

GRADE INCREASE

TRACKING DISTANCE EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

Julia E. Seaman, I. Elaine Allen and Jeff Seaman



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Grade Increase:

Tracking Distance Education in the United States

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Julia E. Seaman
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2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Distance education enrollments increased for the fourteenth straight year, growing faster than they have for the past several years. From 2002 to 2012 both distance and overall enrollments grew annually, but since 2012 distance growth has continued its steady increase in an environment that saw overall enrollments decline for four straight years and the largest for-profit distance education institutions continue to face serious issues and lose their enrollments.

The number of distance education students grew by 5.6% from Fall 2015 to Fall 2016 to reach 6,359,121 who are taking at least one distance course, representing 31.6% of all students. Total distance enrollments are composed of 14.9% of students (3,003,080) taking exclusively distance courses, and 16.7% (3,356,041) who are taking a combination of distance and non-distance courses.

Year-to-year changes in distance enrollments continue to be very uneven with different higher education sectors, with continued steady growth for public institutions, similar levels of growth (albeit on a much smaller base) for the private non-profit sector, and the continuation of the decline in total enrollments for the private for-profit sector for the fourth year in a row.

Distance education enrollments are highly concentrated in a relatively small number of institutions. Almost half of distance education students are concentrated in just five percent of institutions, while the top 47 institutions (just 1.0% of the total) enroll 22.4% (1,421,703) of all distance students. This level of concentration is most extreme among the for-profit sector, where 85.6% of the distance students are enrolled at the top 5% of institutions. Concentration rates for private not-for-profit institutions are lower, while public institutions show very low levels of concentration.

Distance enrollments remain local: 52.8% of all students who took at least one distance course also took an on-campus course, and of those who took only distance courses 56.1% reside in the same state as the institution at which they are enrolled. Virtually no distance enrollments are international: only 0.7% of all distance students are located outside of the United States.

The total number of students studying on campus (those not taking any distance course or taking a combination of distance and non-distance courses) dropped by over a million (1,173,805, or 6.4%) between 2012 and 2016. The largest declines came at for-profit institutions, which saw a 44.1% drop, while both private not-for-profit institutions (-4.5%) and public institutions (-4.2%) saw far smaller decreases.

The number of students who are not taking any distance courses declined even more from 2012 to 2016, down by 11.2% (1,737,955 students) by the end of the period. The private for-profit sector fared worse (down 50.5%) as compared to both private not-for-profit institutions (-9.5%) and public institutions (-7.7%).

DEFINITIONS

This report uses data collected under the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Fall Enrollment survey. Beginning with Fall 2012, the data includes distance education enrollments.

The definitions used for this data collection are:

<i>Item</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Distance education	<p>Education that uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor synchronously or asynchronously.</p> <p>Technologies used for instruction may include the following: Internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcasts, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite or wireless communication devices; audio conferencing; and video cassette. DVDs, and CD-ROMS, if the cassette, DVDs, and CD-ROMS are used in a course in conjunction with the technologies listed above.</p>
Distance education course	<p>A course in which the instructional content is delivered exclusively via distance education. Requirements for coming to campus for orientation, testing, or academic support services do not exclude a course from being classified as distance education.</p>
Distance education program	<p>A program for which all the required coursework for program completion is able to be completed via distance education courses.</p>

IPEDS collects distance education enrollments in two categories:

- “Exclusively” distance education: All of the student's enrollments for the term were through distance education courses.
- “Some but not all” distance education: The student enrolled in a mix of course modalities, including some distance education courses.

This report creates a third category, composed of the sum of “exclusively” and “some but not all” distance education courses:

- "At least one" distance education course: A new data field created as the sum of the above two categories. This category matches the historical data reported prior to the fall of 2012, when the BSRG survey was the *de facto* data available.

PATTERNS IN OVERALL ENROLLMENTS

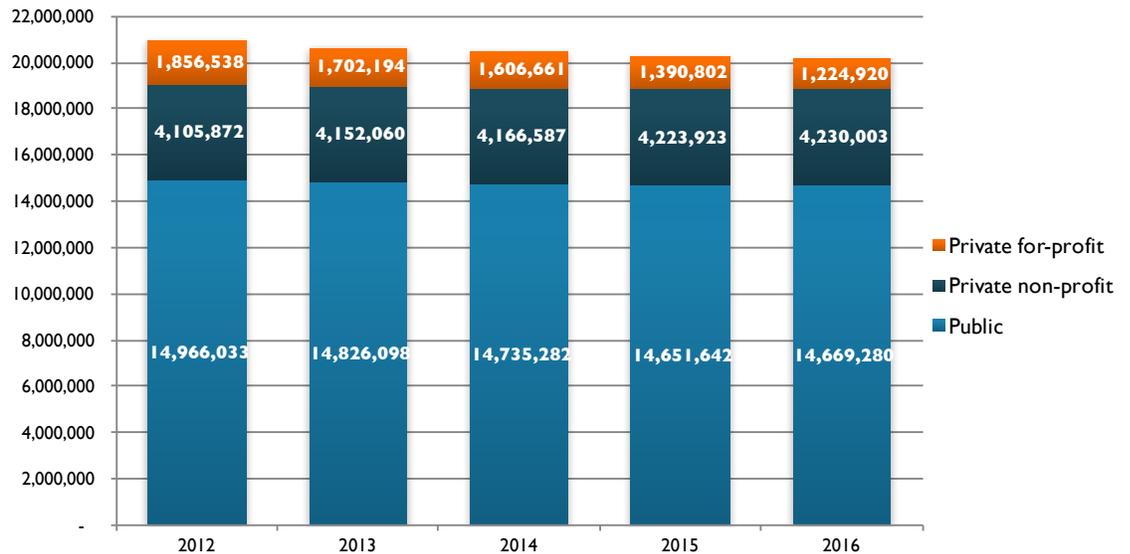
Overall Higher Education Enrollments Continue Downward Trend

The recent trend of overall enrollment decline continues for U.S. higher education institutes for 2016: the total number of students enrolled has dropped for each of the past four years. However, last year saw the smallest loss of students from the previous year since 2012.

There were 20,928,443 total students in Fall 2012 at all levels across all degree-granting institutions that were active and open to the public. Four years later in the fall of 2016, this number had decreased by 804,240, or -3.8%, to 20,124,203.

Overall enrollments decreased by 248,091 students from 2012 to 2013, by 171,822 from 2013 to 2014, by 242,163 from 2014 to 2015, and by a further 142,164 from 2015 to 2016. This continued decline follows a period of sustained growth among higher education institutions. From 2002 through 2012, higher education averaged a 2.7% compound annual growth rate for overall enrollments.

TOTAL ENROLLMENT - DEGREE-GRANTING INSTITUTIONS - 2012-2016



Overall Enrollment Changes Have Been Uneven

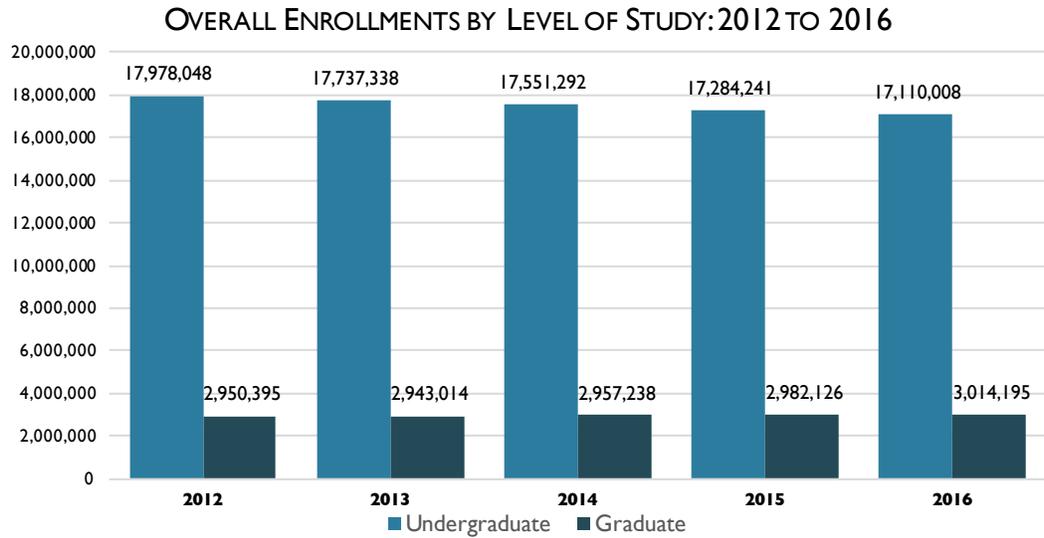
While the number of total students declined, not all types of institutions suffered from decreasing enrollments. Compared to 2015, private for-profit institutions account for all of the loss of students, while private non-profit and public institutions both had slight increases in enrollment.

Between 2012 and 2016, the largest drops were in the for-profit sector, where four-year institutions were down 479,821 (-32.3%) and two-year institutions lost 151,797 (-40.9%). Public four-year institutions grew by 654,947 students (8%), while public two-year institutions lost 951,700 (-14.0%) of their students over the same period. Overall enrollments at private non-profit institutions grew among four-year institutions (up 2.7%, or 111,069 students), and two-year institutions (increasing 33.8%, albeit on a very small base of 13,062 students). The net result of all of these changes is that there were a million fewer (1,090,435) students enrolled at two-year institutions in 2016 as compared to 2012. Four-year institutions grew by 286,195 total enrollments; the gains in the public and nonprofit sectors more than overcame the loss among the for-profit four-year institutions.

OVERALL FALL ENROLLMENT: 2012 AND 2016

	<i>Change 2012 to 2016</i>		<i>2012</i> Enrollments	<i>2016</i> Enrollments
Public, 4-year	8.0%	654,947	8,161,103	8,816,050
Private not-for-profit, 4-year	2.7%	111,069	4,067,218	4,178,287
Private for-profit, 4-year	-32.3%	(479,821)	1,485,847	1,006,026
Public, 2-year	-14.0%	(951,700)	6,804,930	5,853,230
Private not-for-profit, 2-year	33.8%	13,062	38,654	51,716
Private for-profit, 2-year	-40.9%	(151,797)	370,691	218,894
Total	-3.8%	(804,240)	20,928,443	20,124,203

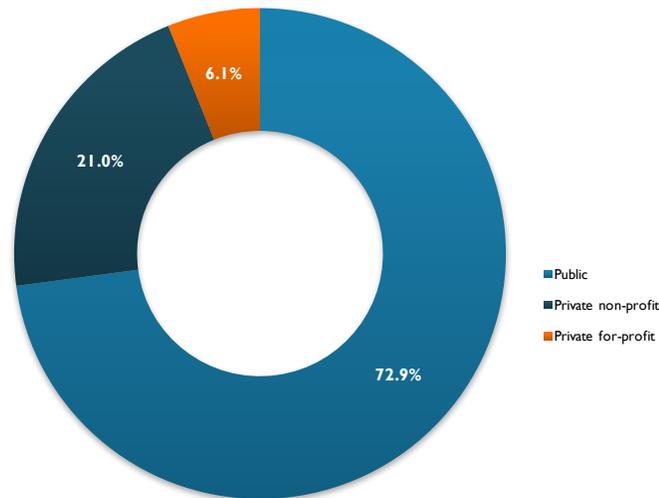
The total decrease recorded over the 2012 to 2016 time period was found in the undergraduate sector, down 868,040 (-4.8%). A steady loss of approximately 1.2% undergraduate students was seen every year. In contrast, the graduate student population remained relatively steady throughout 2014, and then grew slightly by 1.9%, or 56,957 students, over the next two-year period.



Where Students Study

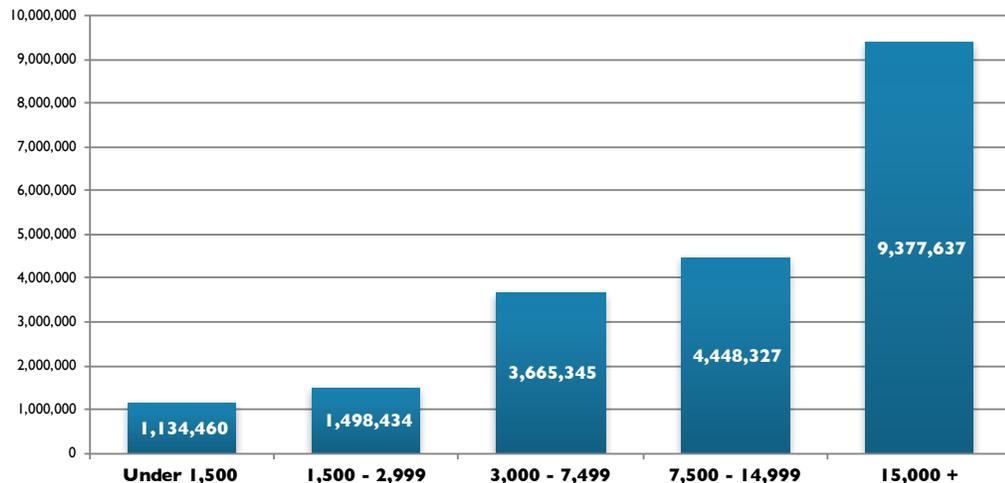
The vast majority of all U.S. higher education students attend one of the 1,652 public institutions, and represent 72.9% of all Fall 2016 enrollments. The 1,796 private non-profits held 21.0% of all enrollments, while 1,269 for-profit institutions enrolled the remaining 6.1% of all students. It's important to keep the relative size of these higher education sectors in mind when examining the following data on distance education.

