

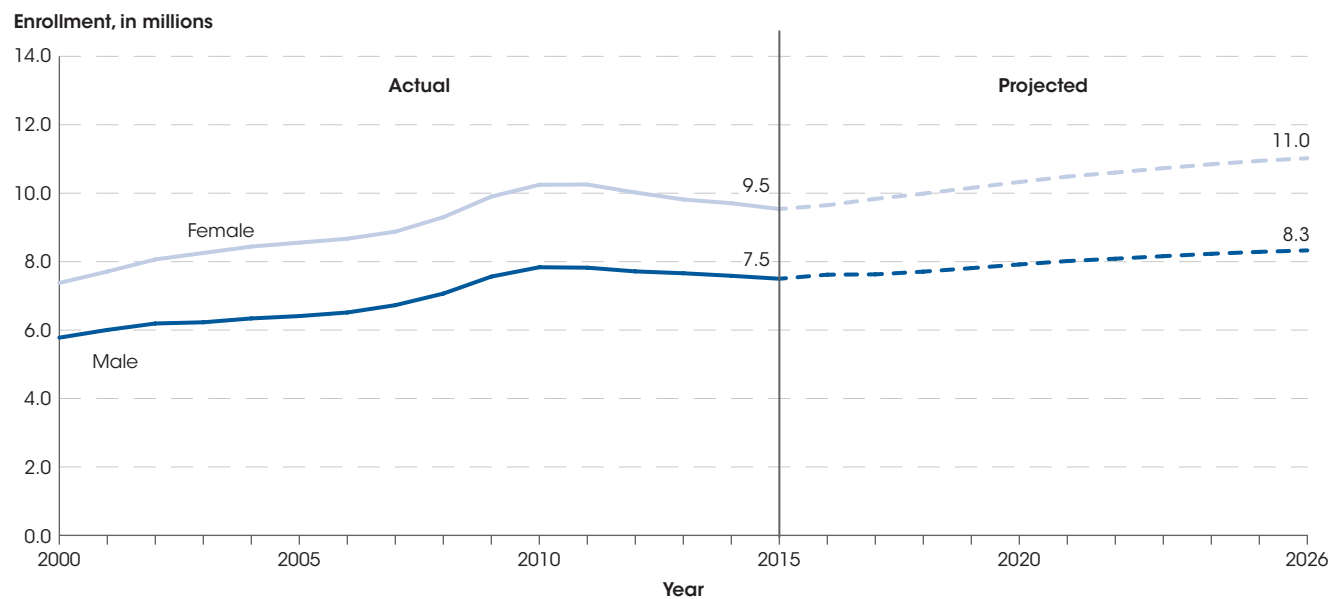
# Undergraduate Enrollment

*Between 2000 and 2015, total undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions increased by 30 percent (from 13.2 million to 17.0 million). By 2026, total undergraduate enrollment is projected to increase to 19.3 million students.*

In fall 2015, total undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions was 17.0 million students, an increase of 30 percent from 2000, when enrollment was 13.2 million students. While total undergraduate enrollment increased by 37 percent

between 2000 and 2010, enrollment decreased by 6 percent between 2010 and 2015. Undergraduate enrollment is projected to increase by 14 percent (from 17.0 million to 19.3 million students) between 2015 and 2026.

