epicenter

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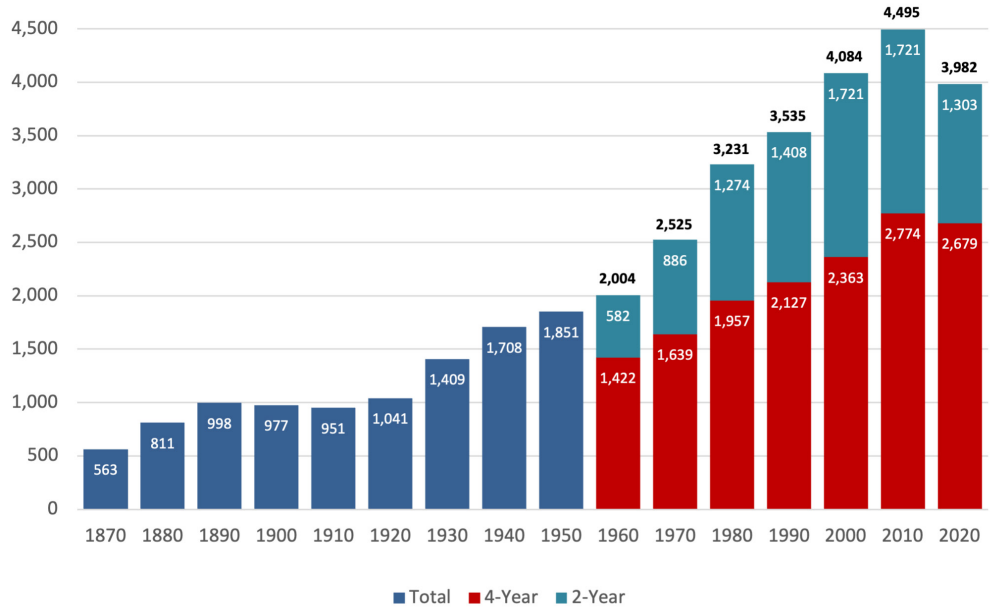
The Massification of Higher Education

Four Centuries of Change

The state of higher education is arguably one of the most prominent issues facing America today. From Capitol Hill to state capitals, streaming platforms to social networking sites, the condition of education, educational policy, and reform are continually discussed, printed, published, blogged, and debated. However, while the current status of education is incessantly criticized, relatively few sources have attempted to understand recent trends, particularly in postsecondary education, in relation to social, political, and historical contexts. With greater collections of data spanning characteristics of institutions, including enrollment, completion, and education finance, along with historical facts and figures, a new perspective on higher education that analyzes change is necessary to identify key issues and means of reform within the framework of society in the United States.[i] This edition of EPICenter focuses on these trends.

i Goldin, C. and Katz, L.F. (1999). The Shaping of Higher Education: The Formative Years in the United States, 1890 to 1940. Journal of Economic Perspectives, 13(1), 37–62. https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/jep.13.1.37.

Exhibit 1. **Number of degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by control and level of institution, 1870 to 2020.**[1]



THIS ISSUE

Higher Education Institutions and Enrollment

Since the 17th century, higher education in the United States has grown exponentially. In this issue of The Swail Letter on Higher Education, we look at the trends in growth of both institutions and enrollment as they have occured over the years.

About Us

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Higher Education in Early America

The structure and function of postsecondary institutions have historically mirrored cultural standards and the popular interests of their time. Following early colonization of America, the protestant reformation of the 16th century led to an upsurge of English migration to the colonies in quest of religious freedom, and during that time, interest in literacy for Bible study and education of clergy marked colonial America. America's first college, Harvard University, was established in 1636 as an institution of theology.[ii] The College of William and Mary followed, also for the training of clergymen, but by 1700, enrollment in higher education totaled only 150 students.

As life in America continued into the 18th century, an influx of immigrants and expansion across the American landscape slowly made shifts in the mindset surrounding formal education. By the beginning of the American Revolution, nine colonial colleges, modeled on European educational forms, had been established, with 1,000 students enrolled and 200 degrees conferred.[iii] During the early 19th century, the nation grew two-fold. Manufacturing and the workforce multiplied and the separation between church and state gave way to hundreds of new colleges across the country. The Supreme Court's decision in Dartmouth vs. Woodward in 1819 prevented states from interfering with privately run schools and further increased a nationwide incentive to establish public colleges. By 1860, several hundred colleges had been established and over 60,000 students enrolled. In 1862, President Lincoln signed the First Morrill Act, which granted each state 30,000 acres of land to each member of Congress "in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life"[iv] and in 1890, The Second Morrill Act was passed, giving life to the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

Exhibit 3. Statistical Portrait of Higher Education in the United StatesPrior to the Civil War.[3]

	Year Ending			
	1700	1789	1790	1860
Population	250,000	2,800,000	3,929,326	31,443,321
Number of Institutions	2	9	11	240
Students Enrolled	150	1,000	1,050	61,000