TYPE OF INSTITUTION TOTAL ENROLLMENT - 2016



Most higher education institutions are small. There are 2,294 with overall enrollments of less than 1,500 total students, and another 2,187 with between 1,500 and 2,999 students. This compares to only 342 institutions with more than 15,000 total enrollments. That said, these few large institutions (7.3% of total institutions) educate the largest portion of students, accounting for 46.6% of the enrolled students in 2016.

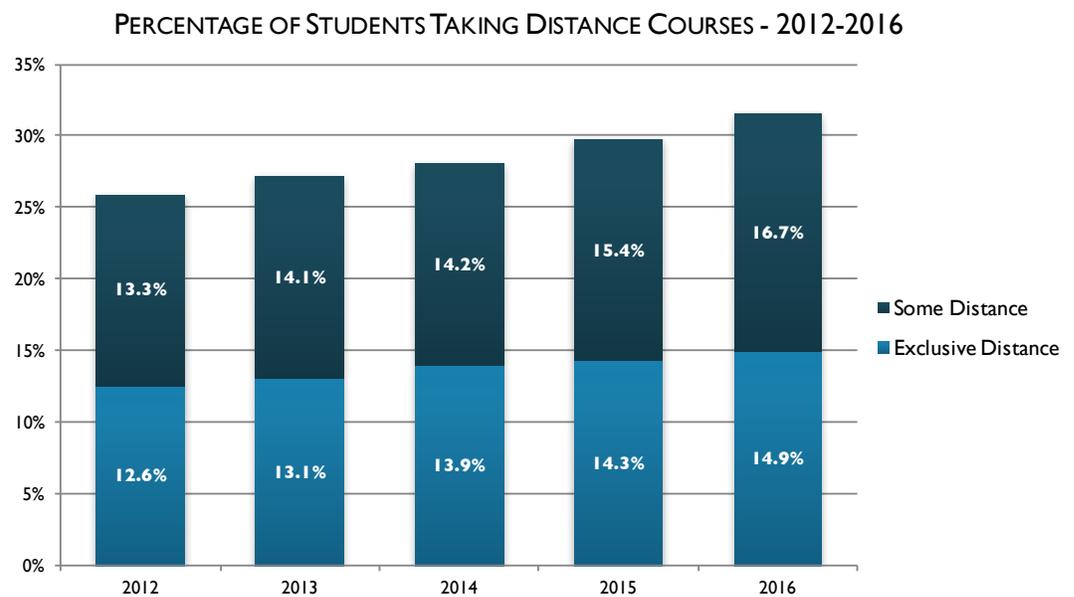
TOTAL ENROLLMENT BY SIZE OF INSTITUTION - 2016



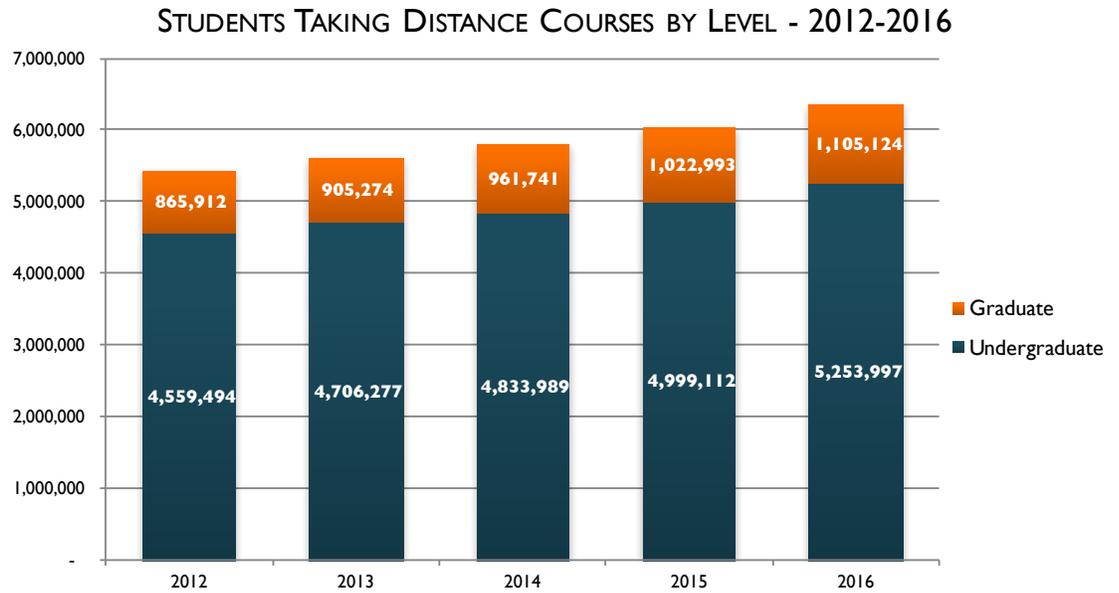
DISTANCE ENROLLMENTS

Distance Education Enrollment Growth is Increasing

As of Fall 2016, there were 6,359,121 students taking at least one distance education course, comprising 31.6% of all higher education enrollments. This share represents the total number of students taking all of their courses at a distance, and those who are taking a combination of distance and non-distance courses. The proportion of the higher education student body taking advantage of distance education courses has increased each of the last four years. It stood at 25.9% in 2012, at 27.1% in 2013, 28.3% in 2014, and 29.7% in 2015.



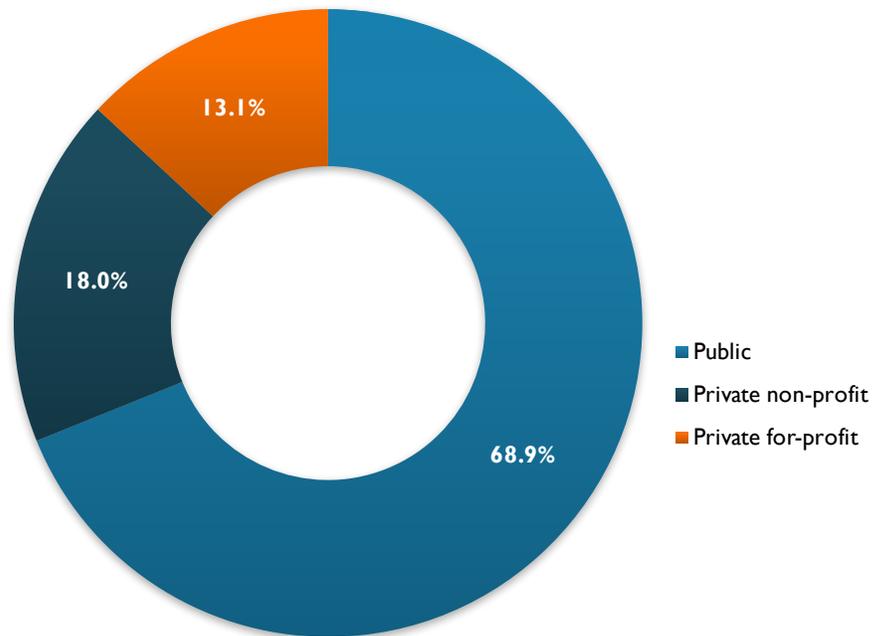
The number of distance students at both the undergraduate and graduate level increased steadily each year from 2012 to 2016. Graduate and undergraduate students taking at least one distance education course increased 5.6% over the previous year, and grew by 17.2% in the four years since 2012. The 5.6% growth rate exceeds that observed between 2012 and 2013 (3.4%), 2013 and 2014 (3.3%), and between 2014 and 2015 (3.9%). The 6,359,121 distance education students in Fall 2016 includes 5,253,997 who studied at the undergraduate level, and 1,105,124 who studied at the graduate level.



Public Institutions Enroll Two-thirds of All Distance Learners

Of the students taking at least one distance course in Fall 2016, 1,147,028 (18.0%) were at a private non-profit institution, 831,673 (13.1%) were at a for-profit institution, and the vast majority, 4,380,420 (68.9%), were at a public institution. The proportion of distance students enrolled at public institutions is slightly lower than the proportion of the overall student body (68.9% of distance students as compared to 72.9% of all students).

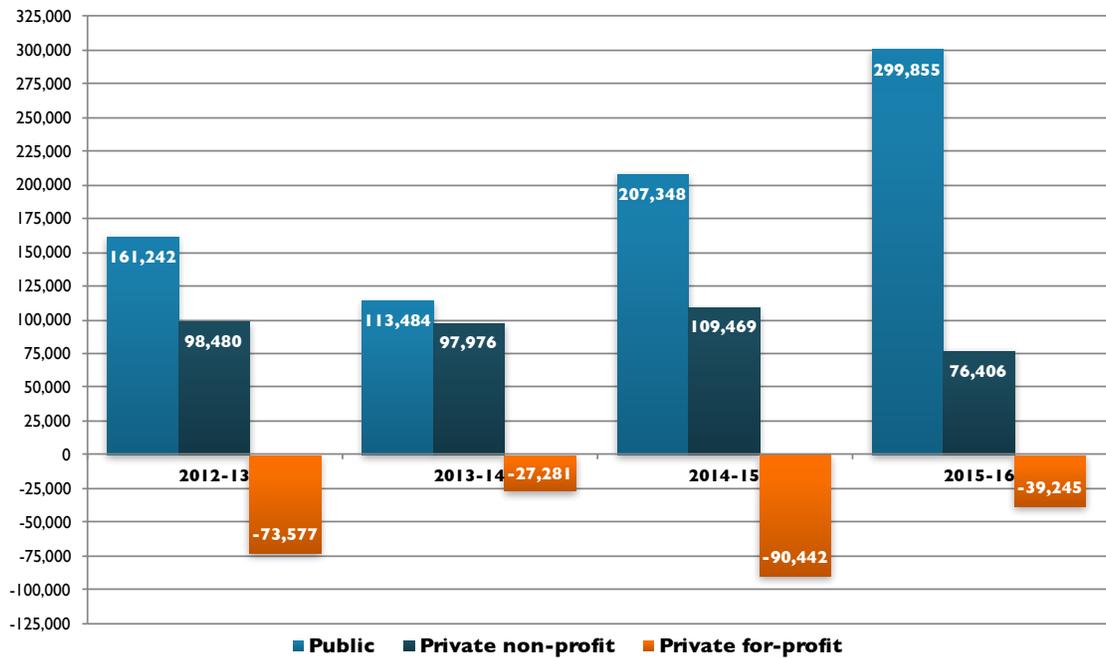
TYPE OF INSTITUTION - STUDENTS ENROLLED IN DISTANCE EDUCATION COURSES - 2016



Changes in Distance Enrollments Have Been Uneven

For each one-year period (2012 to 2013, 2013 to 2014, 2014 to 2015, and 2015 to 2016), the largest numeric increase in the number of distance students occurred at public institutions, compared to private non-profit and for-profit schools. For-profit institutions, by contrast, have seen their total distance education enrollments decrease during these time periods. This pattern coincides with the overall loss of students from for-profit enrollment seen during this same time period. The net effect has been an increase every year in the overall number of students taking at least one distance course.

