METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

The *Stay Informed* series began in the summer of 2020 to track COVID-19's impact on students and institutions. Three years later, even as the acute phase of the pandemic recedes, the enrollment dashboards will continue to be updated within the first two months of every term using the latest enrollment data available to highlight disparities in pandemic recovery across various subgroups of students, programs, institutions, and states/regions.

The current report reflects 9.6 million enrollments reported as of September 28, 2023, by 54.5 percent of Title IV degree-granting institutions in the U.S. that are participating in the Clearinghouse. Analyses focus on year-over-year percent changes in enrollment between 2021 and 2022, 2022 and 2023, and the two-year cumulative percent change in enrollment from 2021 to 2023, based on the same institutions reporting at the same time across all three years.

NATIONAL COVERAGE OF THE DATA

Clearinghouse data track enrollments nationally and are not limited by institutional and state boundaries. As of fall 2021, institutions actively submitting enrollment data to the Clearinghouse account for 97 percent of all enrollments at Title IV, degree-granting institutions in the U.S. Unlike the Current Term Enrollment Estimates report series, where enrollments are weighted to account for variation in data coverage rates by institution sector and state, the Stay Informed series uses unweighted enrollment counts. This is because the emphasis is on year-over-year percentage changes in enrollment patterns rather than estimating total enrollment numbers.

INSTITUTION PANEL SELECTION

To accurately assess postsecondary enrollment changes, the analyses focus on a fixed panel of all institutions that submitted data to the Clearinghouse during the same time frame across all comparison years. We created the panel to control for year-to-year variations in institutional coverage as well as variation in data submission dates.

To control for institutional coverage, only the institutions that submitted enrollment data across the three years (2021-2023) were included in the analyses. Institutions that discontinued or started submitting enrollments at any point within these years were excluded. To control for submission timing variability among these institutions, only fall term data that was submitted within the data submission window (specified in Term Definition, below) in each of the three years was included. However, it is important to note that even with these controls, enrollments at some institutions in the panel may still have been overcounted or undercounted for 2023 due to unusual file submission patterns. Our investigations suggest that such data noise is minor.

TERM DEFINITION

For Clearinghouse reporting, institutions provide the start- and end-dates for each enrollment, rather than formally designating a term. Each iteration of the *Stay Informed* updates contains the latest enrollments submitted by institutions within the time frames below.

Updates	Term Dates	Submission Window	Institutional Coverage	Enrollment Coverage
First Look Fall 2023	Start between 7/1 – 12/1	7/1 – 9/28	55.2%	54.5% (9.6M/17.5M)

Note: Both institutional and enrollment coverage rates for fall 2023 data are calculated using fall 2022 data submissions as the denominator.

NEIGHBORHOOD INCOME MEASURE

The neighborhood income measure provides information about the relative socioeconomic level of students' pre-college neighborhoods for students originating from the 50 U.S. states and Washington, D.C. Neighborhood income is highly correlated with other indicators of neighborhood socioeconomic status (SES) such as home ownership, educational attainment, employment, and poverty. Research suggests that students hailing from higher SES neighborhoods have better outcomes in terms of college attendance and lifetime earnings, likely due to factors such as access to high-quality schools, high-achieving peer groups, healthier natural environments, and limited exposure to violence and the criminal justice system. It is important to note that this is *not* a measure of family or individual income. Not all students who come from high-income neighborhoods come from high-income families and the same is true of students from low-income neighborhoods.
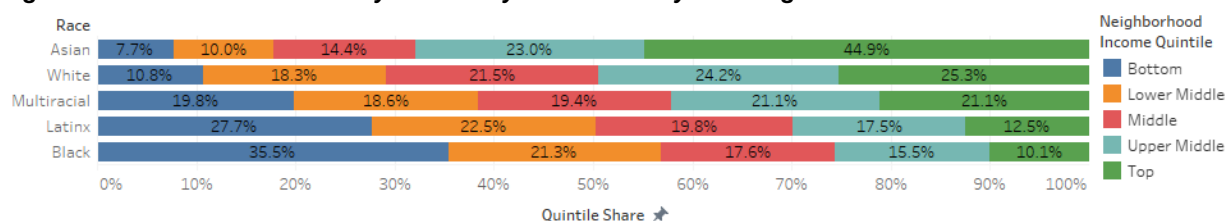
The measure utilizes street addresses reported to the Clearinghouse with each enrollment submission to locate students' homes in a particular census tract through geocoding. To best approximate socioeconomic origins, we use the first permanent address reported to the Clearinghouse for each student and apply the measure only to undergraduate students 24 and younger whose first higher education enrollment (including dual enrollment) occurred at age 19 or younger. Additionally, a small number of students, whose first enrollment predates 2010, are excluded due to the availability of external data sources needed to construct the measure. These three restrictions—location of the first address, age at first enrollment, and data year of the first address—allow us to include over 94% of all undergraduates 24 and younger in each term.