Institutions of Higher Education Since 1870

Over 150 years later (2020), there were 3,982 degree-granting institutions of higher education in the United States. Available to potential students are public universities, community colleges, private non-profit institutions, and proprietary, for-profit schools, all of which compete for the 62 percent of high school graduates who will apply to college, in addition to other adults returning to school for an advanced education.[v]

Over the course of the 20th century, growth in postsecondary institutions was both continuous and exponential, where the number of colleges nearly doubled between 1870 and 1900, and again after 1960. This trend continued to 2010, when a high of 4,495 institutions were operational. The number of institutions briefly declined between 1890 and 1910, likely due to the establishment of formal college Associations that helped institutions set univer-

ii Snyder, T.D. (1993). 120 years of American education: a statistical portrait. National Center for Education Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

iii Cohen, A. M., & Kisker, C. B. (2010). The shaping of American higher education: Emergence and growth of the contemporary system (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

iv Cornell University Legal Information Institute (n.d.). § 304. Investment of proceeds of sale of land or scrip. Retrieved from http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/7/usc_sec_07_00000304----000-.html.

v Digest of Education Statistics, 2023, Table 302.10.

Exhibit 2. Number of degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by control and level of institution, 1870 to 2020.[2]

	All Institutions			Public			Private								
							All Private			Non-Profit			For-Profit		
Year Ending	Total	4-Year	2-Year	Total	4-Year	2-Year	Total	4-Year	2-Year	Total	4-Year	2-Year	Total	4-Year	2-Year
1870	563	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1880	811	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1890	998	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1900	977	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1910	951	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1920	1,041	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1930	1,409	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1940	1,708	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1950	1,851	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1960	2,004	1,422	582	695	367	328	1,309	1,055	254	—	—	—	—	—	—
1970	2,525	1,639	886	1,060	426	634	1,465	1,213	252	—	—	—	—	—	—
1980	3,231	1,957	1,274	1,497	552	945	1,734	1,405	329	1,569	1,387	182	165	18	147
1990	3,535	2,127	1,408	1,563	595	968	1,972	1,532	440	1,656	1,479	177	316	53	263
2000	4,084	2,363	1,721	1,682	614	1,068	2,402	1,749	653	1,681	1,531	150	721	218	503
2010	4,495	2,774	1,721	1,672	672	1,000	2,823	2,102	721	1,624	1,539	85	1,199	563	636
2020	3,982	2,679	1,303	1,625	772	853	2,357	1,907	450	1,660	1,568	92	697	339	358

sity standards and created more competition among postsecondary institutions. Still, the number of institutions and enrollment increased during the Great Depression and towards the end of World War II. The passage of the GI Bill changed higher education forever in the US resulting in massive gains in institutions postwar that continued until 2010. Only in the last decade have we seen a regression in the number of institutions.

While it is well documented that most institutions of higher education have historically been private, inconsistent census surveys and data reporting is fairly unreliable before the mid-20th century. Beginning in 1920, survey data included two-year, or junior colleges, combined institutional sectors and types. It wasn't until the 1950s that we saw the first documentation of public and private control of institutions. At that time, private schools made up 65 percent of postsecondary education. Numbers of two-year and four-year institutions have consistently increased since the early 20th century, but the rate of growth of four-year universities has remained relatively stable. The number of junior colleges, on the other hand, drastically increased between 1920 and 1940—and again between 1960 and 2000—in order to meet a growing demand in higher education. By the turn of the millennium, two-year colleges made up 42 percent of all institutions.

Between 1960 and 1980, increases in junior colleges were isolated to the public sector, as a push to expand state colleges into new areas heightened the proportion of public to private institutions during a time when inflation costs limited private school growth. By 1980, public schools made up nearly half of all postsecondary institutions, but as publically-funded two-year community colleges saturated the states, growth of the public sector slowed. After 2000, the number of community colleges began to decline, and private institution growth rebounded rapidly. By 2020, private schools represented 59 percent of all postsecondary institutions.

