

# Section 5

## *Contexts of Postsecondary Education*





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This List of Indicators includes all the indicators in Section 5 that appear on *The Condition of Education* web site (<http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe>), drawn from the 2000, 2001, 2002, and 2003 print volumes. The list is organized by subject area. The indicator numbers and the years in which the indicators were published are not necessarily sequential.



## Introduction: Contexts of Postsecondary Education

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The postsecondary education system encompasses various types of institutions, both public and private. These include less-than-2-year institutions providing short-term vocational training, 2-year institutions offering associate's degrees and occupational certificates, and 4-year colleges and universities offering bachelor's or higher degrees. This system serves not only recent high school graduates but also adults of all ages who enroll to fulfill a wide range of personal and career-related goals.

Although issues of student access, persistence, and attainment have been predominant concerns in postsecondary education (see section 3), the context in which postsecondary education is delivered has attracted considerable attention as well. With respect to students, issues of ongoing concern have included, for example, curriculum content, student access to faculty and courses, the use of technology, and the availability of student support services. All of these issues must

be addressed in the context of a diverse student body that varies in terms of age, sex, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic background, academic goals, and work and enrollment patterns. With respect to faculty, issues such as workload, tenure, salaries, allocation of time between teaching and research, and faculty diversity have been prominent.

The indicators in this section describe the undergraduate population, the programs and course of study they take, their learning opportunities, and the special programs in which they participate. They also describe the characteristics of faculty and how colleges and universities use faculty and other resources.

Additional indicators on these topics, particularly on learning opportunities, may be found in the web version of *The Condition of Education*. These indicators are listed on the facing page and are available at <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/list/i5.asp>.

# Characteristics of Postsecondary Students

## Undergraduate Diversity

*Undergraduates display considerable diversity in their demographic, enrollment, and employment characteristics.*

Undergraduates who attend our nation's colleges and universities are not a homogeneous group. Many student demographic, enrollment, and employment characteristics are related to the risk of dropping out (NCES 97-578). Consequently, understanding the variation in the undergraduate population has implications for how postsecondary institutions might better meet the needs of students and promote their success.

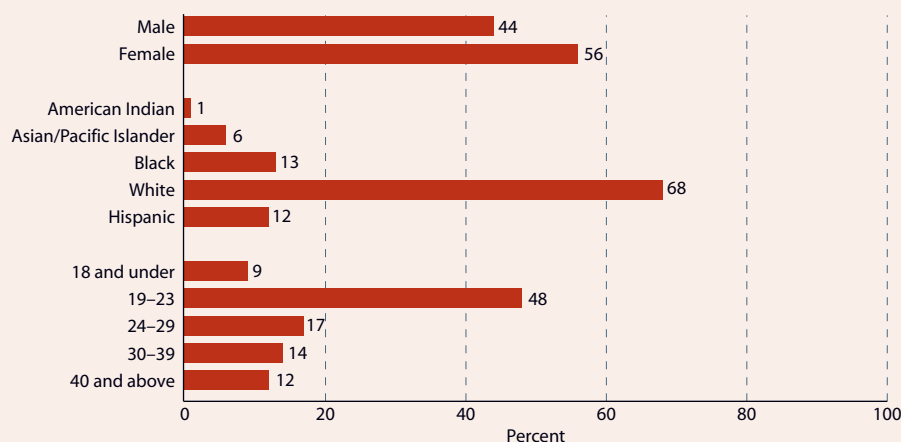
More than half of undergraduates were women in 1999-2000 (56 percent), and close to a third were other than White. Traditional college-aged students (23 years or younger) accounted for 57 percent of all undergraduates, and 43 percent were age 24 or older. More than a quarter (27 percent) of undergraduates had dependents, 13 percent were single parents, and 80 percent were employed, including 39 percent who were employed full time. Also, 9 percent reported having some type of disability causing them difficulties as a student (see supplemental table 32-1).