Income data for each tract are sourced from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) five-year estimates. These are adjusted using Regional Price Parity values from the Bureau of Economic Analysis to account for price level differences by state and metropolitan area. The quintiles referenced in this report are of tract median household income adjusted for household size. Quintiles are based on the national distribution of median household income, adjusted for household size, among all census tracts in the 50 states and D.C.

In this report, students with missing neighborhood income quintile values are those who have met the sample restrictions described above, but that (1) we were unable to geocode or (2) were geocoded to a tract for which ACS does not publicly publish income data. These missing rates range from 8.1% to 8.7% depending on the student group (undergraduates or freshmen) and the year. The inability to geocode (rather than geocoding to a tract without income data) accounts for nearly all of these missing cases. Geocoding non-matches typically arise from issues relating to the quality of address data, such as P.O. boxes and incomplete street addresses. These conditions may be correlated with both neighborhood and household income.

Geocoding success rates are also correlated with race. Because certain racial and ethnic groups have higher missing income values for this measure, we have limited the results presented in this report to only the five groups (White, Latinx, Black, Asian, and Multiracial students) whose missing rates are not higher than the panel average missing rate in each year. Because ethnoracial groups are not uniformly distributed across neighborhood income quintiles, we provide a baseline estimate of the population of all 15–17-year-olds in the U.S. residing in tracts of each neighborhood income quintile for reference:

Figure M1. Distribution of 15–17-year-olds by Race/Ethnicity and Neighborhood Income Quintile

RACE AND ETHNICITY DATA COVERAGE AND ESTIMATION

Not all institutions report race and ethnicity data to the Clearinghouse. *Missing* data (for institutions that do not report to the Clearinghouse) account for an average of 13.6 percent of all enrollments across panel years in this report. The missing rate is higher for freshmen because newer students have less opportunity for their race/ethnicity to have been reported to the Clearinghouse. To account for differences in data missing rate, undergraduate and freshman enrollments by race and ethnicity are estimated for the most recent year (fall 2023) based on previous years' patterns of data reporting. The missing rate after adjustments is 12.3 percent for undergraduates and 16.4 percent for freshmen. An additional 3.5 percent of students on average across panel years have race/ethnicity reported as *Unknown,* a valid reporting category meaning they do not report their race to their institution. Only the missing rate, and not the unknown rate, is a target of our estimation procedure. As the fall 2023 race and ethnicity data are adjusted enrollment estimates for freshmen and undergraduates, these data should be interpreted with caution. No adjustments are made for graduate students as their race/ethnicity missing rate is relatively stable year-over-year.

ENROLLMENT INTENSITY

Unlike the Current Term Enrollment Estimates report series, enrollment intensity is identified based on the latest data submitted for a student in any given term. As a result, the intensity reflects the student's current workload as of the data cut-off date. The current analysis broadly categorizes enrollment intensity into full-time and part-time. The part-time category includes three-quarter time, half-time and less-than-half-time.

PRIMARILY ASSOCIATE DEGREE GRANTING BACCALAUREATE INSTITUTIONS (PABs)

As more and more associate colleges have begun to offer bachelor's degree programs, there has been a growing number of sector reclassifications by IPEDS, where two- and four-year colleges are determined based on program offerings. However, these reclassified four-year institutions often educate and award degrees primarily at the associate-degree level. These institutions are considered Primarily Associate Degree Granting Baccalaureate Institutions (PABs). PABs can be identified using the institutional category variable from the IPEDS Institutional Characteristics survey, which relies on both program offerings and degrees awarded. Alternatively, PABs can be identified based on an institution's Carnegie Classification, which similarly relies on program offering (there must be one bachelor's-level program offered) and degrees awarded. The IPEDS methodology identifies more institutions than the Carnegie methodology. This is because Carnegie excludes tribal colleges and special focus colleges (e.g., those focused on health sciences, arts, or religious instruction) from its PAB designation. IPEDS does not. We elect to use the more conservative Carnegie Classification.

PABs carry Carnegie Classifications of either 14 (Baccalaureate/Associate Colleges: Associate Dominant) or 23 (Baccalaureate/Associate College: Mixed Baccalaureate/Associate). In general, the difference between a 14 and a 23 designation lies in the share of degrees awarded at the associate degree level. Institutions with a 14 designation award 90% or more of degrees at the associate level while those with a 23 designation award more than 50% but less than 90% of degrees at this level. To keep the panel methodology consistent, the 2021 Carnegie designations were applied across all years analyzed in this report.

RECLASSIFICATIONS OF INSTITUTION SECTORS

This report defines institution sectors based on the 2021 Carnegie Classification. While the classification largely follows IPEDS sector designations, where there are differences between IPEDS and Carnegie, we

follow the Carnegie Classification. These discrepancies primarily affect PABs (see above) as well as 33 institutions considered four-year schools by IPEDS but two-year schools by Carnegie. Most institutions in the latter case (30) are public institutions. Our reporting is restricted to the fixed panel of institutions, and the institution sector definitions are applied consistently across all comparison years (2021-2023) in order to calculate year-over-year enrollment changes without the disruption of sector reclassifications between years.

