



2021 Update - Facts & Figures

DESCRIPTIVE HIGHLIGHTS

Based on Classifications as of February 18, 2021

CARNEGIE CLASSIFICATION OF INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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The BASIC Classification – Significantly fewer institutions; somewhat lower enrollments; more degrees conferred

Since its inception, the original, now labelled “Basic” classification, has illustrated that the U.S. Postsecondary landscape is comprised of a relatively small number of institutions that enroll many students (especially in the doctoral and associate’s levels), with more numerous smaller institutions that enroll relatively few students (especially in the baccalaureate and special focus categories).

The 2021 update illustrates some notable shifts in the landscape, with the number of institutions diminishing by 9% while enrollment only declined by 4%.

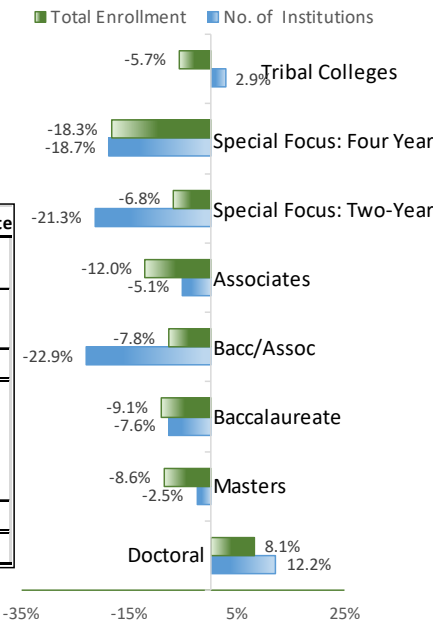
In contrast, the total number of degrees conferred by all institutions combined increased by nearly 5%.

The largest decline in number of institutions was among special focus and mixed bacc/assoc colleges.

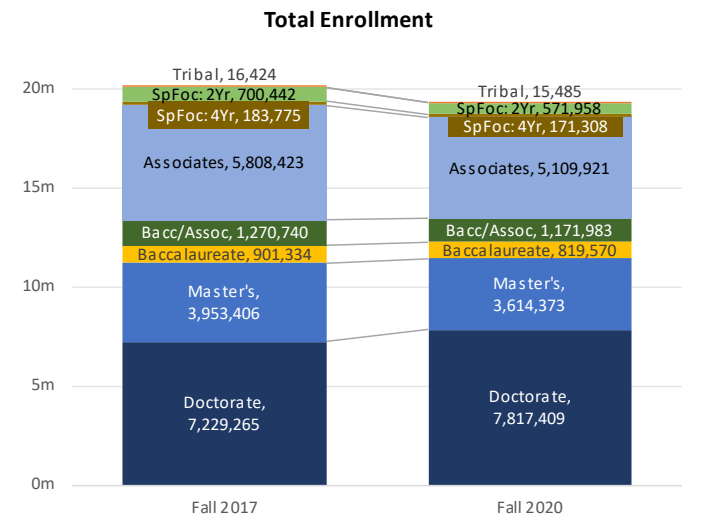
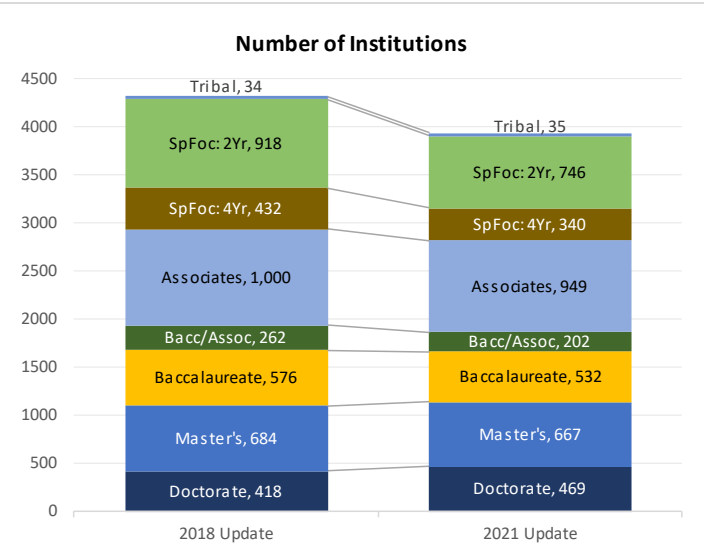
Doctoral universities grew especially in number (up 12%) and less so in total enrollment (up 8%). Despite those declines, the total number of degrees conferred increased by just under 5% with slightly larger increases at the graduate level (4.9%) compared to undergraduate level (4.3%).