In general, the distribution of students according to the characteristics just mentioned has changed

little over the past 10 years, but two notable differences exist. First, the proportion of White students has decreased, while the proportion of students in each other racial/ethnic group has increased. Combined, minority students represented nearly a third of all undergraduates in 1999-2000, up from about a quarter in 1989-90. Second, the percentage of students working full time during the school year rose 7 percentage points during this period, while the percentage working part time fell 9 points. The percentage of students not working rose almost 2 points (see supplemental tables 32-1 and 32-2).

Many of these characteristics are related to the type of institutions students attend. In 1999-2000, students at public 2-year institutions were more likely than those at 4-year institutions to have dependents, work full time, and delay enrollment. These results are consistent with the fact that students at public 2-year institutions were older than those at 4-year institutions. Conversely, in 1999-2000, students at 4-year institutions, especially private not-for-profit doctorate-granting institutions, were more likely than those at 2-year institutions to be of traditional age, not work, and attend full time.

**UNDERGRADUATE DIVERSITY: Percentage of undergraduates with selected student characteristics: 1999-2000**



NOTE: American Indian includes Alaska Native, Pacific Islander includes Native Hawaiian, Black includes African American, and Hispanic includes Latino. Race categories exclude Hispanic origin unless specified.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 1999-2000 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:2000).

FOR MORE INFORMATION:  
Supplemental Notes 1, 3, 8,  
11



Supplemental Tables 32-1,  
32-2

NCES 97-578

NCES 2002-168

# Programs and Courses

## Degrees and Fields of Study

*Between 1990–91 and 2000–01, the number of associate's degrees awarded increased at a faster rate than the number of bachelor's degrees.*

The number of associate's degrees awarded between 1990–91 and 2000–01 increased by 20 percent, from 482,000 to 579,000. In contrast, the number of bachelor's degrees awarded grew by 14 percent, from 1,095,000 to 1,244,000. The number of associate's degrees awarded increased more during the first half of the time period than the second half (15 vs. 4 percent), while the number of bachelor's degrees awarded increased by 6 to 7 percent in both 5-year periods (see supplemental tables 33-1, 33-2, and 33-3).

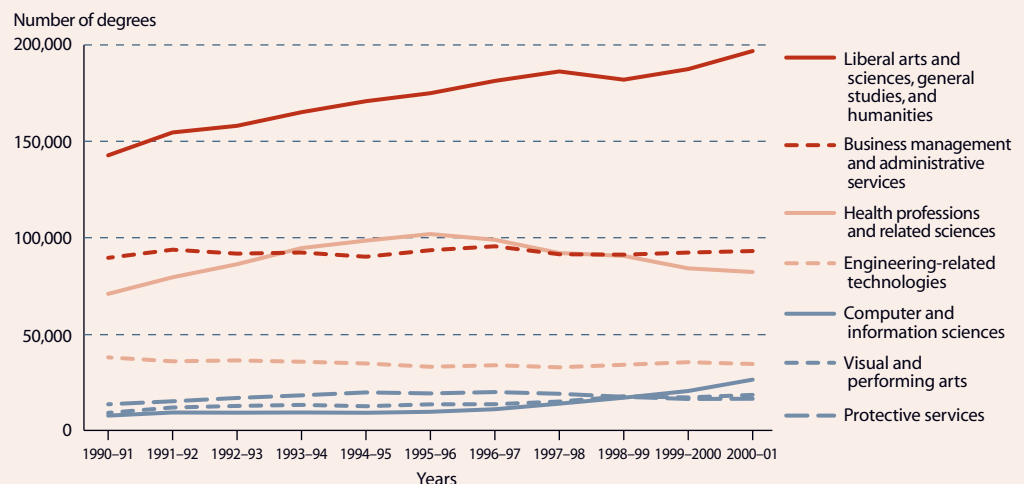
Each year between 1990–91 and 2000–01, more associate's degrees were awarded in liberal arts/sciences, general studies, and humanities than in any other field. Associate's degrees in these fields increased in both the number awarded (by 38 percent) and in the share of the total (from 30 to 34 percent). Business management/administrative services and health professions/related sciences were the next largest fields in 2000–01, accounting for 16 and 14 percent, respectively, of all associate's degrees. While the number of associate's degrees awarded in business remained relatively stable between 1990–91 and 2000–01, the number of degrees awarded in health grew until the mid-1990s