PRIMARILY ONLINE INSTITUTIONS

Primarily online institutions (POIs) are identified based on the IPEDS 2021-2022 enrollment survey data, specifically, from the distance education enrollment survey items. Any institution that reports more than 90 percent of its undergraduate and graduate enrollments combined enrolling exclusively in distance education courses prior to the pandemic era is considered a POI. Following this method, there are 24 institutions identified as POIs in the Clearinghouse data and 15 POIs in this report (62.5% institution coverage). POIs are predominantly for-profit four-year, multi-state institutions; therefore, they are combined with multi-state institutions for state-level analyses.

HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Defined by the Higher Education Act of 1965, HBCUs were established prior to 1964, with the principal mission of educating black Americans and are accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association determined by the U.S. Secretary of Education to be a reliable authority as to the quality of training offered. Currently, there are 91 HBCUs identified in the Clearinghouse data. For this report, 29 are included in the analysis (31.9% institution coverage).

SELECTIVITY INDEX

The Barron's Selectivity index evaluates the competitiveness of an institution based on several admissions factors such as an institution's acceptance rate, SAT score, high school GPA, and high school class rank. Utilizing the 2016 Barron's selectivity list, the ranking categories are as follows:

- Highly Selective are institutions identified as either "Most Competitive" or "Highly Competitive" according to the Barron's Selectivity Index. Their definitions are as follows:
    - Most Competitive: Institutions that generally admit less than a third of their total applicant pool. Students that are admitted generally have a high school class rank in the top 10-20 percent of their graduating class, and high school grade averages from A to B+. SAT/ACT scores are in the top 80th percentile.
    - Highly Competitive: Institutions that generally admit between a third to half of their applicant pool. Students that are admitted generally are in the top 20-35 percent of their high school graduating class, with high school grade averages from B+ to B. SAT and ACT scores are in the top 75th percentile.
- Very Competitive: Institutions that generally admit between 50-75 percent of their applicant pool. Students that are admitted generally are in the top 35-50 percent of their graduating class and have high school grade averages of a B- or better. SAT and ACT scores are in the top 67th percentile.
- Competitive: Institutions that generally admit between 75-85 percent of their applicant pool. Students that are admitted are generally in the top 50-65 percent of their high school graduating class and have a high school grade average of a B- or better. SAT and ACT scores are in the top 60th percentile.
- Less Selective are institutions identified as either "Less Competitive," "Noncompetitive," "Special Focus," or "Unranked," according to the Barron's Selectivity Index. Their definitions are as follows:
    - Less Competitive: Institutions that generally admit more than 85 percent of their applicant pool. Students that are admitted generally rank in the top 65 percent of their graduating class and have high school grade averages below a C. SAT and ACT scores are below the top 60th percentile.

- o Noncompetitive: Institutions that either admit more than 98 percent of their applicant pool, admit all in-state residents, but have some requirements for out-of-state students, or require evidence of a high school diploma from an accredited school.
- o Special Focus: Institutions that are specialized, such as professional schools of art, music, or other disciplines. Schools oriented towards adult learners are also sometimes in this category.
- o Unranked: All institutions not otherwise categorized in the Barron's selectivity index.

URBANICITY (CAMPUS SETTING)

Urbanicity refers to the geographic location of a college categorized on a continuum ranging from urban to rural, as defined by IPEDS. The IPEDS codes incorporate the campus location's population size and distance from an urbanized area, resulting in 12 distinct codes, grouped into the following three categories:

- Urban: Territory inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city
- Suburban: Territory outside a principal city and inside an urbanized area.
- Rural & Town (combined):
  - o Town: Territory inside an urban cluster and outside an urbanized area.
  - o Rural: Territory outside of an urban cluster and outside an urbanized area.

MAJOR FIELD OF STUDY

Reporting on the field of study is based on the 2020 NCES Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP), first analyzing at the six-digit CIP level and categorizing into CIP families at the two-digit level. Science and Engineering majors are defined in accordance with the six-digit CIP levels used by the National Science Foundation, and the following disciplines are included: Biological and Agricultural Sciences; Computer Sciences; Earth, Atmospheric, and Ocean Sciences; Engineering; Mathematics; Physical Sciences; Psychology; and Social Sciences.

STATE-LEVEL DATA COVERAGE

States are considered to have sufficient coverage if at least three institutions reported in the given state and there is at least 30 percent statewide enrollment coverage. Forty-five states and the District of Columbia (D.C.) have sufficient data to show in the interactive maps on the data dashboards for total enrollment, 46 states and D.C. have sufficient data for undergraduate enrollment, and 42 states and D.C. have sufficient data for graduate enrollment.

SUGGESTED CITATION

Berg, B., Cohen, J., Gardner, A., Karamarkovich, S., Kim, H., Randolph, B., and Shapiro, D. (October 2023), *Stay Informed Fall 2023*, Herndon, VA: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.