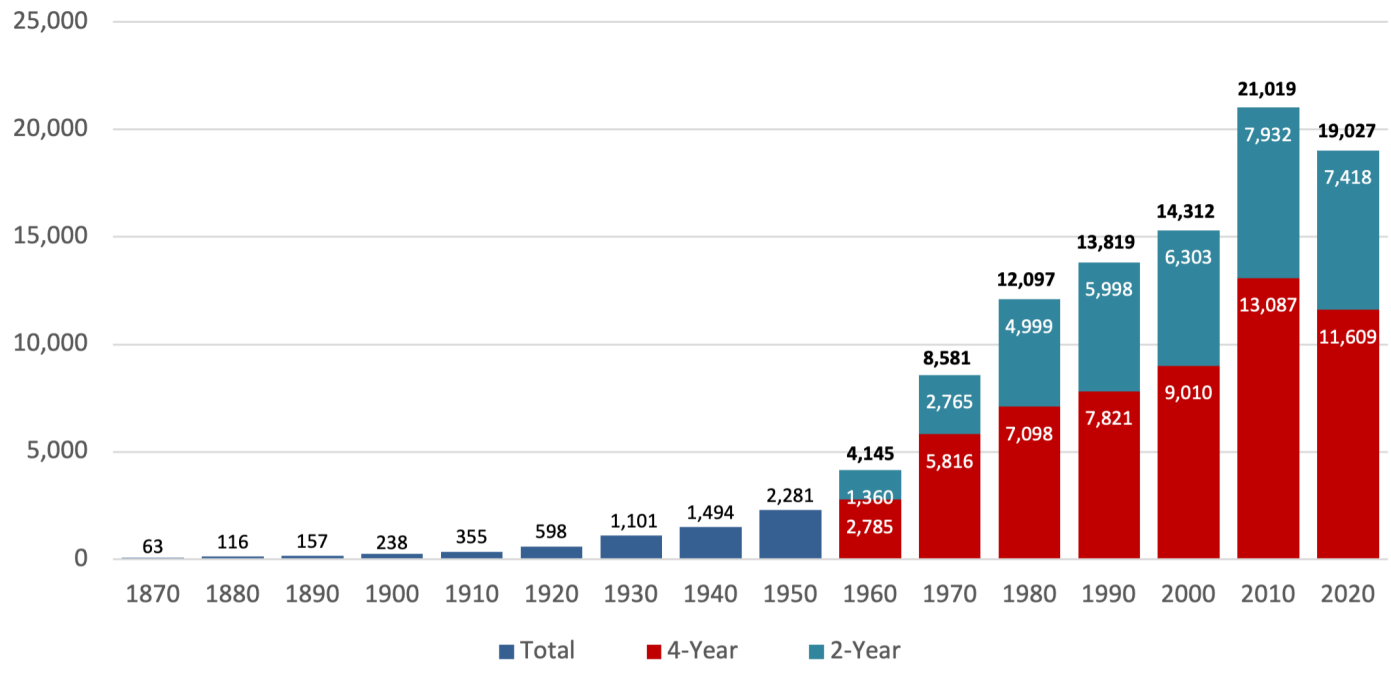
Unlike the private sector prior to the 1980s, 30 percent of private schools today are for-profit. The for-profit market hit a high of 43 percent in 2010, but decreased significantly during the following decade due to federal regulatory guidelines imposed to clamp down on "fly-by-night" for-profit institutions. Still, the for-profit, proprietary market has grown significantly since the 1980s.

Enrollment in Higher Education Since 1870

Increases in population and expansion of more institutions following the First Morrill Act (1862) resulted in a growth of higher education enrollment by nearly 300 percent between 1870 and 1890. As colleges received more recognition and high school graduation rates increased during the early 20th century, enrollment continued to multiply, and by 1930, over one million students attended postsecondary schools. Similar to the number of institutions, enrollment in higher education dropped briefly during the Great Depression and World War II, but attendance quickly rebounded. Between 1930 and 1950, growth of enrollment in public and private institutions was comparable, each comprising about half of all students enrolled. Over 90 percent of students attended four-year universities and close to 70 percent attended full-time.

In the years following the World War II, increased commerce and business, heightened environmental concern, and fears of unemployment led to greater interest in higher education. Congress

Exhibit 4. Total fall enrollment at degree-granting institutions, by control and level of institution, 1870-2020 (in thousands).[4]

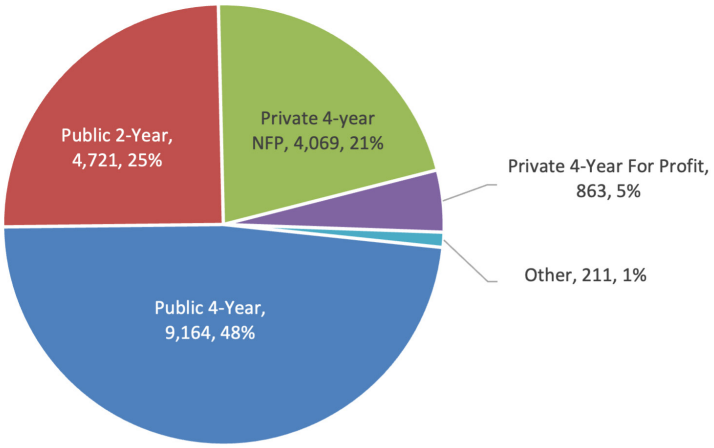


passed the Servicemen's Readjustment Act in 1944, better known as the GI Bill, which granted federally-funded postsecondary access to millions of Americans and resulted in an enrollment surge of 64 percent between 1940 and 1950. As the need for college-educated adults grew, the number of older students also multiplied. Enrollment of 18-to-24 year olds grew two-fold between 1950 and 1960, and the enrollment of 25-34 year olds nearly doubled each decade for 20 years thereafter. In addition, the expansion of public community colleges in the 1960s led to a dramatic rise of enrollment in that sector. By 1980, total enrollment in higher education had increased by 373 percent. Public institutions enrolled 3.5 times more students than private institutions, and enrollment in public two-year institutions increased from 171,000 students in 1950 to 4,057,000, nearly matching enrollment in public four-year colleges. In contrast, growth of private institution enrollment was much slower, only doubling once 30 years post-WWII.