	Institutions		Fall 2017 Enrollment	
	N	%	N	%
Tribal Colleges	35	1%	15,485	0.1%
Special Focus: Four Year	746	19%	571,958	3%
Special Focus: Two-Year	340	9%	171,308	1%
Associate's Colleges	949	24%	5,109,921	26%
Baccalaureate/Associate's Colleges	202	5%	1,171,983	6%
Baccalaureate Colleges	532	14%	819,570	4%
Master's Colleges and Universities	667	17%	3,614,373	19%
Doctoral Universities	469	12%	7,817,409	41%
Grand Total	3,940		19,292,007	

Percent Change in No. of Institutions and Total Enrollment, 2018 to 2021 Update



	2018 (AY16-17)	2021 (AY19-20)	% chg
Assoc	1010k	1061k	5.1%
Bacc	2079k	2161k	4.0%
Total Ugrad	3088k	3223k	4.3%
Master's	822k	862k	4.9%
R/S Doc	72k	75k	4.2%
PP Doc	110k	116k	5.2%
Oth Doc	2.1k	2.2k	0.7%
Total Grad	1005k	1055k	4.9%
Grand Total	4094k	4277k	4.5%



UNDERGRADUATE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

Arts & Sciences v. Professional/Vocational/Technical Focus

The Undergraduate Instructional Program classification describes institutions that have undergraduate programs, according to the proportion of the degree completions (academic year 2019-20) in professional, technical and career programs vs those in the arts & sciences. For Associates colleges, the career and technical degrees are distinguished from degrees conferred in disciplinary areas that generally require further education to enter careers directly related to field of study (labeled as a “transfer” focus). These distinctions are then categorized along a continuum. For Associates colleges, we use three categories, and for Four-Year Colleges and Universities, we use a continuum of five categories.

Associates Colleges - Undergraduate Instructional Program Focus

	Number of Institutions				Total Enrollment			
	2021 Update	Pct of Total	2018 Update	Pct Change	2021 Update (Fall 2020)	Pct of Total	2018 Update (Fall 2017)	Pct Change
High Transfer	317	33%	342	-7%	2,422,207	47%	2,935,267	-17%
Mixed Transfer/Career Tech	316	33%	311	2%	1,718,988	34%	1,967,804	-13%
High Career Tech	316	33%	347	-9%	968,726	19%	905,352	7%
Grand Total	949		1,000	-5%	5,109,921		5,808,423	-12%

Four-Year Colleges & Universities - Undergraduate Instructional Program Focus

	Number of Institutions				Total Enrollment			
	2021 Update	Pct of Total	2018 Update	Pct Change	2021 Update (Fall 2020)	Pct of Total	2018 Update (Fall 2017)	Pct Change
Arts & Sciences Focus	225	11%	162	39%	469,728	4%	454,980	3%
Arts & Sciences Plus Professions	169	8%	185	-9%	1,032,388	8%	1,062,535	-3%
Balanced Arts & Sciences/Professions	484	23%	495	-2%	4,853,016	38%	4,744,249	2%
Professions Plus Arts & Sciences	662	31%	664	0%	4,701,795	37%	4,728,528	-1%
Professions Focus	583	27%	656	-11%	1,603,861	13%	1,450,962	11%
Grand Total	2,123		2,162	-2%	12,660,788		12,441,254	2%

Associates Colleges are evenly distributed in number among the three types of focus (by design). However, enrollments are skewed toward the “High Transfer” focus end of the continuum, where you find many of the large, public community colleges. (Note that special focus two-year and Mixed Baccalaureate/Associates colleges are included in separate categories not shown in these tables).

Four-Year Colleges & Universities are skewed, in number of institutions toward the professional end of the spectrum. Enrollments in the four-year sector, are more normally distributed across, with the Balanced Arts & Sciences/Professions and Professions Plus Arts & Sciences categories accounting for three quarters (75%) of all enrollments in less than one-half (44%) of the total institutions.

The pattern of changes from the 2018 to 2021 updates were not consistent, although there was a somewhat surprising increase (39%) in the number of institutions that have an “arts & science focus” and a decline (11%) among institutions with a “professions focus”. However, enrollments within both categories increased.