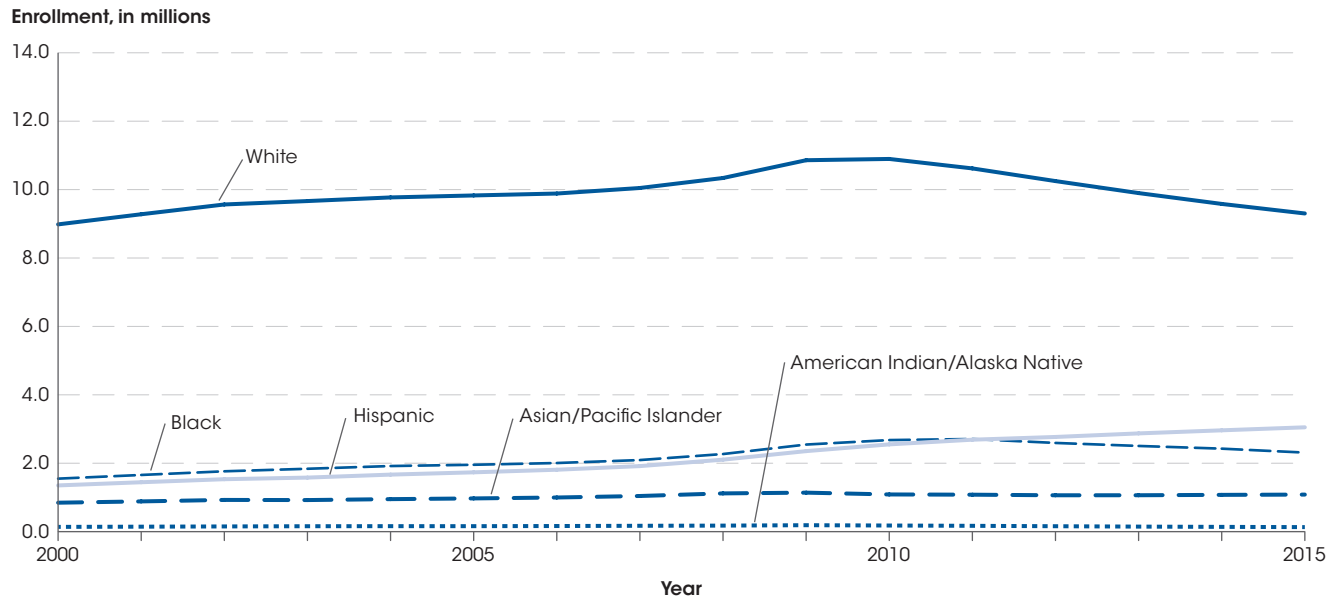
**Figure 1. Actual and projected undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by sex: Fall 2000–2026**



NOTE: Data include unclassified undergraduate students. Degree-granting institutions grant associate's or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Projections are based on data through 2015. Some data have been revised from previously published figures.  
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Spring 2001 through Spring 2016, Fall Enrollment component; and Enrollment in Degree-Granting Institutions Projection Model, 1980 through 2026. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 303.70.

In fall 2015, female students made up 56 percent of total undergraduate enrollment at 9.5 million, and male students made up 44 percent at 7.5 million. Between 2000 and 2015, enrollment for both groups showed similar patterns of change: female enrollment increased by 29 percent and male enrollment increased by 30 percent. Most of these increases occurred between 2005 and 2010, when female enrollment increased by 20 percent

and male enrollment increased by 22 percent. However, between 2010 and 2015 both female and male enrollment decreased by 7 percent and 4 percent, respectively. Between 2015 and 2026, female enrollment is projected to increase by 16 percent (from 9.5 million to 11.0 million students), and male enrollment is projected to increase by 11 percent (from 7.5 million to 8.3 million students).

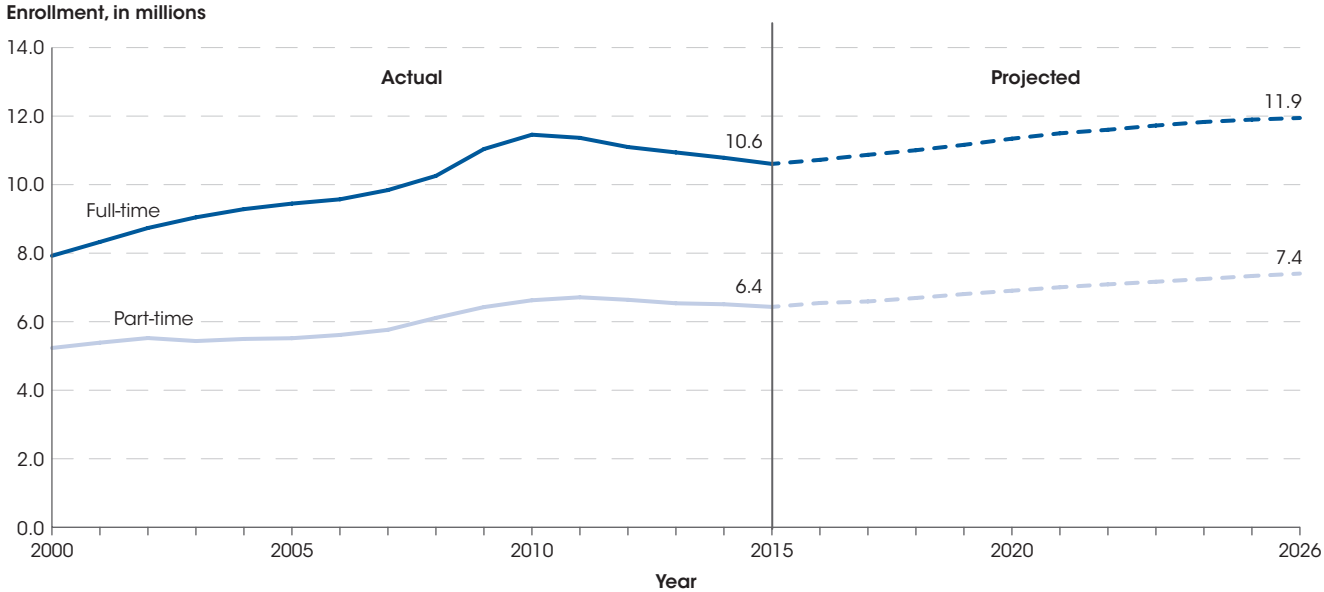
**Figure 2. Undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by race/ethnicity: Fall 2000–2015**