Enrollment in public postsecondary institutions slowed between 1980 and 2000, but overall college enrollment grew steadily until the turn of the century, when enrollment rose again by 38 percent. By 2010, over 21 million students were enrolled in some form of higher education. This regressed to 19 million by 2020. Of those enrolled, almost two-thirds of students were full-time status. Contrasting with the enrollment surge between 1960 and 1980, enrollment increases since 2000 have been greater among the private sector, where private institution enrollment has increased by 61 percent, twice the amount of recent enrollment growth in public schools.

In particular, private for-profit colleges have had the greatest rise in enrollment since 2000. Heightened pressure for postsecondary experience over the 00s, coupled with record-high unemployment and the fiscal shock of 2008, led many job-seeking professionals opting to enroll in more convenient proprietary programs, where they could get certifications or learn skills in a particular trade through often online, remote access. As a result, while public and private non-profit colleges saw rises in enrollment rates in the 00s (29 and 24 percent, respectively) and still retain the majority of students enrolled in postsecondary institutions (72 and 18 percent, respectively), enrollment in for-profit schools has grown by more than 331 percent, providing an alternative route to higher education for over one million people in 2020.

Exhibit 6. **Total fall enrollment at degree-granting institutions, by control and level of institution, 2020 (in thousands).**[6]



Equal Access and Higher Education

Since the 1940s, improving access to postsecondary education has been a significant nationwide agenda. At the onset of American education, postsecondary schools were largely designed for scholarship of Christian doctrines and classical texts, and access was limited to white males (mostly of wealth) interested in clerkship or studying Latin and Greek. While few other Americans of the 17th century were interested in college, having been educated by their families and trained through apprenticeships, the 18th century brought on American expansion, the Enlightenment, and increased interest in formal education. By the 19th century,

Exhibit 5. **Total fall enrollment at degree-granting institutions, by control and level of institution, 1870-2020 (in thousands).**[5]

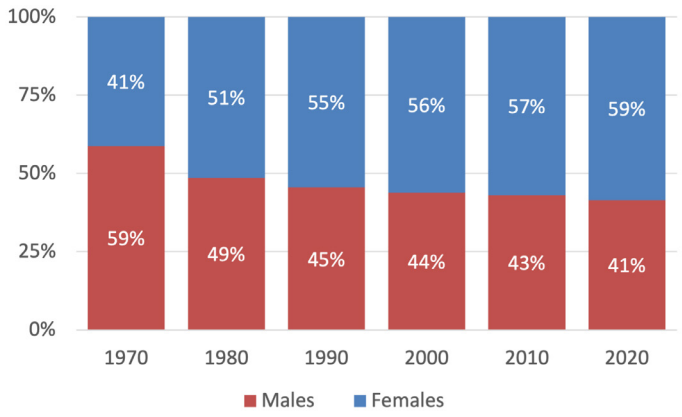
	All Institutions					Public			Private Non-Profit			Private For-Profit		
	Total	Full-Time	Part-Time	4-Year	2-Year	Total	4-Year	2-Year	Total	4-Year	2-Year	Total	4-Year	2-Year
1870	63	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1880	116	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1890	157	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1900	238	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1910	355	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1920	598	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1930	1,101	—	—	—	—	531	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1940	1,494	—	—	1,344	150	797	689	108	—	—	—	—	—	—
1950	2,281	—	—	2,216	229	1,140	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1960	4,145	2,785	1,360	—	—	2,561	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1970	8,581	5,816	2,765	6,262	2,319	6,428	4,233	2,195	2,134	2,021	113	18	8	11
1980	12,097	7,098	4,999	7,571	4,526	9,457	5,129	4,329	2,528	2,414	114	112	28	83
1990	13,819	7,821	5,998	8,579	5,240	10,845	5,848	4,996	2,760	2,671	89	214	59	154
2000	15,312	9,010	6,303	9,364	5,948	11,753	6,055	5,697	3,109	3,051	59	450	258	192
2010	21,019	13,087	7,932	13,336	7,684	15,142	7,924	7,218	3,854	3,822	33	2,023	1,590	433
2020	19,027	11,609	7,418	14,096	4,932	13,884	9,164	4,721	4,101	4,069	32	1,042	863	179

institutional diversity began to take form. Some colleges educated women exclusively, while others focused on particular trades. The first commuter college was established in Cincinnati in 1816, and "normal schools," specializing in teacher education, opened in 1823. Three black colleges—Cheyney University (PA), Lincoln University (PA), and Wilberforce University (OH)—had also been established, although most African Americans did not have access to formal education until after the Civil War.[vi] Other efforts to educate minority groups were limited to a few colleges with missions to Christianize and civilize indigenous populations, but less than 50 Native Americans enrolled between 1769 and 1900.[vii]

Gender

Since the late 19th century, women have continued to enter into higher education at increasing rates. Between 1870 and 1900, enrollment of women increased by 550 percent, as opposed to a 240 percent growth in male enrollment during that same time. Increased women in the workforce during World War I, followed by the cultural revolution of the 1920s, led to further rises in female attendance rates, and by 1930 over 40 percent of postsecondary students were female. Increases in enrollment of women slowed during the Great Depression and following World War II, but by 1960 female enrollment was on the rise again. By 1980, women made up over half of students (51 percent) enrolled in higher education. While enrollment rates of men slowed between 1970 and 2010, matriculation by women continued to grow. In 2020, women accounted for 59 percent of postsecondary students, 57 percent of full-time students, and 61 percent of part-time students. With enrollment of women of every ethnic background exceeding enrollment of their respective male counterparts, the women's movement for equal access in higher education has been arguably one of the most successful stories in American education.