GRADUATE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

Institutions offering graduate degrees—master’s, research/scholarship doctoral, professional doctoral, and other doctoral—are arrayed based on the disciplinary focus of their programs. Two additional distinctions are made. 1) between institutions that offer only master’s degrees and professional doctoral degrees or “other” doctoral degrees and those that confer research/scholarship doctoral degrees (“A Ph.D. or other doctor's degree that requires advanced work beyond the master's level, including the preparation and defense of a dissertation based on original research, or the planning and execution of an original project demonstrating substantial artistic or scholarly achievement.”*). We also pull out within each broad category, institutions that offer degrees in only one broad disciplinary area (most commonly Health, Business, or Education).

Using these distinctions, over two-fifths (63%) of institutions are those that offer only master’s and other than research/scholarship doctoral degrees, but they only account for less than one-third (29%) of total enrollments (Fall 2020). Conversely, the remaining one-third of institutions that confer Ph.D.s and other “research/scholarship” doctoral degrees account for nearly three-quarters (71%) of all enrollments, with the vast majority of those within the comprehensive institutions, among which most are in the two research categories of the basic classification. Among institutions that do not confer research/scholarship doctorates, the majority fall into the various “other professions” categories. However, the other types of institutions, and especially those that are in the “Business dominant” categories, tend to be larger and so account for a larger proportion of total enrollments.

Since the 2018 update, there has been a shift toward more of these institutions offering a research/ scholarship doctorate. Enrollments have also increased among

institutions that confer research/scholarship doctorates. Among those that do not confer such degrees, enrollments have increased among the those that confer only or predominantly doctorates in Education fields.

Graduate Instructional Program Focus

	Number of Institutions				Total Enrollment				
	2021 Update		Pct of Total	2018 Update	Pct Change	2021 Update (Fall 2020)	Pct of Total	2018 Update (Fall 2017)	Pct Change
Do not confer Research/Scholarship Doctorates	1,227		63%	1,348	-9.0%	3,548,300	29%	4,131,443	-14.1%
Education-Single or Dominant	211	606,875	11%	354	-40.4%	606,875	5%	280,103	116.7%
Business-Single or Dominant	266	1,009,148	14%	457	-41.8%	1,009,148	8%	866,756	16.4%
Other Professions-Single or Dominant	656	1,151,435	34%	442	48.4%	1,151,435	9%	1,879,657	-38.7%
Arts & Sciences/Comprehensive	94	780,842	5%	95	-1.1%	780,842	6%	1,104,927	-29.3%
Confer Research/Scholarship Doctorates	722	5,738,655	37%	686	5.2%	8,790,589	71%	8,082,833	8.8%
Single Program	261	1,298,417	13%	234	11.5%	1,298,417	11%	960,095	35.2%
With Focus	283	2,809,782	15%	279	1.4%	2,809,782	23%	2,694,512	4.3%
Comprehensive	178	1,630,456	9%	173	2.9%	4,682,390	38%	4,428,226	5.7%
Grand Total	1,949			2,034	-4.2%	12,338,889		12,214,276	1.0%

*From the IPEDS Glossary definitions of the various types of doctoral degree designations provided for institutions to report their degree conferrals (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, <https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/VisGlossaryAll.aspx>). Note that there is a third type of doctoral degree (“Other”) which, for the Graduate Instructional Program classification is included with the Master’s and Professional Doctoral Degrees counts.

ENROLLMENT PROFILE – Mix of Undergraduate and Graduate Students

The Enrollment profile classification arrays institutions according to the mix of undergraduate and graduate students. Among exclusively undergraduate institutions, it further distinguishes among those that only award Associates degrees from those that award Bachelor's degrees and higher (some of which also confer Associates degrees).

The exclusively undergraduate two-year institutions, which include predominantly Community Colleges and Special Focus vocational and technical colleges, which have declined in number by about 10 percent and in enrollment by closer to 12 percent, represent one-third of the institutions but now just over one-quarter of the student enrollment (27%).

Among four-year colleges and universities, exclusively undergraduate institutions have declined in number by just over 20 percent, but in enrollment by just under 8 percent. Conversely, the very high undergraduate institutions declined in number by about 11 percent, but in enrollment by nearly 22 percent. Aside from the very high group, the other categories with mixed undergraduate and graduate programs all grew in enrollment and remained about the same in number.