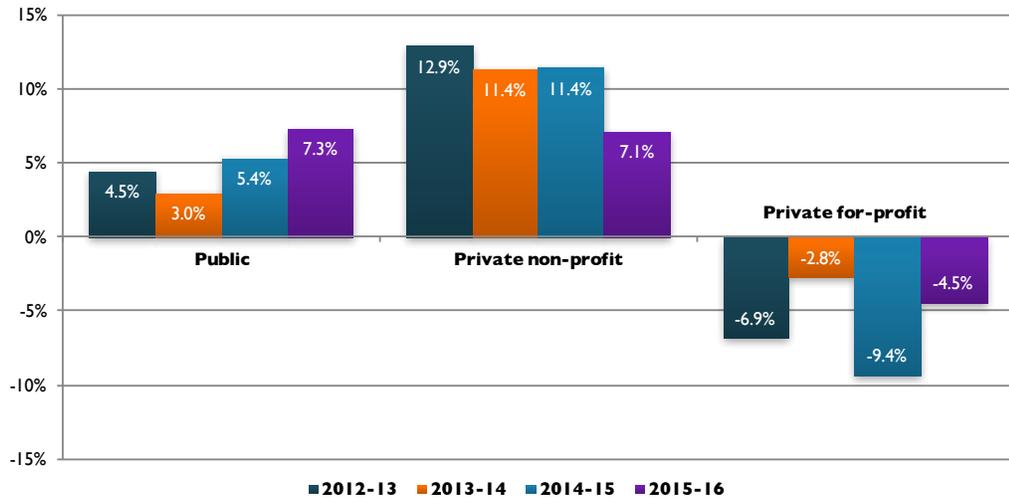
YEAR-TO-YEAR CHANGE IN DISTANCE ENROLLMENTS - DEGREE-GRANTING INSTITUTIONS - 2012-2016



While the year-to-year increase in the number of distance students for the public sector has been the largest among the three sectors, the size of this advantage varies from year to year. Public institutions saw the largest gain between 2015 and 2016, with an enrollment growth of over 200,000 more than the increase observed among private non-profit institutions (299,855 vs 76,406). The growth in the private non-profit sector was somewhat lower in the most recent period, not reaching the nearly 100,000 additional students added in each of the previous three time periods. The for-profit sector saw a decrease in distance enrollments for each period, but these are very uneven. The most recent decline of 39,245 students is far fewer than the previous period, which saw the numbers go down by 90,442 students.

The period from 2015 to 2016 also marks the first time that public institutions have shown the highest rate of growth of distance education students. In previous periods private non-profit institutions grew fastest, with double-digit percentage increases for each period. Private non-profit growth slowed to 7.1% for 2015-2016, while growth among the public institutions sat at 7.3%. Unlike the continued increases in the other two sectors, the for-profit sector has decreased each year, the most recent change being -4.5%.

YEAR-TO-YEAR PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN DISTANCE ENROLLMENTS - DEGREE-GRANTING INSTITUTIONS - 2012-2016



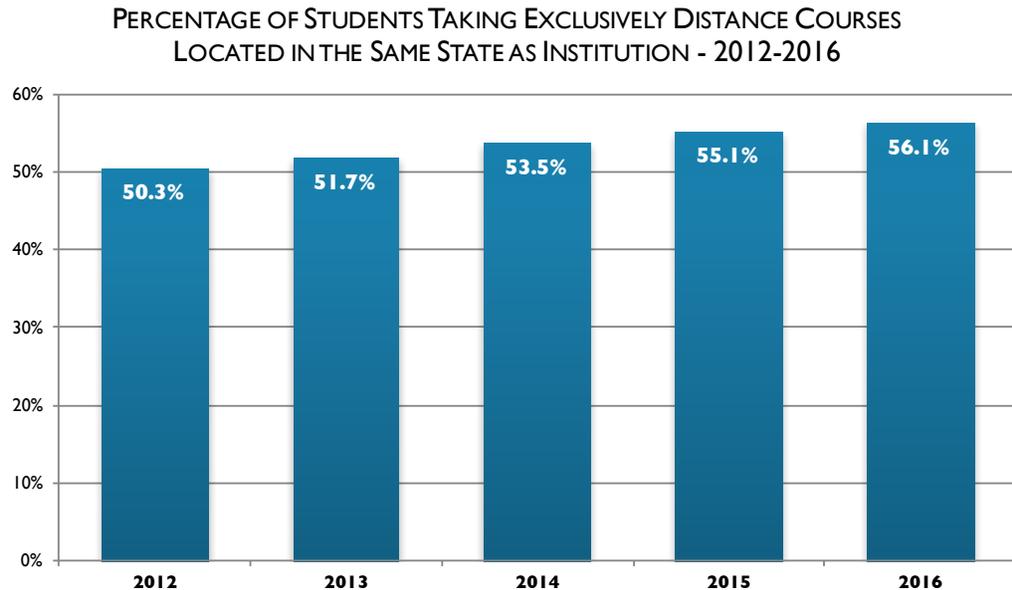
There are almost a million (933,715) additional students taking distance education courses in 2016 as compared to 2012. Comparing 2016 distance enrollments to data from 2012 highlights the great disparities by sector:

- The private non-profit sector experienced tremendous growth (50.0%, or 382,331 students).
- The private for-profit sector experienced a significant decrease (-21.7%, or -230,545 students).
- Public institutions continued their history of steady growth (21.7%, or 781,929 students).

Distance Can Be Local

Taking distance education courses does not always mean that you reside some distance away from the institution offering the courses. The majority of students taking distance courses (3,356,041 of the total 6,359,121, or 52.8%) also took at least one course on campus. These students may take their "distance" courses while sitting in their dorm room or in the campus student center, and are just as likely to be on the institution's physical campus as students taking only on-campus courses. This is not a new result: data collected by the Babson Survey Research Group for the fall of 2007 showed that institutions reported 63% of their online students came from within 50 miles of their campus, and a full 87% were taking courses in the same state as the campus.¹

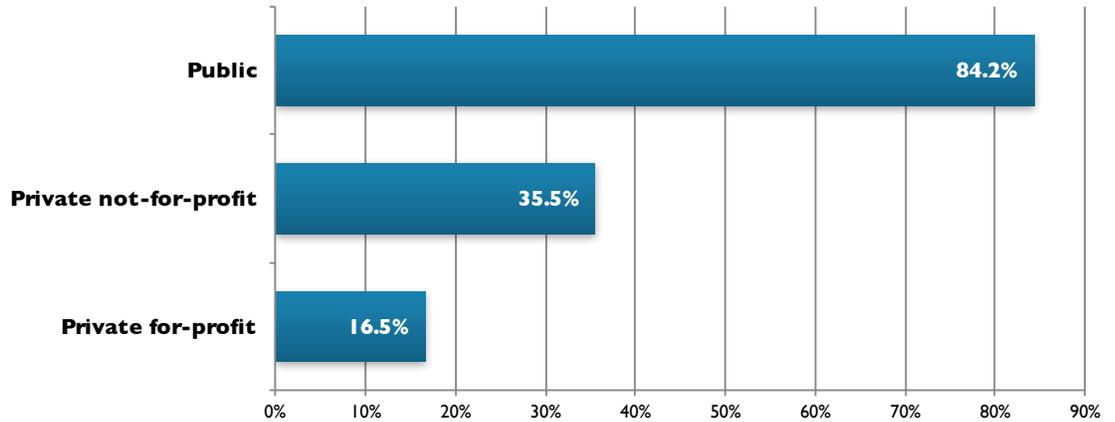
The majority of students who only took distance courses are also located in the same state as the higher education institution. Distance education is becoming more localized over time: the proportion of students taking exclusively distance courses who are located in the same state as the institution offering the courses has increased every year, growing from 50.3% in 2012 to 56.1% in 2016.



¹ Allen, I. Elaine and Seaman, Jeff, *Staying the Course: Online Education in the United States*, Babson Survey Research Group, 2008.

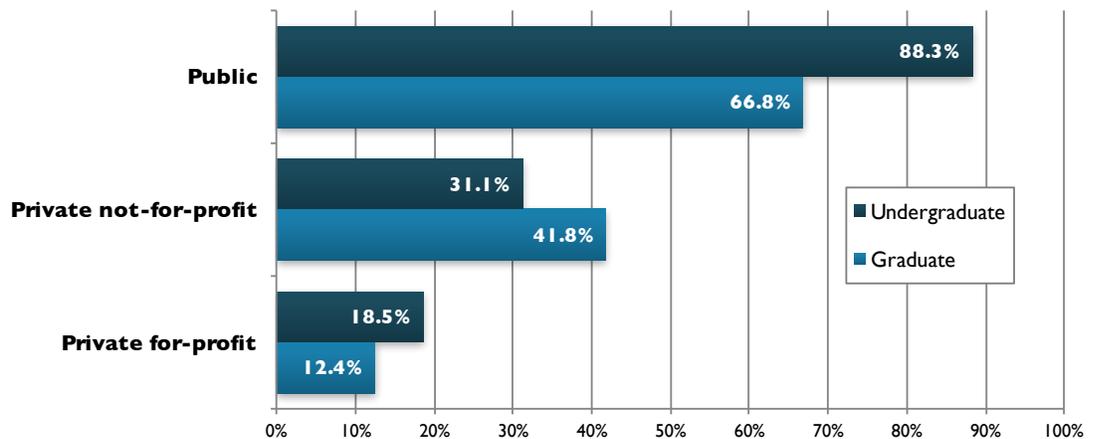
Enrollment patterns reveal that public institutions are much more likely to design their programs and recruiting efforts to serve local students. The vast majority (84.2%) of students taking exclusively distance courses enrolled at public institutions are located in the same state as the institution. This compares to a bit over a third (35.5%) for private not-for-profit institutions, and only 16.5% for private for-profit institutions.

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS TAKING EXCLUSIVELY DISTANCE COURSES LOCATED IN THE SAME STATE AS INSTITUTION - 2016



The pattern differs somewhat by the student's level. Only 42.6% of graduate level students taking exclusively distance courses are located in the same state as the institution they attend, compared to 61.3% of undergraduate students. Private not-for-profit institutions are the sole exception to this pattern, where the percentage of same-state graduate students (41.8%) is higher than the percentage for undergraduates (31.1%).

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS TAKING EXCLUSIVELY DISTANCE COURSES LOCATED IN THE SAME STATE AS INSTITUTION - 2016