Exhibit 8. Ratio of total fall enrollment at degree-granting institutions, by gender, 1970 to 2020.[8]



Race/Ethnicity

Prior to 1976, data on enrollment of minorities reflected U.S. census estimates based on survey data from the mid to late 1900s, and in 1960, minority enrollment was estimated at approximately six percent of students. By 1970, this estimate grew to 8 percent, with Black students comprising 6 percent of higher education enrollment. In 2020, almost half (48 percent) of all fall enrollment in degree-seeking institutions was non-White.

Between 1976 and 2020, enrollment of Blacks, Hispanics, and Asian/Pacific Islanders rose gradually. In 1976, 9 percent of college students were Black, followed by 3 percent Hispanic, 2 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1 percent American Indian/Alaskan Native (AIAN). Another two percent of students enrolled in higher education were foreign residents. By 2020, enrollment of

vi Hill, S. T. (1984). The traditionally black institutions of higher education: 1860-1982. National Center for Educational Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office

vii Cohen & Kisker, (2010).

Exhibit 7. Total fall enrollment at degree-granting institutions, by gender and attendance status, 1870 to 2020 (in thousands).[7]

YEAR	All Students			Full-Time			Part-Time		
	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females
1870	62	49	13	—	—	—	—	—	—
1880	116	78	38	—	—	—	—	—	—
1890	156	100	56	—	—	—	—	—	—
1900	237	152	85	—	—	—	—	—	—
1910	356	215	141	—	—	—	—	—	—
1920	598	315	283	—	—	—	—	—	—
1930	1,101	620	481	—	—	—	—	—	—
1940	1,494	893	601	—	—	—	—	—	—
1950	2,445	1,722	723	—	—	—	—	—	—
1960	3,640	2,333	1,307	—	—	—	—	—	—
1970	8,581	5,044	3,537	5,816	3,504	2,312	2,765	1,540	1,225
1980	12,097	5,874	6,223	7,098	3,689	3,409	4,999	2,185	2,814
1990	13,819	6,284	7,535	7,821	3,808	4,013	5,998	2,476	3,521
2000	15,312	6,722	8,591	9,010	4,111	4,899	6,303	2,611	3,692
2010	21,019	9,046	11,974	13,087	5,838	7,249	7,932	3,207	4,725
2020	19,027	7,885	11,142	11,609	4,987	6,623	7,418	2,898	4,520

Blacks was 14 percent, Hispanics 19 percent, and Asian/ Pacific Islanders to 7 percent. Foreign students rose slightly to four percent of postsecondary students, but AIAN attendance increased relatively little and remains at only one percent of the total student population. Enrollment of Hispanic students has risen at the highest rate, increasing from 23 percent of minority enrollment in 1976 to 44 percent in 2020, eclipsing the rate of Black students at 29 percent. The ratio of Black students versus other students of color has continued to slide from a high of 61 percent in 1976 to the current 29 percent. This may be less about the enrollment of Black students and more about other groups making significant progress in college going behaviors and opportunities. Still, the number of Black students decreased by almost 700,000 students, or 21 percent, between 2010 and 2020.

Enrollment in minority institutions indicates further trends. In 1980, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) enrolled 1.6 percent of all college students and 17 percent of all Black college students. As the number of Black students increased in PSE, the percent of students attending an HBCU decreased given the limited and defined number of HBCUs. In 1990, 17 percent of Black college students attended an HBCU. By 2020, that percentage dropped to 9 percent. Three quarters (76 percent) of students enrolled at HBCUs are Black.

Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) are defined much differently than HBCUs. While the latter were created out of the Morrill Act II, HSIs are defined as any institution that has at least a 25 percent share of Hispanic students. Thus, the number of HSIs increases each year as the Hispanic population in the US similarily increased. Since 1990, the number of Hispanic students has grown from 782,449 to 3,696,771, an increase of 372 percent. The proportion of Hispanics enrolled at an HSI has increased from 46 percent in 1990 to 51 percent in 2020. Also in that year, 45 percent of students attending an HSI were of Hispanic origin.

Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) serve only 10 percent of AIAN college students (2020). The number of students attending a Tribal College was down 27 percent in 2020 from 2010.