NOTE: Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Degree-granting institutions grant associate's or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Some data have been revised from previously published figures.  
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Spring 2001 through Spring 2016, Fall Enrollment component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2005*, table 205; *Digest of Education Statistics 2009*, table 226; *Digest of Education Statistics 2015* and *2016*, table 306.10.

Of the 17.0 million undergraduate students in fall 2015, some 9.3 million were White, 3.0 million were Hispanic, 2.3 million were Black, 1.1 million were Asian/Pacific Islander, and 132,000 were American Indian/Alaska Native. Between 2000 and 2015, Hispanic enrollment more than doubled (a 126 percent increase from 1.4 million to 3.0 million students). In contrast, enrollment for other racial/ethnic groups fluctuated during this period. Between 2000 and 2010, Black enrollment increased by 73 percent (from 1.5 million to 2.7 million students), Asian/Pacific Islander enrollment increased by 29 percent (from 846,000 to 1.1 million

students), American Indian/Alaska Native enrollment increased by 29 percent (from 139,000 to 179,000 students), and White enrollment increased by 21 percent (from 9.0 million to 10.9 million students). However, between 2010 and 2015, American Indian/Alaska Native enrollment decreased by 26 percent (from 179,000 to 132,000 students), White enrollment decreased by 15 percent (from 10.9 million to 9.3 million students), Black enrollment decreased by 14 percent (from 2.7 million to 2.3 million students), and Asian/Pacific Islander enrollment remained relatively unchanged (at 1.1 million students).

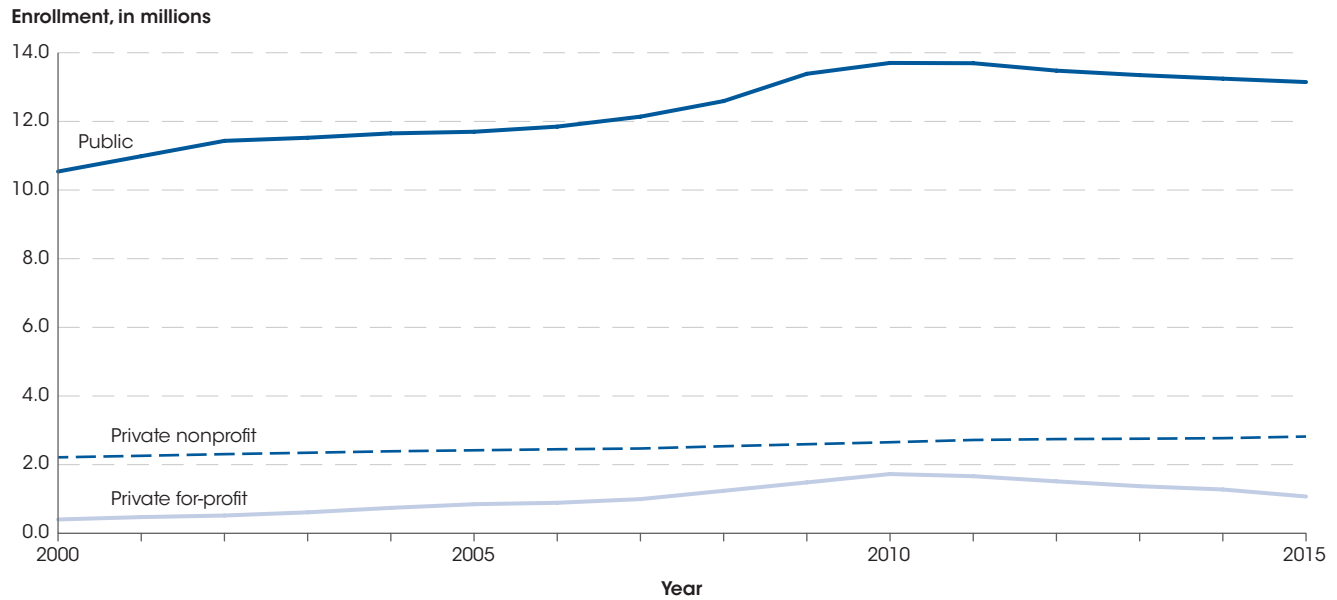
Figure 3. Actual and projected undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by attendance status: Fall 2000–2026