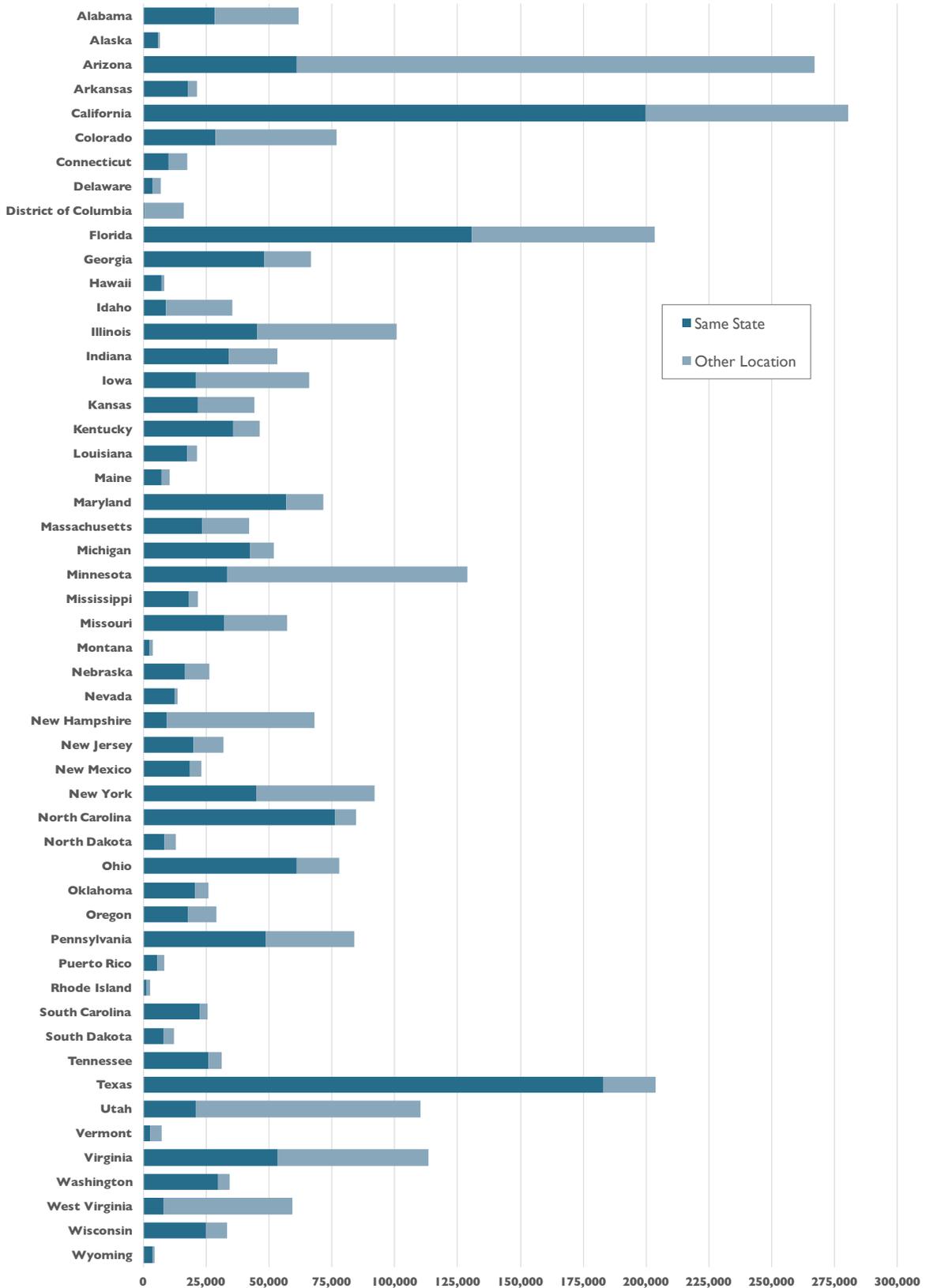


A Patchwork of States

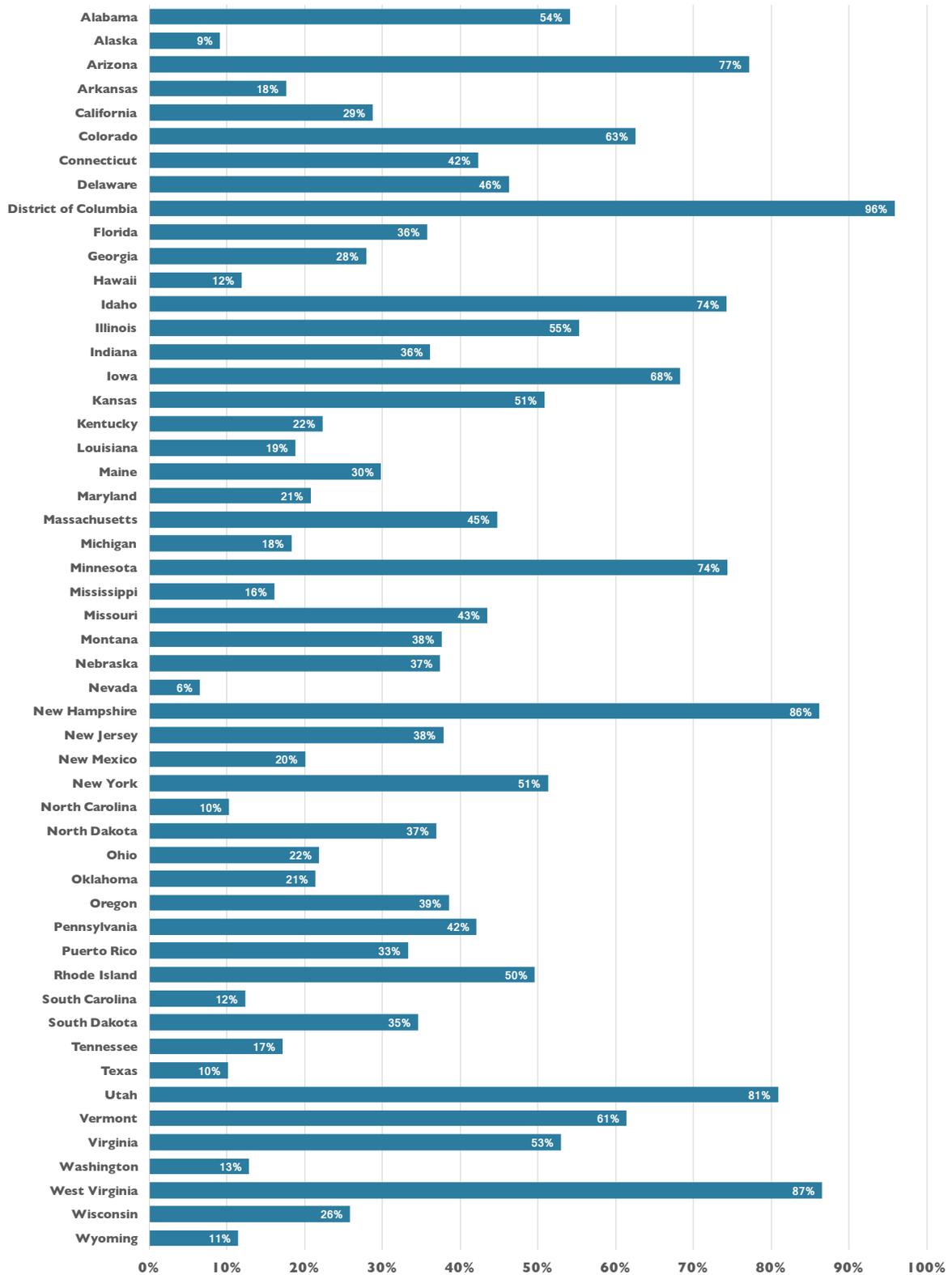
Distance education has not been implemented evenly across the country, as states show large variation in total distance enrollment. Large states with large overall enrollments also have the largest number of exclusively distance students. California, Texas and Florida, for example, all have over 130,000 exclusively distance students enrolled at in-state institutions. The average number of exclusively distance students per state is 32,420.

For each state, the proportion of students that reside within the state that are exclusively distance learners varies greatly. The state with the highest number of in-state students is Nevada, at 93.5%. West Virginia has the fewest proportion of residents enrolled as exclusively distance students, at 13.5%.

NUMBER OF EXCLUSIVELY DISTANCE STUDENTS BY STATE OF INSTITUTION AND LOCATION OF STUDENT: 2016

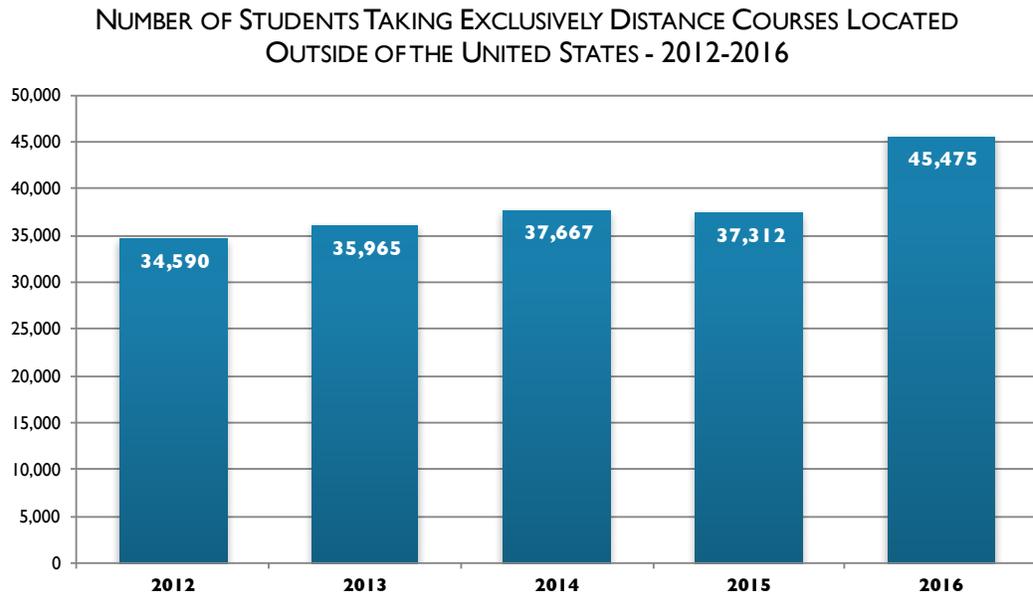


PROPORTION OF EXCLUSIVELY DISTANCE STUDENTS LOCATED OUTSIDE STATE OF INSTITUTION: 2016



Distance Is Not International

Higher education in the United States is often described as "the envy of the world,"² though this does not translate into large numbers of international students attending U.S. institutions at a distance. In Fall 2016, there were only 45,475 students located outside of the United States taking exclusively distance courses. This represents only 1.5% of students taking exclusively distance courses, and only 0.7% of all distance education students. This result is actually an improvement over previous years; there is virtually no improvement from 2012 to 2015.



There are only seven higher education institutions in the U.S. that enroll more than a thousand distance education students studying from outside the United States. Only one of them, Brigham Young University-Idaho, has more than 5,000 such students. Only 69 of 4,717 total institutions (1.5%) have more than 100 such students. Institutions in the United States attract over a million international students,³ but almost none of them (0.5% at best) choose to remain in their home country and enroll via exclusively distance courses.

² See, for example, Stephanie Bell-Rose, "A Path Forward for Faculty in Higher Education", Higher Education Today, American Council on Education, <https://www.higheredtoday.org/2016/12/19/path-forward-faculty-higher-education/>

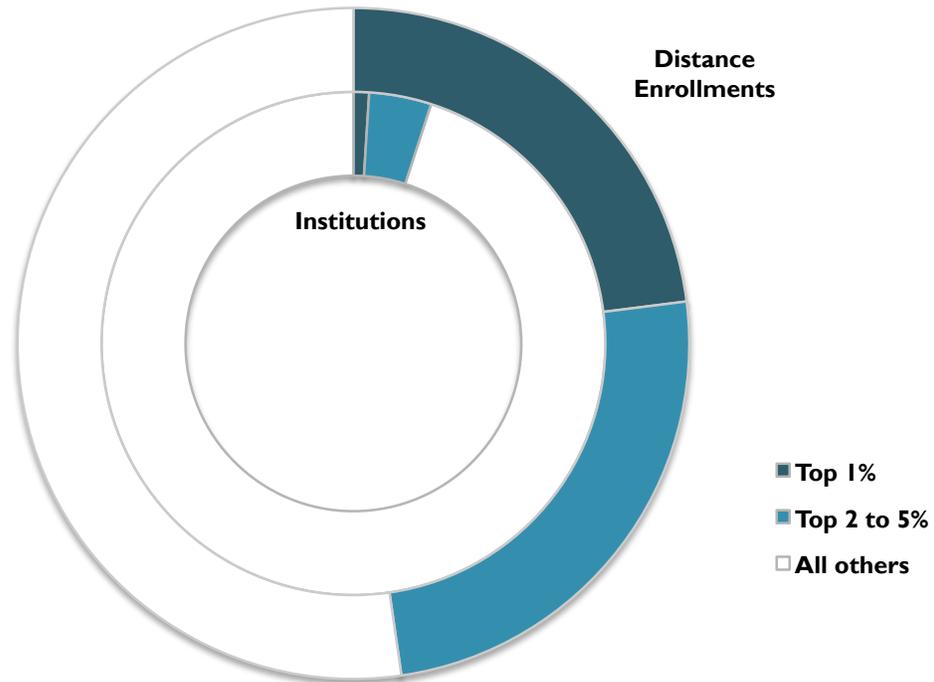
³ Institute of International Education, Inc., 2018, <https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Open-Doors/Data/International-Students/Enrollment>

Distance Enrollments Are Concentrated in Relatively Few Institutions

This report examines data from 4,717 degree-granting institutions that were active and open to the public in the fall of 2016. Of these, 3,338 (70.8%) institutions reported having at least one distance education student. The 6,359,121 distance education students are not equally distributed among all institutions.

Students enrolled in distance education remain highly concentrated in a relatively small number of institutions. Almost half of distance education students are accounted for in just 5% of institutions: the 235 institutions that represent only 5.0% of the higher education universe command 46.9% (2,985,347) of the student distance enrollments. The top 47 institutions, representing only 1.0% of all institutions, enroll 22.4% (1,421,703) of all distance students. A mere 10 institutions account for over 10% of all distance education enrollments, yet represent only 0.21% of higher education institutions.

CONCENTRATION OF DISTANCE ENROLLMENTS AMONG THE TOP 5 PERCENT OF INSTITUTIONS

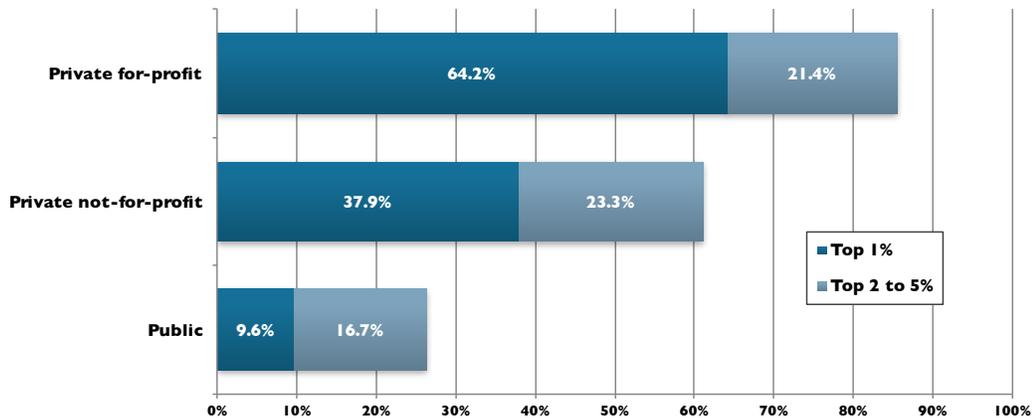


There has been a slight reduction in the overall level of concentration of distance education enrollments in 2016 as compared to 2015. The top 1% of institutions commanded 23.0% of distance enrollment in 2015, compared to 22.4% in 2016. This change was primarily driven by the University of Phoenix, the institution with the largest distance enrollments, which reduced its numbers by 20.2% from 162,003 in 2015 to 129,332 for 2016.

