being independent for financial aid purposes, having one or more dependents, being a single caregiver, not having a traditional high school diploma, delaying postsecondary enrollment, attending school part time, and being employed full time.