Student Level Mix

	Number of Institutions				Total Enrollment			
	2021 Update	Pct of Total	2018 Update	Pct Change	2021 Update (Fall 2020)	Pct of Total	2018 Update (Fall 2017)	Pct Change
Exclusively undergraduate two-year	1,308	33%	1,450	-9.8%	5,287,137	27%	5,998,187	-11.9%
Exclusively undergraduate four-year	609	15%	770	-20.9%	1,590,723	8%	1,723,797	-7.7%
Very high undergraduate	575	15%	644	-10.7%	2,338,772	12%	2,985,139	-21.7%
High undergraduate	655	17%	644	1.7%	6,414,687	33%	5,865,571	9.4%
Majority undergraduate	319	8%	327	-2.4%	2,654,728	14%	2,575,401	3.1%
Majority graduate	194	5%	193	0.5%	853,828	4%	753,431	13.3%
Exclusively graduate	280	7%	296	-5.4%	152,132	1%	162,283	-6.3%
Grand Total	3,940		4,324	-8.9%	19,292,007		20,063,809	-3.8%

UNDERGRADUATE PROFILE – Course Load, Transfer, and Selectivity

Three factors are represented in the Undergraduate Profile classification. Both 2-Yr and 4-Yr institutions are considered by student course load intensity. Four-year institutions are further characterized by student transfer and selectivity levels.

Within the two-year sector, most institutions enroll large proportions of part-time students, and these have grown in number since 2018. However, the institutions with “higher full-time” proportions of students, while declining in number, maintained enrollment levels. The situation is reversed at four-year institutions, where most institutions serve primarily full-time students, with higher numbers declining among the higher part-time institutions, but enrollments remaining stable across all categories.

Student Course Load Intensity at Two-Year Institutions

	Number of Institutions				Total Enrollment			
	2021 Update	Pct of Total	2018 Update	Pct Change	2021 Update (Fall 2020)	Pct of Total	2018 Update (Fall 2017)	Pct Change
Higher Part-Time (<40% FT)	597	46%	545	10%	3,880,273	73%	4,092,738	-5%
Mixed Full/Part-Time (40-59% FT)	271	21%	337	-20%	1,088,200	21%	1,463,248	-26%
Medium Full-Time (61-90% FT)	116	9%	194	-40%	148,993	3%	232,041	-36%
Higher Full-Time (>90% FT)	328	25%	376	-13%	171,229	3%	171,034	0%
Grand Total	1,312		1,452	-10%	5,288,695		5,959,061	-11%

Student Course Load at Four-Year Institutions with Undergraduate Programs

	Number of Institutions				Total Enrollment			
	2021 Update	Pct of Total	2018 Update	Pct Change	2021 Update (Fall 2020)	Pct of Total	2018 Update (Fall 2017)	Pct Change
Higher Part-Time (<60% FT)	370	16%	458	-19%	2,344,035	17%	2,340,677	0%
Medium Full-Time (60-79% FT)	381	16%	455	-16%	2,338,070	17%	2,404,314	-3%
Higher Full-Time (80%+ FT)	1,571	68%	1,674	-6%	9,148,094	66%	9,162,188	0%
Grand Total	2,322		2,587	-10%	13,830,199		13,907,179	-1%

Transfer Volume at Four-Year Institutions with Undergraduate Programs

	Number of Institutions				Total Enrollment			
	2021 Update	Pct of Total	2018 Update	Pct Change	2021 Update (Fall 2020)	Pct of Total	2018 Update (Fall 2017)	Pct Change
Low Transfer-In (<20%)	836	36%	1,684	-50%	4,385,042	32%	9,806,960	-55%
High Transfer-In (20%+)*	1,486	64%	903	65%	9,445,157	68%	4,100,219	130%
Grand Total	2,322		2,587	-10%	13,830,199		13,907,179	-1%

*Includes the "four-year, higher part-time category, which is not divided according to transfer level because all institutions have relatively higher transfer rates.

Selectivity at Four-Year Institutions

	Number of Institutions				Total Enrollment			
	2021 Update	Pct of Total	2018 Update	Pct Change	2021 Update (Fall 2020)	Pct of Total	2018 Update (Fall 2017)	Pct Change
Inclusive (<18)*	1,465	63%	1,684	-13%	6,451,350	47%	5,670,958	14%
Selective (18-21)*	574	25%	545	5%	4,502,317	33%	4,037,049	12%
More Selective (21+)*	283	12%	358	-21%	2,876,532	21%	4,199,172	-31%
Grand Total	2,322		2,587	-10%	13,830,199		13,907,179	-1%

*Based on average 25th percentile of composite ACT score or equivalent SAT score. For test optional institutions, based on percent of applicants admitted.

Low transfer-in institutions have declined in both number and enrollments, with more institutions now falling in the high transfer-in categories.