As has been the case for some time, the high degree of distance enrollment concentration means that the decisions of a relatively small number of academic leaders will have a very large impact on the overall distance education universe. A change in only 10% of the higher education institutions has the potential to impact nearly two-thirds of all distance students.

The level of concentration is very different in the different sectors of higher education, being extreme among for-profit institutions and very mild for public institutions. The top 1% of private for-profit institutions enroll nearly two-thirds (64.2%) of all private for-profit distance education students, a rate that is nearly seven times that observed among public institutions (9.6%). The top 5% of private for-profit institutions command 85.6% of the distance enrollments, compared to only 26.3% among public institutions.

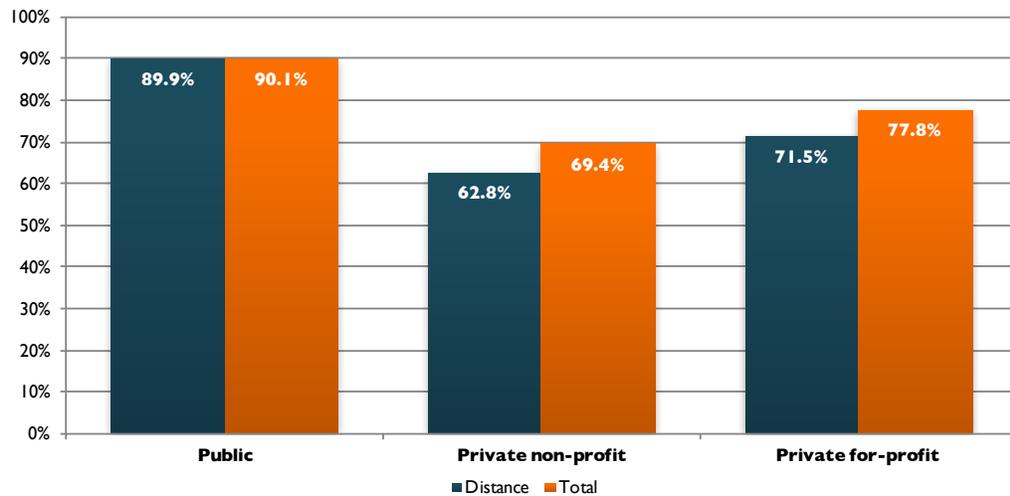
CONCENTRATION OF DISTANCE ENROLLMENTS AMONG THE TOP 1 AND 5 PERCENT OF INSTITUTIONS



Distance Enrollments Are Primarily Undergraduate

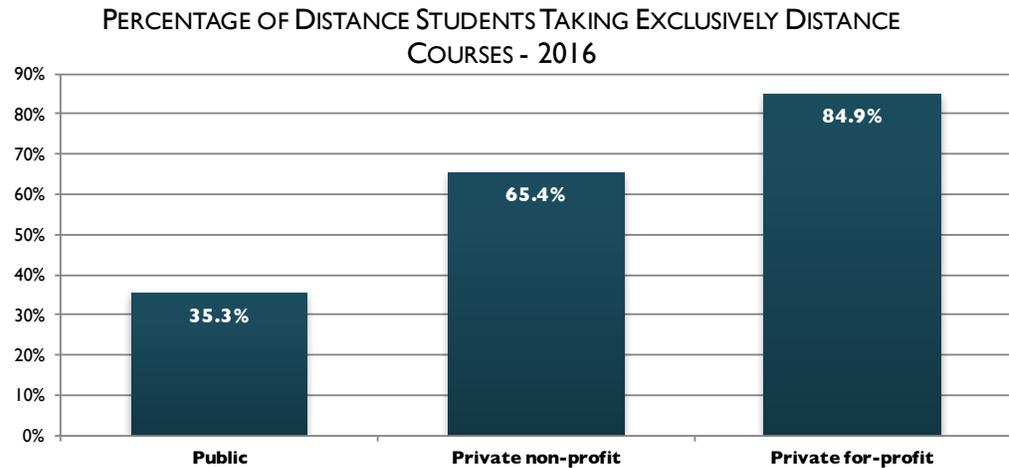
There are nearly five times as many undergraduate enrollments (4,999,112) as graduate enrollments (1,022,993) among students taking at least one distance education course. The proportion of undergraduates (82.6%) among students taking at least one distance course is only slightly less than the proportion among the overall higher education population (85.0%). The proportion of undergraduate distance students is highest at public institutions (89.9%), very close to the 90.1% of their overall student body that is composed of undergraduates. Other types of institutions have a somewhat smaller proportion of undergraduates among their distance students than their overall student body, with for-profit institutions having 71.5% undergraduate among distance students, and 77.8% for the full student body. Similarly, private non-profit institutions have 62.8% undergraduates among their distance students as compared to 69.4% overall.

DISTANCE AND TOTAL ENROLLMENTS PERCENTAGE UNDERGRADUATE - 2016

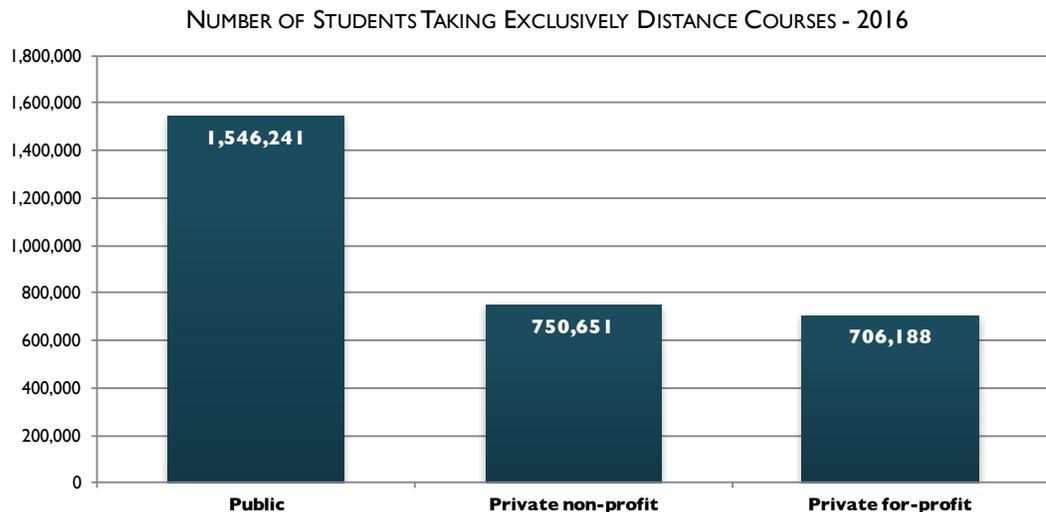


Students Taking Exclusively Distance Courses

Among all students taking distance education courses, just under one-half are taking *only* distance courses (47.2%, or 3,003,080 out of 6,359,121). Approximately one-half of these exclusively distance students are enrolled at public institutions, with the remaining portion evenly split between non-profit and for-profit institutions. While public institutions host the majority of exclusively distance students, they make up a much smaller portion of the “at least one” distance enrollments found at other institution types. Only 35.3% of all distance students at public institutions are taking exclusively distance courses. This compares to 65.4% at private non-profit institutions and 84.9% at private for-profit institutions.

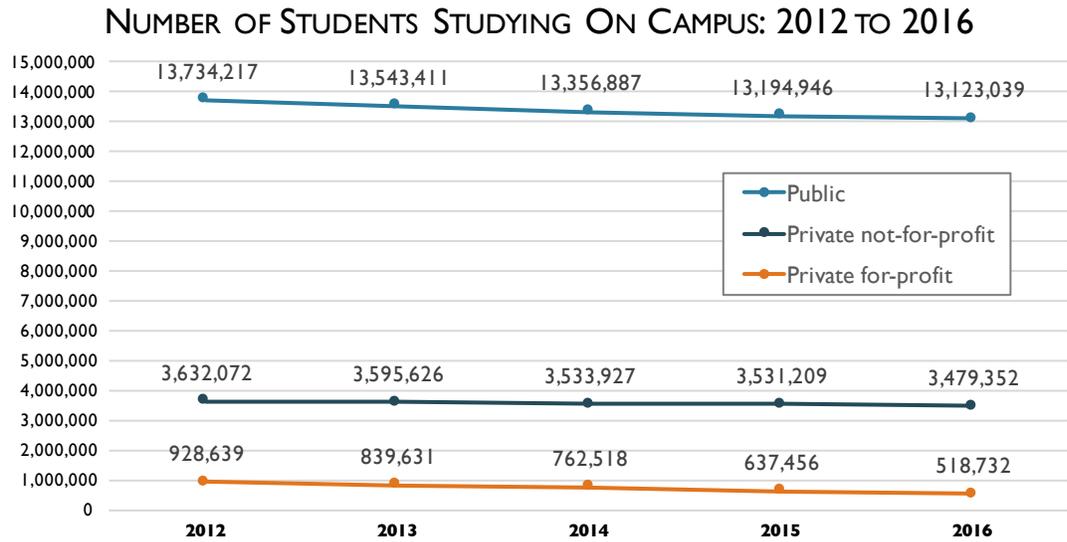


While the percentage of students at public institutions that are taking only distance courses may be low, the large size of this sector means that there are still more exclusively distance students at public institutions than at other types of schools. Just over one-half (1,546,241 out of 3,003,080, or 50.2%) of exclusively distance students are enrolled at public institutions.



The On-Campus Student

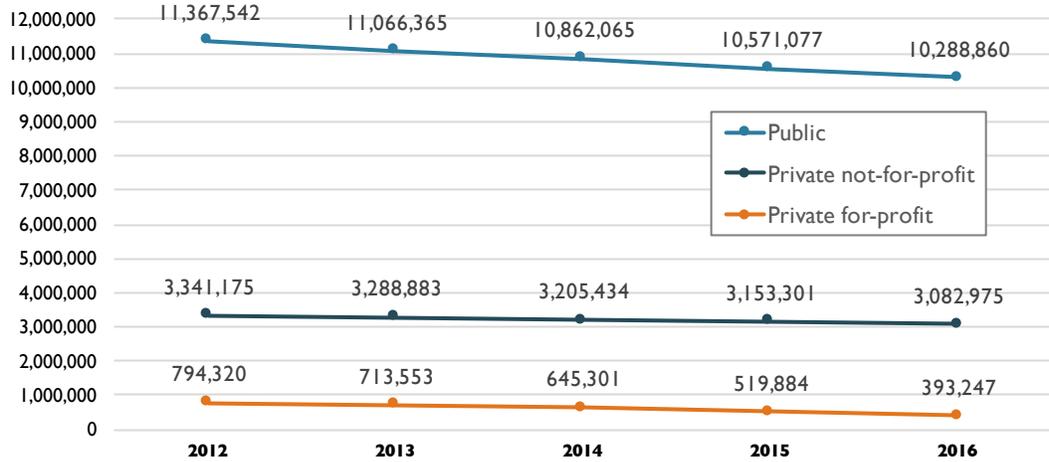
There are now fewer students studying on campus than at any point since 2012. The growth in the number of students taking only distance courses, coupled with the overall decline in the overall number of students enrolled, means that there are now over a million fewer students coming to campus in 2016 than there was in 2012. This decline has been present across all sectors of higher education. Both public and private not-for-profit institutions had moderate declines during this period, down 4.5% among public institutions and down 4.2% for the private not-for-profits. The private for-profit institutions suffered a 44.1% decline.



The overall 6.4% decline in the number of on-campus students means that there are 1,173,805 fewer students who need to be in physical classrooms, use the cafeteria, study in the campus library, buy notebooks at the campus book store, or need a parking space. On average, this translates into 250 fewer on-campus students for each higher education institution.