Exhibit 9. Total fall enrollment in degree-seeking institutions by race-ethnicity, 1976-2020 (in thousands).[12]

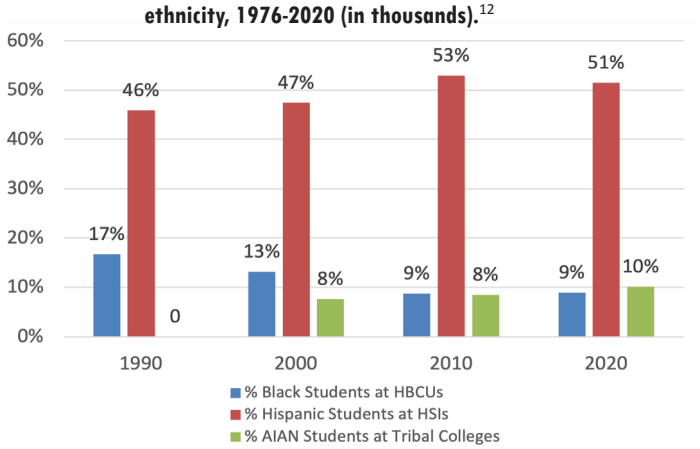


Exhibit 10. Total fall enrollment in degree-seeking institutions by race ethnicity, 1976-2020 (in thousands).[9]

Year	TOTAL	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/ Pacific Islander	American Indian/ Alaska Native	Non-Resident
1976	**10,986**	9,076	1,033	384	198	76	219
1980	**12,087**	9,833	1,107	472	286	84	305
1990	**13,819**	10,722	1,247	782	572	103	391
2000	**15,312**	10,462	1,730	1,462	978	151	529
2010	**21,019**	12,721	3,039	2,749	1,282	196	708
2016	**19,847**	10,717	2,589	3,428	1,307	142	998
2017	**19,778**	10,517	2,550	3,546	1,328	137	1,000
2018	**19,651**	10,305	2,496	3,643	1,355	133	990
2019	**19,630**	10,140	2,467	3,786	1,378	130	975
2020	**19,027**	9,817	2,389	3,697	1,391	121	849

Exhibit 11. Percent distribution of total fall enrollment in degreeseeking institutions by race ethnicity, 1976-2020.[10]

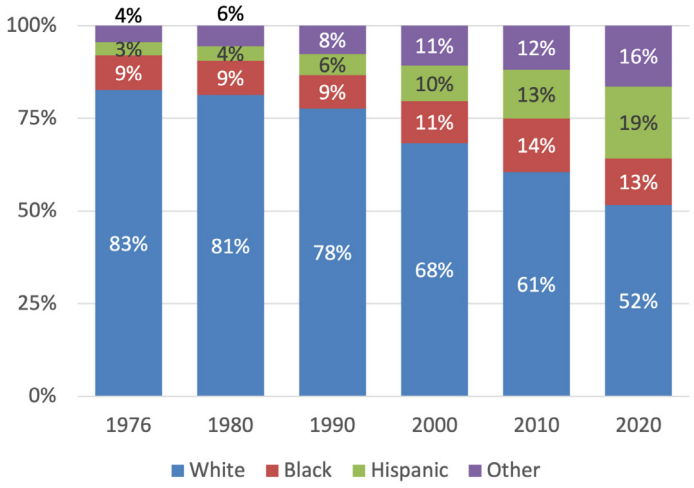


Exhibit 12. Total fall enrollment in degree-seeking institutions by race ethnicity, 1976-2020 (in thousands).[11]

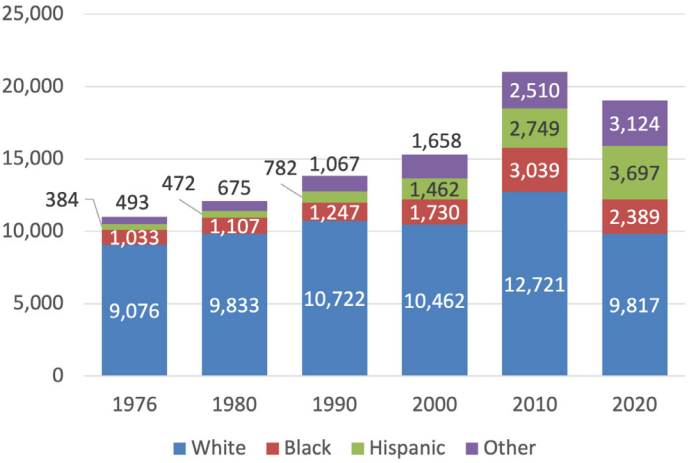


Exhibit 13. **Total fall enrollment at degree-granting HBCUs, HSIs, and TCUs, by selected race/ethnicitic categories, 1980 to 2022 (in thousands and percent of population).**[13]