NOTE: Data include unclassified undergraduate students. Degree-granting institutions grant associate's or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Projections are based on data through 2015. Some data have been revised from previously published figures.  
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Spring 2001 through Spring 2016, Fall Enrollment component; and Enrollment in Degree-Granting Institutions Projection Model, 1980 through 2026. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 303.70.

In fall 2015, there were 10.6 million full-time and 6.4 million part-time undergraduate students. Enrollment for both full- and part-time students has generally increased since 2000, particularly between 2000 and 2010, when full-time enrollment increased by 45 percent and part-time enrollment increased by 27 percent. More recently, the pattern of enrollment has changed:

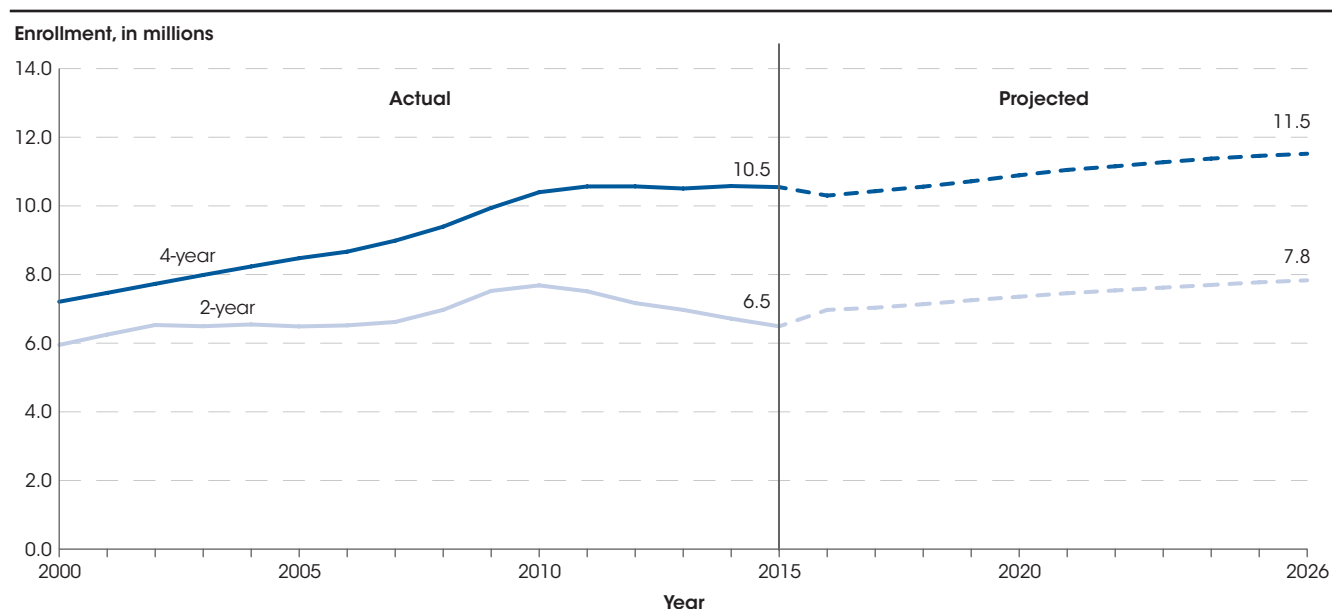
between 2010 and 2015, full-time enrollment decreased by 7 percent and part-time enrollment decreased by 3 percent. Between 2015 and 2026, full-time enrollment is projected to increase by 13 percent (from 10.6 million to 11.9 million students) and part-time enrollment is projected to increase by 15 percent (from 6.4 million to 7.4 million students).

**Figure 4. Undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by control of institution: Fall 2000–2015**

NOTE: Data include unclassified undergraduate students. Degree-granting institutions grant associate's or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Some data have been revised from previously published figures.  
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), IPEDS Spring 2001 through Spring 2016, Fall Enrollment component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 303.70.