and then started to decline. The number of associate's degrees awarded in engineering-related technologies declined from 1990–91 to 2000–01. Computer/information sciences grew rapidly in the second half of the time period (with the number of degrees increasing by 173 percent). Associate's degrees in visual/performing arts and protective services increased from 1990–91 to 2000–01, but each field accounted for only 3 percent of all associate's degrees awarded in 2000–01 (see supplemental table 33-2).

At the bachelor's degree level, the number of degrees awarded in the three largest fields reveal different patterns. In business, the number of degrees awarded decreased between 1990–91 and 1995–96 (by 9 percent) but then increased between 1995–96 and 2000–01 (by 17 percent). The number of bachelor's degrees awarded in social sciences/history remained relatively stable, increasing by 1 percent in both time periods. In education, the number of degrees awarded decreased between 1990–91 and 1995–96 (by 5 percent) but then remained stable between 1995–96 and 2000–01 (see supplemental table 33-3).

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, NCES. (2003). *Digest of Education Statistics 2002* (NCES 2003–060), table 250. Data from U.S. Department of Education, NCES, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, "Completions Survey" (IPEDS-C:90–01), 1990–91 through 2000–01.

**ASSOCIATE'S DEGREES: Number of associate's degrees conferred by Title IV degree-granting institutions, by field of study: 1990–91 through 2000–01**



FOR MORE INFORMATION:  
Supplemental Notes 3, 8  
Supplemental Tables 33-1,  
33-2, 33-3

# Special Programs

## Services and Accommodations for Students With Disabilities

About 9 percent of undergraduates reported having disabilities in 1999–2000, and 22 percent of these students reported not receiving the services or accommodations they needed.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 require postsecondary institutions to make education accessible for students with disabilities. At the postsecondary level, disability-related services and accommodations might include, for example, alternative examination formats, readers, interpreters, or ramps for wheelchair access. The percentage of college freshmen reporting disabilities has increased from just under 3 percent in 1978 to more than 9 percent in 1998 (American Youth Policy Forum and Center on Education Policy 2002).

In 1999–2000, 9 percent of all undergraduate students in degree-granting institutions reported having a disability that created difficulties for them as a student.<sup>1</sup> About half of these students were enrolled at public 2-year institutions, and another 26 percent were enrolled at public 4-year institutions. The percentage of students with disabilities was higher at public 2-year and private for-profit institutions than at public and private not-for-profit 4-year institutions. Among students with disabilities, 26 percent reported

receiving disability-related services or accommodations. However, 22 percent of students with disabilities reported not receiving the services or accommodations they needed. At private for-profit institutions, 11 percent of students with disabilities reported not receiving the services or accommodations they needed, compared with 21 to 24 percent of their counterparts at other types of institutions.

Of the students with disabilities, 29 percent had an orthopedic or mobility impairment; 17 percent mental illness or depression; 15 percent a health impairment; 12 percent a visual or hearing impairment; 11 percent a learning disability or Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD); and 15 percent had some other type of disability. Students with a learning disability or ADD were more likely than students with other types of disabilities to report receiving services (51 percent vs. 19 to 30 percent). Nevertheless, 32 percent of students with a learning disability or ADD reported not receiving the services or accommodations they needed (see supplemental table 34-1).