		HBCUs			HSIs			TCUs			
Fall Year	All Institutions	Total	Black	%	Total	Hispanic	%	Total	American Indian	%	
1980	12,096,895	233,557	190,989	82%	—	—	—	—	—	—	
1982	12,425,780	228,371	182,639	80%	—	—	—	—	—	—	
1984	12,241,940	227,519	180,803	79%	—	—	—	—	—	—	
1986	12,503,511	223,275	178,628	80%	—	—	—	—	—	—	
1988	13,055,337	239,755	194,151	81%	—	—	—	—	—	—	
1990	13,818,637	257,152	208,682	81%	1,225,887	358,982	29%	—	—	—	
1992	14,487,359	279,541	228,963	82%	1,352,495	442,556	33%	—	—	—	
1994	14,278,790	280,071	230,162	82%	1,328,471	478,024	36%	—	—	—	
1996	14,367,520	273,018	224,201	82%	1,349,099	526,703	39%	—	—	—	
1998	14,506,967	273,472	223,745	82%	1,369,535	563,409	41%	13,271	10,983	83%	
2000	15,312,289	275,680	227,239	82%	1,650,117	693,111	42%	13,680	11,459	84%	
2002	16,611,711	299,041	247,292	83%	1,848,001	781,550	42%	15,837	13,024	82%	
2004	17,272,044	308,939	257,545	83%	1,961,791	827,542	42%	16,889	13,168	78%	*
2006	17,754,230	308,774	255,144	83%	2,284,868	965,365	42%	17,255	13,635	79%	
2008	19,081,686	313,491	258,402	82%	2,453,109	1,034,762	42%	17,014	13,820	81%	**
2010	21,019,438	326,614	265,908	81%	3,455,024	1,456,522	42%	21,225	16,640	78%	
2012	20,644,478	312,438	251,527	81%	3,870,646	1,659,622	43%	18,881	14,765	78%	
2014	20,209,092	294,316	231,889	79%	4,660,973	1,938,824	42%	17,879	14,154	79%	
2016	19,846,904	292,083	223,512	77%	3,137,407	1,495,086	48%	16,857	13,163	78%	
2018	19,651,412	291,758	223,199	77%	3,975,378	1,837,291	46%	16,190	12,705	78%	
2020	19,027,410	279,219	211,792	76%	4,104,726	1,901,959	46%	15,323	12,210	80%	
2022	18,580,026	289,426	219,327	76%	4,606,528	2,072,276	45%	17,249	13,542	79%	

Conclusions

With the national population expected to increase by 22 million people over the next 20 years,[viii] providing access to those who wish to pursue a higher education represents new challenges. As numbers of postsecondary institutions, types of institutions, enrollment in colleges and universities, and student diversity reach record highs, the push for more postsecondary opportunities and access to higher education continues to increase. Educational trends throughout history, however, show intermittent rises and falls, shifts, and evolutions, all reflecting changes in society and broader national and international conditions. And just as the rapid growth of the nation during the 19th century produced a feverous interest in higher education towards the end of the 1800s and political and economic trends fueled the dramatic surge of postsecondary accessibility in the late 1940s, current trends are reflections of America today.

The first quarter of the 21st century has been marked by record-breaking deficits, vascillation in unemployment rates from low to high to low again, and a mounting wealth distribution gap. More jobs today than ever before require some level of postsecondary education, and all postsecondary institutions—public, private, non-profit, and for-profit—are collectively part of the effort to extend higher education to the ever-expanding population. While all levels postsecondary institution have absorbed some of the increased enrollment over the past decade, controls on government appropriations and limits on private sector endowments due to economic hardships have constrained growth in public and private non-profit institutions. In fact, the number of institutions, regardless of type and sector, has regressed since the turn of the century.

New shifts in higher education will require appropriate reforms in policy to respond to issues of educational quality and mounting student indebtedness associated with modern postsecondary education. Continuing to look at institutional data will help policymakers recognize how the current trends can contribute to educational success in America, while also reinforcing safeguards that ensure academic excellence among all postsecondary institutions. Overall, if we understand these trends, historical parallels, and the contexts in which our system of higher education operates, we will have the tools to develop appropriate reform that works in the modern era of higher education.

viii Congressional Budget Office, "The Demographic Outlook: 2025 to 2055." https://www.cbo.gov/publication/60875

Exhibit 14. Total fall enrollment at degree-granting institutions, by age grouping, 2001-2021 (in thousands).[15]