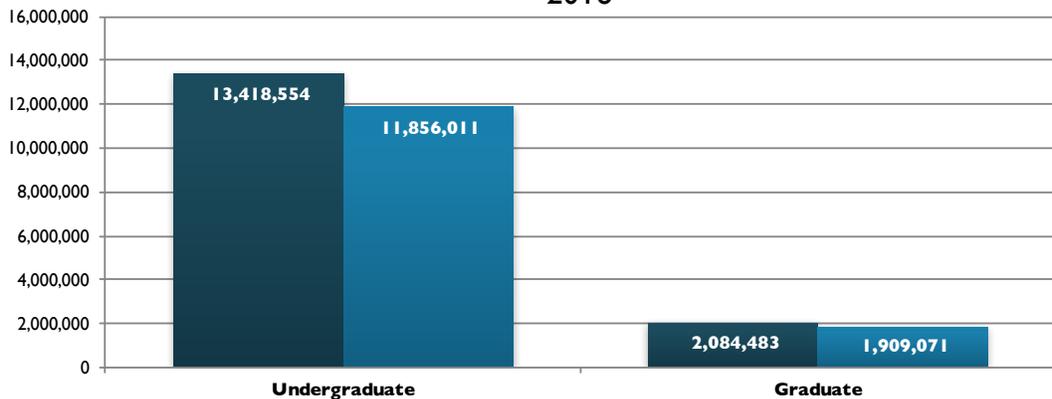
As substantial as a 6.4% decline in the number of on-campus students has been, there has been an even larger change in the number of students who do not take any distance courses. There were 15,503,037 such students in 2012, a number that dropped 11.2% by 2016 to 13,765,083 students.

NUMBER OF STUDENTS TAKING NO DISTANCE COURSES: 2012 TO 2016



Most of the decline in students that are only taking on-campus courses has come at the undergraduate level, which fell 1,562,543 (-11.6%) during the period. Graduate students also saw a decline, but at lesser rate (down 175,412, or -8.4%).

NUMBER OF STUDENTS TAKING NO DISTANCE COURSES: 2012 AND 2016



Overall Enrollments - The Top 50 Institutions in 2016

In 2016, the top 50 institutions by overall enrollment reported a total of 2,645,464 students, representing 13.1% of all enrollments at that time. These are composed of 38 public institutions (with a total of 1,881,330 enrollments), 7 private non-profit institutions (414,122 enrollments), and 5 private for-profit institutions (350,012 enrollments). The University of Phoenix is by far the largest, with 131,629 enrollments. University of Maryland-College Park sits in 50th position, with 39,083 enrollments.

As noted earlier, there are a small number of private for-profit institutions with a large distance enrollment. That pattern repeats with overall enrollments as well. The average enrollment of for-profit institutions on the top 50 list is 70,002, which compares to 59,160 for the private non-for-profit institutions, and 49,509 for the public institutions.

TOP 50 INSTITUTIONS BY TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS - 2016

Rank	Name	State	Control	Enrollment
1	University of Phoenix-Arizona	Arizona	Private for-profit	131,629
2	Western Governors University	Utah	Private not-for-profit	84,289
3	Ivy Tech Community College	Indiana	Public	78,910
4	Grand Canyon University	Arizona	Private for-profit	75,834
5	Liberty University	Virginia	Private not-for-profit	75,756
6	Southern New Hampshire University	New Hampshire	Private not-for-profit	73,177
7	Lone Star College System	Texas	Public	71,551
8	Texas A & M University-College Station	Texas	Public	65,632
9	University of Central Florida	Florida	Public	64,088
10	Ohio State University-Main Campus	Ohio	Public	59,482
11	University of Maryland-University College	Maryland	Public	57,529
12	Houston Community College	Texas	Public	57,032
13	Miami Dade College	Florida	Public	55,206
14	Florida International University	Florida	Public	55,003
15	Walden University	Minnesota	Private for-profit	52,565
16	University of Florida	Florida	Public	52,367
17	Arizona State University-Tempe	Arizona	Public	51,869
18	University of Minnesota-Twin Cities	Minnesota	Public	51,579
19	Tarrant County College District	Texas	Public	51,350
20	The University of Texas at Austin	Texas	Public	51,331
21	Northern Virginia Community College	Virginia	Public	50,835
22	New York University	New York	Private not-for-profit	50,550
23	Michigan State University	Michigan	Public	50,340
24	Rutgers University-New Brunswick	New Jersey	Public	50,146
25	Indiana University-Bloomington	Indiana	Public	49,695
26	American Public University System	West Virginia	Private for-profit	48,623
27	Pennsylvania State University-Main Campus	Pennsylvania	Public	47,789
28	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	Illinois	Public	46,951
29	University of Washington-Seattle Campus	Washington	Public	45,591
30	The University of Texas at Arlington	Texas	Public	45,282
31	Brigham Young University-Idaho	Idaho	Private not-for-profit	44,821
32	University of Michigan-Ann Arbor	Michigan	Public	44,718
33	Valencia College	Florida	Public	44,515
34	University of Southern California	California	Private not-for-profit	43,871
35	University of Houston	Texas	Public	43,774
36	Broward College	Florida	Public	43,700
37	University of California-Los Angeles	California	Public	43,548
38	University of Arizona	Arizona	Public	43,161
39	University of South Florida-Main Campus	Florida	Public	42,861
40	University of Wisconsin-Madison	Wisconsin	Public	42,582
41	Excelsior College	New York	Private not-for-profit	41,658
42	Austin Community College District	Texas	Public	41,543
43	Purdue University-Main Campus	Indiana	Public	41,513
44	Ashford University	California	Private for-profit	41,361
45	Florida State University	Florida	Public	41,173
46	California State University-Fullerton	California	Public	40,235
47	University of California-Berkeley	California	Public	40,154
48	California State University-Northridge	California	Public	39,916
49	Temple University	Pennsylvania	Public	39,296
50	University of Maryland-College Park	Maryland	Public	39,083

Distance Enrollments – The Top 50 Institutions in 2016

A listing of the top 50 institutions by distance education enrollments in 2016 includes many of the same names as were present in the listing by overall enrollments. Of the 50 schools with the largest overall enrollments in 2016, 30 are also present on the top 50 list of distance enrollments.

The top 50 schools by number of students taking at least one distance course account for 1,460,348 distance enrollments, or 23.0% of all distance enrollments. Distance enrollments are far more concentrated than overall enrollments, almost double that of overall enrollments (23%, compared to 13.1%).

There is a greater presence of private for-profit institutions on this list with 12 schools represented, compared to the 7 on the listing by overall enrollments. These 7 institutions enroll 523,111 distance students. The 8 private not-for-profit institutions on the list enroll 336,272 distance students, while the 30 public institutions enroll 600,974 distance students. As was the case for the top 50 listing by overall enrollments, the greater number of public institutions have a smaller average enrollment. Public institutions on the list average 20,032 distance students, far fewer than either private not-for-profit (42,033) or private for-profit institutions (45,593).

TOP 50 INSTITUTIONS BY NUMBER OF STUDENTS TAKING AT LEAST ONE DISTANCE COURSE - 2016

Rank	Name	State	Control	Enrollment
1	University of Phoenix-Arizona	Arizona	Private for-profit	129,332
2	Western Governors University	Utah	Private not-for-profit	84,289
3	Grand Canyon University	Arizona	Private for-profit	68,542
4	Liberty University	Virginia	Private not-for-profit	67,766
5	Southern New Hampshire University	New Hampshire	Private not-for-profit	63,973
6	Walden University	Minnesota	Private for-profit	52,565
7	University of Maryland-University College	Maryland	Public	50,932
8	American Public University System	West Virginia	Private for-profit	48,623
9	Excelsior College	New York	Private not-for-profit	41,658
10	Ashford University	California	Private for-profit	41,343
11	Capella University	Minnesota	Private for-profit	37,569
12	Kaplan University-Davenport Campus	Iowa	Private for-profit	37,431
13	University of Central Florida	Florida	Public	36,107
14	Brigham Young University-Idaho	Idaho	Private not-for-profit	35,826
15	Ivy Tech Community College	Indiana	Public	34,811
16	Arizona State University-Tempe	Arizona	Public	30,989
17	University of Florida	Florida	Public	30,720
18	Florida International University	Florida	Public	30,126
19	Arizona State University-SkySong	Arizona	Public	24,917
20	Colorado Technical University-Colorado Springs	Colorado	Private for-profit	24,692
21	Chamberlain College of Nursing-Illinois	Illinois	Private for-profit	24,284
22	Lone Star College System	Texas	Public	22,873
23	University of South Florida-Main Campus	Florida	Public	21,661
24	Columbia Southern University	Alabama	Private for-profit	21,442
25	The University of Texas at Arlington	Texas	Public	21,330
26	Full Sail University	Florida	Private for-profit	19,273
27	Houston Community College	Texas	Public	18,877
28	Valencia College	Florida	Public	18,058
29	DeVry University-Illinois	Illinois	Private for-profit	18,015
30	California State University-Northridge	California	Public	17,384
31	St Petersburg College	Florida	Public	16,349
32	Texas Tech University	Texas	Public	16,248
33	Ultimate Medical Academy-Tampa	Florida	Private not-for-profit	16,140
34	Pennsylvania State University-Main Campus	Pennsylvania	Public	15,955
35	College of Southern Nevada	Nevada	Public	15,127
36	Kent State University at Kent	Ohio	Public	15,100
37	Florida State University	Florida	Public	14,985
38	University of Houston	Texas	Public	14,667
39	University of Cincinnati-Main Campus	Ohio	Public	14,491
40	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	Illinois	Public	14,090
41	Ohio State University-Main Campus	Ohio	Public	13,640
42	Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University	Florida	Private not-for-profit	13,443
43	Pennsylvania State University-World Campus	Pennsylvania	Public	13,411
44	University of North Texas	Texas	Public	13,331
45	National University	California	Private not-for-profit	13,168
46	Utah State University	Utah	Public	13,122
47	Northern Virginia Community College	Virginia	Public	13,028
48	University of Arizona	Arizona	Public	12,997
49	Northern Arizona University	Arizona	Public	12,906
50	California State University-Fullerton	California	Public	12,742

Exclusively Distance Enrollments –Top 50 Institutions in 2016

About one-half (47.2%) of all distance education students are taking all of their courses at a distance. The top 50 institutions by distance-only enrollments host 1,151,405 of these students (38.3% of the total). The list is pretty evenly split among private for-profit (19), private not-for-profit (14), and public (17) institutions. The distribution of student enrollments is not as even. The 19 private for-profit institutions enroll 562,039 exclusively distance students (48.8% of those represented by the top 50 list). This is an average enrollment of 29,581 exclusively distance students per institution.

Private not-for-profit institutions have a slightly lower average enrollment of distance-only students, at 26,034. The 14 such institutions on the top 50 list total 364,476 (or 31.7%) enrollments. Public institutions, on the other hand, have much smaller distance-only enrollments, and average only 13,229 distance-only students per institution. The 17 public institutions on the list enroll 224,890 distance-only students. This represents 19.5% of the list total, even though they represent 34.0% of the institutions.

TOP 50 INSTITUTIONS BY NUMBER OF STUDENTS TAKING EXCLUSIVELY DISTANCE COURSES - 2016

Rank	Name	State	Control	Enrollment
1	University of Phoenix-Arizona	Arizona	Private for-profit	128,410
2	Western Governors University	Utah	Private not-for-profit	84,289
3	Southern New Hampshire University	New Hampshire	Private not-for-profit	61,495
4	Liberty University	Virginia	Private not-for-profit	60,850
5	Grand Canyon University	Arizona	Private for-profit	58,779
6	Walden University	Minnesota	Private for-profit	52,565
7	American Public University System	West Virginia	Private for-profit	48,623
8	University of Maryland-University College	Maryland	Public	44,308
9	Excelsior College	New York	Private not-for-profit	41,658
10	Ashford University	California	Private for-profit	41,343
11	Capella University	Minnesota	Private for-profit	37,569
12	Kaplan University-Davenport Campus	Iowa	Private for-profit	36,835
13	Brigham Young University-Idaho	Idaho	Private not-for-profit	25,820
14	Arizona State University-Skysong	Arizona	Public	24,630
15	Colorado Technical University-Colorado Springs	Colorado	Private for-profit	24,132
16	Chamberlain College of Nursing-Illinois	Illinois	Private for-profit	22,837
17	Columbia Southern University	Alabama	Private for-profit	21,442
18	DeVry University-Illinois	Illinois	Private for-profit	16,461
19	Ultimate Medical Academy-Tampa	Florida	Private not-for-profit	16,140
20	The University of Texas at Arlington	Texas	Public	15,510
21	Ivy Tech Community College	Indiana	Public	14,296
22	Pennsylvania State University-World Campus	Pennsylvania	Public	13,411
23	Full Sail University	Florida	Private for-profit	12,983
24	Thomas Edison State University	New Jersey	Public	12,441
25	Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University	Florida	Private not-for-profit	11,632
26	Colorado State University-Global Campus	Colorado	Public	11,605
27	National University	California	Private not-for-profit	11,599
28	Northcentral University	California	Private for-profit	10,916
29	Rio Salado College	Arizona	Public	10,815
30	American College of Financial Services	Pennsylvania	Private not-for-profit	10,383
31	American InterContinental University-Online	Illinois	Private for-profit	10,091
32	University of Central Florida	Florida	Public	10,035
33	Fort Hays State University	Kansas	Public	9,946
34	Columbia College	Missouri	Private not-for-profit	9,308
35	St Petersburg College	Florida	Public	9,215
36	Lone Star College System	Texas	Public	9,166
37	South University Savannah Online	Georgia	Private for-profit	8,954
38	Grantham University	Kansas	Private for-profit	8,637
39	Florida International University	Florida	Public	8,495
40	Keiser University-Ft Lauderdale	Florida	Private not-for-profit	8,375
41	Coastline Community College	California	Public	8,265
42	Ohio University-Main Campus	Ohio	Public	8,082
43	Nova Southeastern University	Florida	Private not-for-profit	7,933
44	Saint Leo University	Florida	Private not-for-profit	7,922
45	Strayer University-Global Region	D.C.	Private for-profit	7,397
46	Houston Community College	Texas	Public	7,347
47	Central Texas College	Texas	Public	7,323
48	Argosy University-Phoenix Online Division	Arizona	Private for-profit	7,117
49	Bellevue University	Nebraska	Private not-for-profit	7,072
50	Trident University International	California	Private for-profit	6,948

Distance-Only Institutions –Top 50 in 2016

A common misconception is that most institutions that offer distance education are distance-only schools, and may not have a physical campus at all. That is not the case. There are 3,338 U.S. degree granting higher education institutions that offer distance education, of which only 140 (4.2%) are exclusively distance institutions. Only 12 of these institutions have more than 10,000 distance students.