On the selectivity measure, the number of institutions shifted toward the middle category and away from the inclusive and more selective extremes, but enrollments grew in both the inclusive and selective category but declined in the most selective category (reflecting a trend toward institutions becoming more inclusive).

SIZE & SETTING – Course Load, Transfer, and Selectivity

This classification considers the combination of two factors that differentiate institutions that include an undergraduate student population (exclusively graduate program institutions are not classified). Size, that is, the number of enrolled students, is separately calibrated into five categories for two-year colleges and into four categories for four-year colleges and universities. Four-year colleges and universities in each size category are further differentiated according to the proportion of students who live in institutional housing.

With respect to size, the more numerous, smaller institutions enroll a relatively small proportion of students, while the fewer large institutions enroll the majority, especially among four-year institutions. Changes between 2018 and 2021 do not show any consistent patterns across size categories in either the 2- or 4-year sectors.

A pattern of change is more noticeable in residential character, with institutions moving toward the middle, “primarily residential” category. This appears to be due to a shift more so from the highly residential category “downward” (campuses becoming less residential).

Size Categories* at Two-Year Institutions

	Number of Institutions				Total Enrollment			
	2021 Update	Pct of Total	2018 Update	Pct Change	2021 Update (Fall 2020)	Pct of Total	2018 Update (Fall 2017)	Pct Change
Very Small (<500)	358	28%	503	-29%	99,628	2%	131,767	-24%
Small (500-1,999)	479	37%	438	9%	841,683	16%	761,468	11%
Medium (2,000-4,999)	293	23%	304	-4%	1,690,433	32%	1,721,859	-2%
Large (5,000-9,999)	114	9%	143	-20%	1,392,125	26%	1,688,588	-18%
Very Large (10,000+)	45	3%	64	-30%	1,257,360	24%	1,655,379	-24%
Grand Total	1,289		1,452	-11%	5,281,229		5,959,061	-11%

Size Categories* at Four-Year Institutions

	Number of Institutions				Total Enrollment			
	2021 Update	Pct of Total	2018 Update	Pct Change	2021 Update (Fall 2020)	Pct of Total	2018 Update (Fall 2017)	Pct Change
Very Small (<1,000)	840	36%	1,021	-18%	479,526	3%	502,232	-5%
Small 1,000-2,999)	729	31%	719	1%	1,677,625	12%	1,610,631	4%
Medium (3,000-9,999)	493	21%	541	-9%	3,724,816	27%	3,855,274	-3%
Large (10,000+)	284	12%	261	9%	7,955,835	57%	7,062,264	13%
Grand Total	2,346		2,542	-8%	13,837,802		13,030,401	6%

*Size based on the FTE of Degree-Seeking students, where FTE = Full-Time Headcount plus 1/3 part-time headcount.

Campus Residence** Status at Four-Year Institutions

	Number of Institutions				Total Enrollment			
	2021 Update	Pct of Total	2018 Update	Pct Change	2021 Update (Fall 2020)	Pct of Total	2018 Update (Fall 2017)	Pct Change
Primarily Nonresidential	940	40%	1,161	-19%	6,259,342		6,392,354	-2%
Primarily Residential	510	22%	433	18%	4,838,828		1,697,646	185%
Highly Residential	896	38%	948	-5%	2,739,632		4,940,401	-45%
Grand Total	2,346		2,542	-8%	13,837,802		13,030,401	6%

**Based on a combination of percent of undergraduate degree-seeking students living on campus and percent full-time. See definitions on web site for further details.

Changes among Doctoral Research Universities

The final table illustrates the movement of institutions that were categorized in any of the three doctoral university categories in 2018 or 2021. Most institutions remained in the same category, particularly among the two research subcategories. No “R1” university left the category, and 15 previous high research institutions moved into the “very high” research category, 3 moved into doctoral/professional, and 3 into other categories. The most movement into the doctoral categories occurred among the Doctoral/Professional subcategory, with 9 institutions moving into the “high research” category, and 15 moving into other categories, while 68 institutions moved from other categories into doctoral/professional.

		2021 Doctoral Universities			2021 Other			Total
		Very High Research	High Research	Doctoral/Profess.	Master's	Bacca-laureate	Special Focus	
2018 Doctoral Universities	Very High Research	131						131
	High Research	15	113	3	1		2	134
	Doctoral/Professional		9	121	12	3		142
2018 Other	Master's		10	48				
	Baccalaureate			7				
	Special Focus		2	10				
	Total	146	134	189				