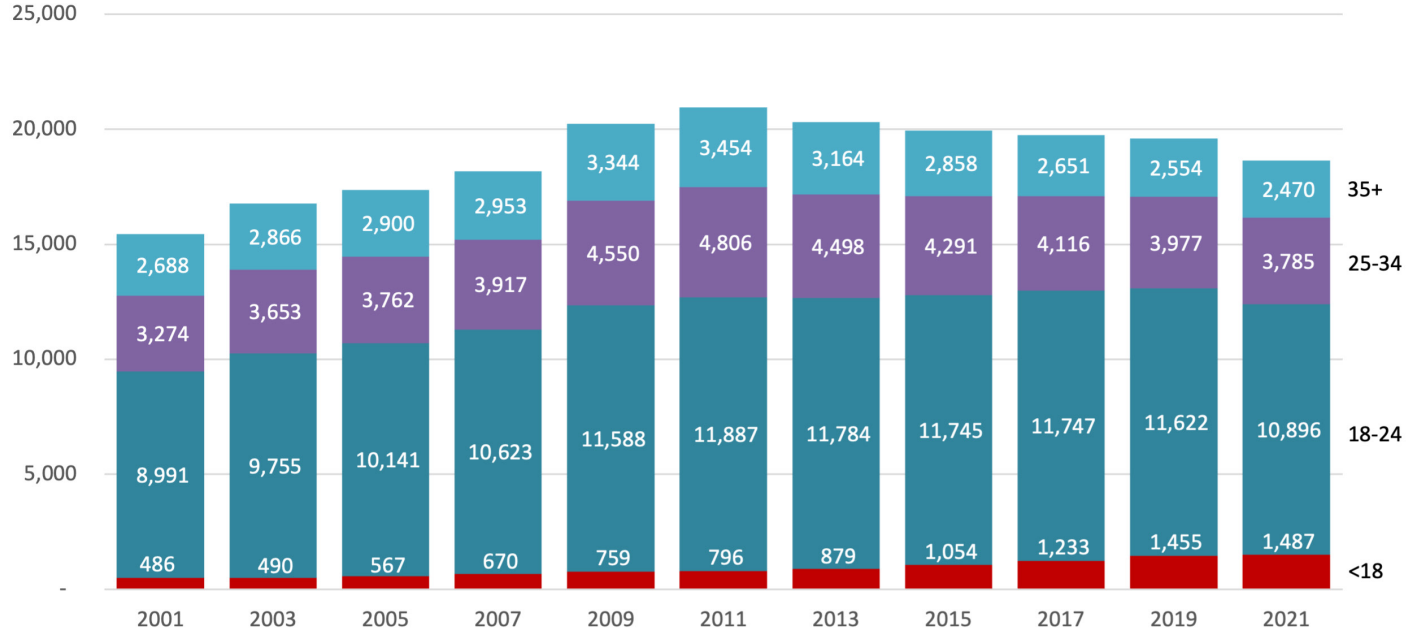


Exhibit 15. Total fall enrollment at degree-granting institutions, by age grouping, 2001-2021 (in thousands).[14]

		Number				Percent			
Attendance	All	<18	18-24	25-34	35+	<18	18-24	25-34	35+
2001	**15,928**	486	8,991	3,274	2,688	3%	56%	21%	17%
2003	**16,911**	490	9,755	3,653	2,866	3%	58%	22%	17%
2005	**17,474**	567	10,141	3,762	2,900	3%	58%	22%	17%
2007	**18,258**	670	10,623	3,917	2,953	4%	58%	21%	16%
2009	**20,314**	759	11,588	4,550	3,344	4%	57%	22%	16%
2011	**21,011**	796	11,887	4,806	3,454	4%	57%	23%	16%
2013	**20,377**	879	11,784	4,498	3,164	4%	58%	22%	16%
2015	**19,988**	1,054	11,745	4,291	2,858	5%	59%	21%	14%
2017	**19,778**	1,233	11,747	4,116	2,651	6%	59%	21%	13%
2019	**19,630**	1,455	11,622	3,977	2,554	7%	59%	20%	13%
2021	**18,660**	1,487	10,896	3,785	2,470	8%	58%	20%	13%

Endnotes

1. Snyder, T.D. (1993). 120 years of American education: a statistical portrait. National Center for Education Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office; Digest of Education Statistics 2023, Table 317.10.
2. Ibid.
3. Cohen, A. M., & Kisker, C. B. (2010). The shaping of American higher education: Emergence and growth of the contemporary system (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
4. Snyder, T.D. (1993). 120 years of American education: a statistical portrait. National Center for Education Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office; Digest of Education Statistics 2023, Table 317.10 and 317.25.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. 1970 to 1980: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS), "Fall Enrollment in Colleges and Universities" surveys, 1976 and 1980; Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), "Fall Enrollment Survey" (IPEDS-EF:90); and IPEDS Spring 2001 through Spring 2021, Fall Enrollment component. Years 1870 to 1960: Snyder, T.D. (1993). 120 years of American education: a statistical portrait. National Center for Education Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
8. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS), "Fall Enrollment in Colleges and Universities" surveys, 1970 through 1985; Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), "Fall Enrollment Survey" (IPEDS-EF:90-99); IPEDS Spring 2000 through Spring 2022, Fall Enrollment component.
9. All institution data from 2023 Digest Table 303.10; HBCU data from 2023 Digest Table 313.20; HSI data for 2012 to 2022 from Digest of each year Table 312.40. For 2000 to 2010, various tables (changed by year) of the Digest for each year. For the 1990s, see data extracted from U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Hispanic Serving Institutions: Statistical Trends from 1990 to 1999, NCES 2002–051, by Christina Stearns and Satoshi Watanabe. Project Officer: Thomas D. Snyder. Washington, DC:2002. Tribal College data from various Digest tables 1998 to 2022
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid. 2004 HSI data actual 2005 and 2008 is actual 2007 due to data availability. Puerto Rico is not included; only 50 states and DC.
14. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Spring 2002 through Spring 2022, Fall Enrollment component; and Enrollment in Degree-Granting Institutions Projection Model, through 2031. (This table was prepared November 2022.)
15. Ibid.