Taken as a group, the 140 distance-only institutions enrolled 489,139 students in the Fall of 2016, which represents 7.7% of all distance education students and 16.1% of all students taking exclusively distance courses. There is a high degree of concentration among these distance-only institutions. The top 50 accounts for almost all of enrollments at distance-only schools, with 466,054 of the 489,139 students, or 95.3%. The top 25 on the list account for 87.8% of students at distance-only institutions, and the top 10 accounts for over two-thirds (68.4%).

Another common assumption is that these distance-only institutions are all for-profit. One-half of the top 50 are for-profit institutions, and they account for just over one-half (51.8%) of the enrollments among the top 50 such institutions. However, the remaining are a mix of private not-for-profit (17 institutions enrolling 36.1% of the students on the list) and public institutions (8 institutions enrolling 12.0% of the students of the top 50 schools).

Western Governors University, a private not-for-profit institution, has the highest enrollment of any of these distance-only institutions with 84,289 students in Fall of 2016. This is over a hundred percent increase from the number enrolled in the fall of 2012 (41,369). The largest for-profit institution on the list, Walden University, has grown only 4.7% during this same time period, from 50,209 in 2012 to 52,565 in 2016.

TOP 50 DISTANCE-ONLY INSTITUTIONS BY NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED - 2016

Rank	Name	State	Control	Enrollment
1	Western Governors University	Utah	Private not-for-profit	84,289
2	Walden University	Minnesota	Private for-profit	52,565
3	American Public University System	West Virginia	Private for-profit	48,623
4	Excelsior College	New York	Private not-for-profit	41,658
5	Capella University	Minnesota	Private for-profit	37,569
6	Columbia Southern University	Alabama	Private for-profit	21,442
7	Pennsylvania State University-World Campus	Pennsylvania	Public	13,411
8	Thomas Edison State University	New Jersey	Public	12,489
9	Colorado State University-Global Campus	Colorado	Public	11,605
10	Northcentral University	California	Private for-profit	10,916
11	American College of Financial Services	Pennsylvania	Private not-for-profit	10,521
12	American InterContinental University-Online	Illinois	Private for-profit	10,091
13	SUNY Buffalo State	New York	Public	9,475
14	South University-Savannah Online	Georgia	Private for-profit	8,954
15	Grantham University	Kansas	Private for-profit	8,637
16	Argosy University-Phoenix Online Division	Arizona	Private for-profit	7,117
17	Trident University International	California	Private for-profit	6,948
18	Independence University	Utah	Private not-for-profit	6,389
19	The Art Institute of Pittsburgh-Online Division	Pennsylvania	Private for-profit	4,675
20	University of the People	California	Private not-for-profit	4,411
21	American College of Education	Indiana	Private for-profit	3,844
22	A T Still University of Health Sciences	Missouri	Private not-for-profit	3,569
23	The University of Texas Health Science Center	Texas	Public	3,250
24	Los Angeles Film School	California	Private for-profit	3,128
25	Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine	Pennsylvania	Private not-for-profit	2,826
26	Florida Institute of Technology-Online	Florida	Private not-for-profit	2,774
27	Aspen University	Colorado	Private for-profit	2,729
28	American Sentinel University	Colorado	Private for-profit	2,598
29	La Sierra University	California	Private not-for-profit	2,384
30	University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences	California	Private for-profit	2,352
31	University of Florida-Online	Florida	Public	2,240
32	SUNY Downstate Medical Center	New York	Public	1,839
33	Frontier Nursing University	Kentucky	Private not-for-profit	1,784
34	Elizabethtown College	Pennsylvania	Private not-for-profit	1,784
35	Western International University	Arizona	Private for-profit	1,658
36	Charter Oak State College	Connecticut	Public	1,583
37	Sonoran Desert Institute	Arizona	Private for-profit	1,427
38	Clarkson College	Nebraska	Private not-for-profit	1,219
39	Thomas University	Georgia	Private not-for-profit	1,156
40	Union Institute & University	Ohio	Private not-for-profit	1,133
41	New England College of Business and Finance	Massachusetts	Private for-profit	1,131
42	Concordia University-Ann Arbor	Michigan	Private not-for-profit	1,046
43	South Texas College of Law Houston	Texas	Private not-for-profit	968
44	Rocky Mountain College of Art and Design	Colorado	Private for-profit	923
45	National Paralegal College	Arizona	Private for-profit	868
46	Daymar College-Clarksville	Tennessee	Private for-profit	854
47	Salem International University	West Virginia	Private for-profit	848
48	Taft University System	Colorado	Private for-profit	814
49	Johnson & Wales University-Online	Rhode Island	Private not-for-profit	799
50	American College of Healthcare Sciences	Oregon	Private for-profit	741

METHODOLOGY

The sample for this analysis is comprised of all active, degree-granting institutions of higher education in the United States that are open to the public.

The enrollment data for this report uses information from the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) database.⁴ IPEDS is a national census of postsecondary institutions in the U.S., which represents the most comprehensive data available. Through the IPEDS Data Center, individuals can download data files for one or more institutions with information from any of the IPEDS components or download complete data files, produce reports, or create group statistics.

NCES has released the fifth year of IPEDS Fall Enrollment data that includes distance education enrollments. In addition, IPEDS data is occasionally revised, and the enrollment data for Fall 2014 represents one such revised data set. The enrollment figures in this report use the released revised data for Fall 2014, and will therefore vary slightly from those previously published. Institutional descriptive data for the current year also come from the National Center for Educational Statistics' IPEDS database.

The focus of this report is the distance education data that has been collected by IPEDS for the Fall 2012, Fall 2013, Fall 2014, Fall 2015, and Fall 2016 terms. IPEDS reporting includes a number of other variables that describe the size, sector, and focus of each institution of higher education. This data allows us to compare institutions using a consistent set of definitions provided by the IPEDS survey.

Previous reports from the Babson Survey Research Group predate IPEDS distance education enrollment data, and used a somewhat different definition. The BSRG measure of "online offerings" was defined as broadly as possible: any offering of any length to any audience at any time. IPEDS takes a much narrower view. For example, IPEDS counts undergraduate offerings as being for "a student enrolled in a 4- or 5-year bachelor's degree program, an associate's degree program, or a vocational or technical program below the baccalaureate."⁵ Non-credit courses (e.g., courses for continuing education units that are not credit-bearing, informational courses for alumni, and non-credit MOOCs) do not qualify for the IPEDS definition.

⁴ <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/DataFiles.aspx>

⁵ <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/glossary/?charindex=D>

TABLES

Overall Higher Education Enrollments Continue Downward Trend

TOTAL ENROLLMENT - DEGREE-GRANTING INSTITUTIONS - 2012-2016

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Public	14,966,033	14,826,098	14,735,282	14,651,642	14,669,280
Private non-profit	4,105,872	4,152,060	4,166,587	4,223,923	4,230,003
Private for-profit	1,856,538	1,702,194	1,606,661	1,390,802	1,224,920
Total	20,928,443	20,680,352	20,508,530	20,266,367	20,124,203

Overall Enrollment Changes Have Been Uneven

OVERALL ENROLLMENTS BY LEVEL OF STUDY: 2012 TO 2016

	<i>Undergraduate</i>	<i>Graduate</i>
2012	17,978,048	2,950,395
2013	17,737,338	2,943,014
2014	17,551,292	2,957,238
2015	17,284,241	2,982,126
2016	17,110,008	3,014,195

Where Students Study

TOTAL ENROLLMENT BY CONTROL OF INSTITUTION - 2016

Public	14,669,280
Private non-profit	4,230,003
Private for-profit	1,224,920

TOTAL ENROLLMENT BY SIZE OF INSTITUTION - 2016

<i>Overall size</i>	<i>Total - All students 2016</i>
Under 1,500	1,134,460
1,500 - 2,999	1,498,434
3,000 - 7,499	3,665,345
7,500 - 14,999	4,448,327
15,000 +	9,377,637

Distance Education Enrollment Growth is Increasing

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS TAKING DISTANCE COURSES - 2012-2016

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Exclusive Distance	12.6%	13.1%	13.9%	14.3%	14.9%
Some Distance	13.3%	14.1%	14.2%	15.4%	16.7%

STUDENTS TAKING DISTANCE COURSES BY LEVEL - 2012-2016

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Undergraduate	4,559,494	4,706,277	4,833,989	4,999,112	5,253,997
Graduate	865,912	905,274	961,741	1,022,993	1,105,124

Public Institutions Enroll Two-thirds of All Distance Learners

TYPE OF INSTITUTION - STUDENTS ENROLLED IN DISTANCE EDUCATION COURSES - 2016

	<i>Control of institution</i>	<i>Distance Enrollment</i>
Public		4,380,420
Private non-profit		1,147,028
Private for-profit		831,673

Changes in Distance Enrollments Have Been Uneven

YEAR-TO-YEAR CHANGE IN DISTANCE ENROLLMENTS - DEGREE-GRANTING INSTITUTIONS - 2012-2016

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Public	161,242	113,484	207,348	299,855
Private non-profit	98,480	97,976	109,469	76,406
Private for-profit	(73,577)	(27,281)	(90,442)	(39,245)

YEAR-TO-YEAR PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN DISTANCE ENROLLMENTS - DEGREE-GRANTING INSTITUTIONS - 2012-2016

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Public	4.5%	3.0%	5.4%	7.3%
Private non-profit	12.9%	11.4%	11.4%	7.1%
Private for-profit	-6.9%	-2.8%	-9.4%	-4.5%

Distance Can Be Local

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS TAKING EXCLUSIVELY DISTANCE COURSES LOCATED IN THE SAME STATE AS INSTITUTION - 2012-2016

Year	Percent	Same State	Total Exclusively Distance
2012	50.3%	1,325,721	2,633,515
2013	51.7%	1,395,486	2,701,684
2014	53.5%	1,528,614	2,855,198
2015	55.1%	1,599,658	2,902,756
2016	56.1%	1,685,969	3,003,080

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS TAKING EXCLUSIVELY DISTANCE COURSES LOCATED IN THE SAME STATE AS INSTITUTION - 2016

	Percent	Same State	Total Exclusively Distance
Private for-profit	16.5%	116,821	706,188
Private not-for-profit	35.5%	266,562	750,651
Public	84.2%	1,302,586	1,546,241

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS TAKING EXCLUSIVELY DISTANCE COURSES LOCATED IN THE SAME STATE AS INSTITUTION - 2016

	Percent	Same State	Total Exclusive Distance
<i>Undergraduate</i>			
Private for-profit	18.50%	480,542	88,852
Private not-for-profit	31.10%	441,667	137,433
Public	88.30%	1,254,584	1,107,728
<i>Graduate</i>			
Private for-profit	12.40%	225,646	27,969
Private not-for-profit	41.80%	308,984	129,129
Public	66.80%	291,657	194,858