**DISABILITY-RELATED SERVICES: Percentage and percentage distribution of students reporting disabilities, and among students reporting disabilities, their service receipt status, by type of institution: 1999–2000**

Students reporting disabilities	Total <sup>2</sup>	Private not-		Public 2-year	Private for-profit
		Public 4-year	for-profit 4-year		
Percentage of students with disabilities	9.3	7.8	7.5	10.8	12.0
Among students with disabilities, percentage who					
Received services	26.0	29.2	26.3	25.2	18.0
Needed services, but did not receive them	22.0	21.2	24.0	23.2	10.6
Percentage distribution of students with disabilities	100.0	26.4	11.4	48.6	6.3
Percentage distribution of all students	100.0	31.3	14.0	42.1	4.9

<sup>1</sup>Students were asked several questions about their disability status. Eleven percent reported having a disability, 9 percent reported having a disability that created difficulties for them as a student, and 4 percent considered themselves to be disabled (NPSAS 2000: Previously unpublished tabulations [March 2002]). *Supplemental note 11* provides more information on disabilities.

<sup>2</sup>Percentages are based on students who attended all types of institutions, including others not cited, or more than one institution.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 1999–2000 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:2000).

FOR MORE INFORMATION:  
 Supplemental Notes 3, 8, 11  
 Supplemental Table 34-1  
 American Youth Policy Forum  
 and Center on Education Policy  
 2002







# Faculty

## Changes in Faculty Tenure Policy and Hiring

*The majority of postsecondary institutions had recently taken actions affecting tenure as of 1998, and the proportion of recently hired faculty who were not on a tenure track increased from 1992 to 1998.*

Over the past decade, postsecondary institutions have experienced rising enrollments of nontraditional students, reductions in the proportion of revenues from state funding, and increased use of short-term and contract personnel. These changes have led postsecondary institutions to reevaluate longstanding policies affecting faculty tenure and hiring (Chronister and Baldwin 2000).

About two-thirds (66 percent) of all postsecondary institutions had tenure systems in fall 1998, and 88 percent of all full-time faculty worked at these institutions (NCES 2001–201). The majority of institutions (63 percent) had taken at least one action related to tenure or tenure policy for full-time faculty and instructional staff during the previous 5 years. According to these institutions, they had offered early or phased retirement to full-time tenured faculty more often than other measures such as instituting more stringent standards for granting tenure or downsizing tenured faculty (48 percent vs. 11 and 8 percent, respectively; see supplemental table 35-1). In addition, 16 per-

cent of institutions reported replacing some tenured positions with fixed-term contracts.

The likelihood of enacting changes differed somewhat by type of institution. Research institutions were more likely than doctoral institutions to have taken actions related to tenure for full-time faculty. For example, while a majority of public (60 percent) and private not-for-profit (69 percent) research institutions had offered early or phased retirement to tenured full-time faculty during the previous 5 years, fewer doctoral institutions had done so (44 percent of public and 45 percent of private not-for-profit doctoral institutions). Public research institutions were also more likely than other doctoral and research institutions to have downsized tenured faculty during this period.

Changes in the tenure status of recently hired faculty appear to reflect these strategies. Between 1992 and 1998, the percentage of full-time faculty in their current jobs no more than 3 years who were not on a tenure track (but were at institutions with tenure systems) increased from 32 percent to 38 percent (see supplemental table 35-2).

<sup>1</sup> Includes other possible actions not shown. See supplemental table 35-1 for details.

<sup>2</sup> Downsizing includes dismissing tenured faculty, replacing departing tenured faculty with nontenure-track faculty, or not hiring replacements for departing tenured faculty.

<sup>3</sup> Includes specialized medical schools and medical centers.

NOTE: Includes public and private not-for-profit Title IV degree-granting institutions in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Institutions were asked to report policies affecting full-time faculty and instructional staff. See *supplemental note 8* for a description of the types of institutions.

SOURCE: Berger, A., Kirshstein, R., and Rowe, E. *Institutional Policies and Practices: Results From the 1999 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty, Institution Survey* (NCES 2001–201), tables 5.1 and 5.6. Data from 1999 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF-99).



FOR MORE INFORMATION:  
 Supplemental Notes 3, 8  
 Supplemental Tables  
 35-1, 35-2  
 Chronister and Baldwin  
 2000

**CHANGES IN TENURE POLICY: Percentage of research and doctoral institutions that had taken actions related to tenure during the previous 5 years, by type and control of institution: Fall 1998**