A Patchwork of States

NUMBER OF EXCLUSIVELY DISTANCE STUDENTS BY STATE OF INSTITUTION AND LOCATION OF STUDENT: 2016

<i>State</i>	<i>Same State</i>	<i>Not Same State</i>
Alabama	28,406	33,449
Alaska	5,902	590
Arizona	61,080	205,740
Arkansas	17,704	3,778
California	199,756	80,582
Colorado	28,817	48,099
Connecticut	10,017	7,333
Delaware	3,700	3,180
District of Columbia	656	15,232
Florida	130,797	72,740
Georgia	48,099	18,577
Hawaii	7,239	978
Idaho	9,077	26,161
Illinois	45,085	55,676
Indiana	33,988	19,247
Iowa	20,897	44,995
Kansas	21,813	22,524
Kentucky	35,851	10,298
Louisiana	17,288	4,006
Maine	7,300	3,105
Maryland	56,795	14,872
Massachusetts	23,318	18,868
Michigan	42,500	9,515
Minnesota	33,112	95,875
Mississippi	18,110	3,475
Missouri	32,314	24,876
Montana	2,441	1,472
Nebraska	16,387	9,794
Nevada	12,645	877
New Hampshire	9,424	58,690
New Jersey	19,824	12,049
New Mexico	18,364	4,602
New York	44,861	47,164
North Carolina	76,042	8,712
North Dakota	8,209	4,804
Ohio	60,909	17,034
Oklahoma	20,487	5,578
Oregon	17,927	11,230
Pennsylvania	48,603	35,371
Puerto Rico	5,662	2,824
Rhode Island	1,289	1,268
South Carolina	22,375	3,151
South Dakota	7,927	4,187
Tennessee	25,884	5,364
Texas	183,124	20,621
Utah	21,100	89,055
Vermont	2,774	4,413
Virginia	53,370	60,085
Washington	29,921	4,410
West Virginia	8,010	51,429
Wisconsin	24,786	8,640
Wyoming	3,856	499

PROPORTION OF EXCLUSIVELY DISTANCE STUDENTS LOCATED OUTSIDE STATE OF INSTITUTION: 2016

<i>State</i>	<i>Percent Out of State</i>	<i>Same state</i>	<i>Not Same State</i>	<i>Total Exclusively Distance Students</i>
Alabama	54.1%	28,406	33,449	61.855
Alaska	9.1%	5,902	590	6.492
Arizona	77.1%	61,080	205,740	266.820
Arkansas	17.6%	17,704	3,778	21.482
California	28.7%	199,756	80,582	280.338
Colorado	62.5%	28,817	48,099	76.916
Connecticut	42.3%	10,017	7,333	17.350
Delaware	46.2%	3,700	3,180	6.880
District of Columbia	95.9%	656	15,232	15.888
Florida	35.7%	130,797	72,740	203.537
Georgia	27.9%	48,099	18,577	66.676
Hawaii	11.9%	7,239	978	8.217
Idaho	74.2%	9,077	26,161	35.238
Illinois	55.3%	45,085	55,676	100.761
Indiana	36.2%	33,988	19,247	53.235
Iowa	68.3%	20,897	44,995	65.892
Kansas	50.8%	21,813	22,524	44.337
Kentucky	22.3%	35,851	10,298	46.149
Louisiana	18.8%	17,288	4,006	21.294
Maine	29.8%	7,300	3,105	10.405
Maryland	20.8%	56,795	14,872	71.667
Massachusetts	44.7%	23,318	18,868	42.186
Michigan	18.3%	42,500	9,515	52.015
Minnesota	74.3%	33,112	95,875	128.987
Mississippi	16.1%	18,110	3,475	21.585
Missouri	43.5%	32,314	24,876	57.190
Montana	37.6%	2,441	1,472	3.913
Nebraska	37.4%	16,387	9,794	26.181
Nevada	6.5%	12,645	877	13.522
New Hampshire	86.2%	9,424	58,690	68.114
New Jersey	37.8%	19,824	12,049	31.873
New Mexico	20.0%	18,364	4,602	22.966
New York	51.3%	44,861	47,164	92.025
North Carolina	10.3%	76,042	8,712	84.754
North Dakota	36.9%	8,209	4,804	13.013
Ohio	21.9%	60,909	17,034	77.943
Oklahoma	21.4%	20,487	5,578	26.065
Oregon	38.5%	17,927	11,230	29.157
Pennsylvania	42.1%	48,603	35,371	83.974
Puerto Rico	33.3%	5,662	2,824	8.486
Rhode Island	49.6%	1,289	1,268	2.557
South Carolina	12.3%	22,375	3,151	25.526
South Dakota	34.6%	7,927	4,187	12.114
Tennessee	17.2%	25,884	5,364	31.248
Texas	10.1%	183,124	20,621	203.745
Utah	80.8%	21,100	89,055	110.155
Vermont	61.4%	2,774	4,413	7.187
Virginia	53.0%	53,370	60,085	113.455
Washington	12.8%	29,921	4,410	34.331
West Virginia	86.5%	8,010	51,429	59.439
Wisconsin	25.8%	24,786	8,640	33.426
Wyoming	11.5%	3,856	499	4.355

Distance Is Not International

NUMBER OF STUDENTS TAKING EXCLUSIVELY DISTANCE COURSES LOCATED OUTSIDE OF THE UNITED STATES - 2012-2016

Year	Students Located Outside of United States
2012	34,590
2013	35,965
2014	37,667
2015	37,312
2016	45,475

Distance Enrollments Are Concentrated in Relatively Few Institutions

CONCENTRATION OF DISTANCE ENROLLMENTS - 2016

Number of Institutions	Percentage of Institutions	Distance Enrollments	Percentage of Distance Enrollments
10	0.21%	649,023	10.2%
47	1.0%	1,421,703	22.4%
235	5.0%	2,985,347	46.9%
471	10.0%	4,025,099	63.3%

PRIVATE FOR-PROFIT INSTITUTIONS: CONCENTRATION OF DISTANCE ENROLLMENTS - 2016

Number of Institutions	Percentage of Institutions	Distance Enrollments	Percentage of Distance Enrollments
1	0.08%	129,332	15.6%
13	1.0%	534,027	64.2%
63	5.0%	711,989	85.6%
127	10.0%	761,254	91.5%

PRIVATE NOT-FOR-PROFIT INSTITUTIONS: CONCENTRATION OF DISTANCE ENROLLMENTS - 2016

Number of Institutions	Percentage of Institutions	Distance Enrollments	Percentage of Distance Enrollments
2	0.11%	152,055	13.3%
18	1.0%	435,027	37.9%
90	5.0%	701,907	61.2%
180	10.0%	847,037	73.8%

PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS: CONCENTRATION OF DISTANCE ENROLLMENTS - 2016

Number of Institutions	Percentage of Institutions	Distance Enrollments	Percentage of Distance Enrollments
18	1.09%	437,564	10.0%
17	1.0%	422,464	9.6%

83	5.0%	1,153,221	26.3%
165	10.0%	1,756,866	40.1%

CONCENTRATION OF DISTANCE ENROLLMENTS AMONG THE TOP 1 AND 5 PERCENT OF INSTITUTIONS

	<i>Public</i>	<i>Private not-for-profit</i>	<i>Private for-profit</i>
Top 1%	9.6%	37.9%	64.2%
Top 2 to 5%	16.7%	23.3%	21.4%
All others	73.7%	38.8%	14.4%

Distance Enrollments Are Primarily Undergraduate

DISTANCE AND TOTAL ENROLLMENTS PERCENTAGE UNDERGRADUATE - 2016

	<i>Distance</i>	<i>Total</i>
Public	89.9%	90.1%
Private non-profit	62.8%	69.4%
Private for-profit	71.5%	77.8%

Students Taking Exclusively Distance Courses

PERCENTAGE OF DISTANCE STUDENTS TAKING EXCLUSIVELY DISTANCE COURSES - 2016

	<i>Percentage of Distance Students Taking Exclusively Distance Courses</i>
Public	35.3%
Private non-profit	65.4%
Private for-profit	84.9%

NUMBER OF STUDENTS TAKING EXCLUSIVELY DISTANCE COURSES - 2016

	<i>Students Taking Exclusively Distance Courses</i>
Public	1,546,241
Private non-profit	750,651
Private for-profit	706,188

The On-Campus Student

NUMBER OF STUDENTS STUDYING ON CAMPUS: 2012 TO 2016

	<i>2012</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>
Public	13,734,217	13,543,411	13,356,887	13,194,946	13,123,039

Private not-for-profit	3,632,072	3,595,626	3,533,927	3,531,209	3,479,352
Private for-profit	928,639	839,631	762,518	637,456	518,732
Total	18,294,928	17,978,668	17,653,332	17,363,611	17,121,123

NUMBER OF STUDENTS TAKING NO DISTANCE COURSES: 2012 TO 2016

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Public	11,367,542	11,066,365	10,862,065	10,571,077	10,288,860
Private not-for-profit	3,341,175	3,288,883	3,205,434	3,153,301	3,082,975
Private for-profit	794,320	713,553	645,301	519,884	393,247
Total	15,503,037	15,068,801	14,712,800	14,244,262	13,765,082

NUMBER OF STUDENTS TAKING NO DISTANCE COURSES: 2012 AND 2016

	2012	2016
Undergraduate	13,418,554	11,856,011
Graduate	2,084,483	1,909,071

BABSON SURVEY RESEARCH GROUP

The Babson Survey Research Group conducts regional, national, and international research, including survey design, sampling methodology, data integrity, statistical analyses and reporting.



<http://www.onlinelearningsurvey.com/>

Open Educational Resources

- Opening the Textbook: Open Education Resources in U.S. Higher Education, 2017
- What We Teach: K-12 School District Curriculum Adoption Process, 2017
- Opening the Textbook: Open Education Resources in U.S. Higher Education, 2015-16
- Opening Public Institutions: OER in North Dakota and the Nation, 2015
- Opening the Curriculum: Open Educational Resources in U.S. Higher Education
- Growing the Curriculum: Open Educational Resources in U.S. Higher Education

National Surveys of Online Education

- Distance Education State Almanac 2017
- Digital Learning Compass: Distance Education Enrollment Report 2017
- Online Report Card: Tracking Online Education in the United States
- Grade Level: Tracking Online Education in the United States, 2015
- Grade Change: Tracking Online Education in the United States
- Changing Course: Ten Years of Tracking Online Education in the United States
- Going the Distance: Online Education in the United States, 2011
- Online Learning Trends in Private-Sector Colleges and Universities, 2011
- Class Differences: Online Education in the United States, 2010
- Learning on Demand: Online Education in the United States, 2009
- Staying the Course: Online Education in the United States, 2008
- Online Nation: Five Years of Growth in Online Learning
- Making the Grade: Online Education in the United States, 2006
- Growing by Degrees: Online Education in the United States, 2005
- Entering the Mainstream: The Quality and Extent of Online Education in the United States, 2003 and 2004
- Sizing the Opportunity: The Quality and Extent of Online Education in the United States, 2002 and 2003

Higher Education Faculty and Technology

- Digital Faculty, Professors, Teaching and Technology, 2012
- Conflicted: Faculty and Online Education, 2012

K-12 Online Learning Survey Reports

- Online Learning in Illinois High Schools: Has the Time Come?
- Class Connections: High School Reform and the Role of Online Learning
- K-12 Online Learning: A 2008 follow-up of the Survey of U.S. School District Administrators
- K-12 Online Learning: A Survey of U.S. School District Administrators

The A•P•L•U-Sloan National Commission on Online Learning

- Online Learning as a Strategic Asset, Volume II: The Paradox of Faculty Voices
- Online Learning as a Strategic Asset: A Survey of APLU Presidents and Chancellors
- Online Learning as a Strategic Asset: A Survey of NAFEO Presidents and Chancellors
- Online Learning as a Strategic Asset: A Survey of AIHEC Tribal College and University



Distance education enrollments increased for the fourteenth straight year, growing faster than they have for the past several years. From 2002 to 2012 both distance and overall enrollments grew annually, but since 2012 distance growth has continued its steady increase in an environment that saw overall enrollments decline for four straight years and the largest for-profit distance education institutions continue to face serious issues and lose their enrollments.

The number of distance education students grew by 5.6% from Fall 2015 to Fall 2016 to reach 6,359,121 who are taking at least one distance course, representing 31.6% of all students. Total distance enrollments are composed of 14.9% of students (3,003,080) taking exclusively distance courses, and 16.7% (3,356,041) who are taking a combination of distance and non-distance courses.

Year-to-year changes in distance enrollments continue to be very uneven between different higher education sectors, with continued steady growth for public institutions, similar levels of growth (albeit on a much smaller base) for the private non-profit sector, and the continuation of the decline in total enrollments for the private for-profit sector for the fourth year in a row.