The increase in undergraduate enrollment from fall 2000 to fall 2015 occurred at a faster rate at private for-profit institutions (166 percent) than at public institutions (25 percent) and private nonprofit institutions (27 percent), although in 2000 undergraduate enrollment at private for-profit institutions was relatively small, at 403,000 students. From 2000 to 2010, enrollment at private for-profit institutions quadrupled from 403,000 to 1.7 million students. In comparison, enrollment increased by 30 percent at public institutions (from 10.5 million to 13.7 million students) and by 20 percent at private

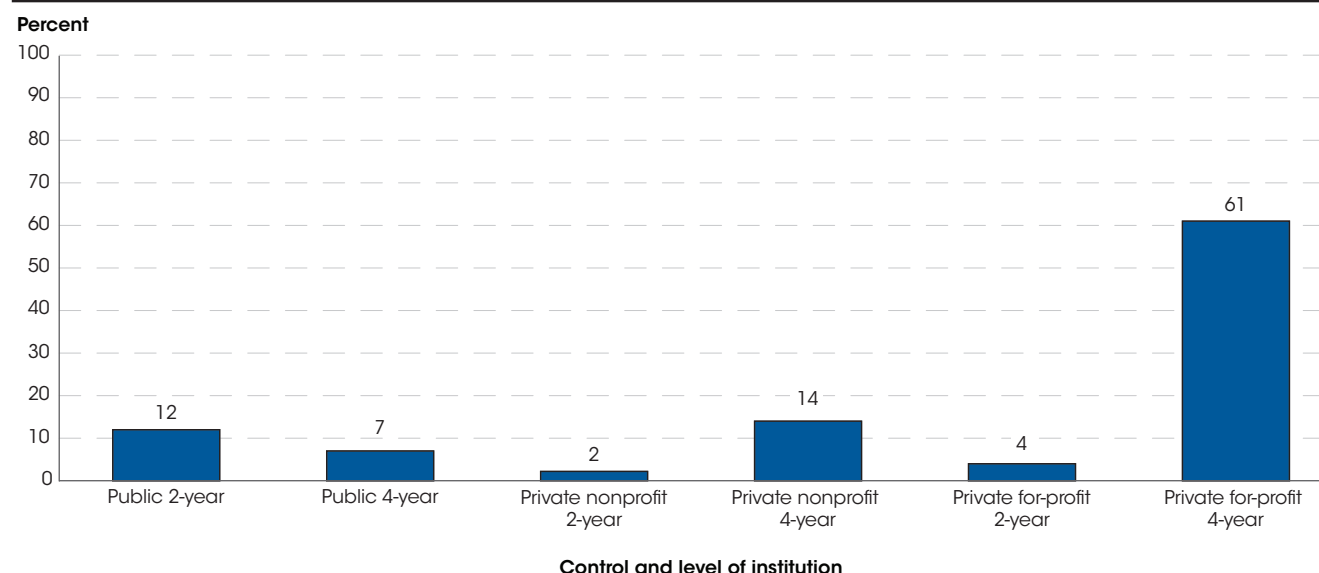
nonprofit institutions (from 2.2 million to 2.7 million students) during this period. More recently, the pattern of enrollment at private for-profit institutions has changed: after peaking in 2010, enrollment at private for-profit institutions decreased by 38 percent (from 1.7 million to 1.1 million students) between 2010 and 2015. In contrast, enrollment at public institutions decreased by 4 percent (from 13.7 million to 13.1 million students) during this period, while enrollment at private nonprofit institutions increased by 6 percent (from 2.7 million to 2.8 million students).

**Figure 5. Actual and projected undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by level of institution: Fall 2000–2026**

NOTE: Data include unclassified undergraduate students. Degree-granting institutions grant associate's or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Projections are based on data through 2015. Some data have been revised from previously published figures.  
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), IPEDS Spring 2001 through Spring 2016, Fall Enrollment component; and Enrollment in Degree-Granting Institutions Projection Model, 1980 through 2026. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 303.70.

In fall 2015, the 10.5 million students at 4-year institutions made up 62 percent of total undergraduate enrollment; the remaining 38 percent (6.5 million students) were enrolled at 2-year institutions. Between 2000 and 2010, enrollment increased by 44 percent at 4-year institutions and by 29 percent at 2-year institutions. More recently, enrollment patterns have changed: enrollment was 1 percent higher at 4-year institutions and 16 percent lower at 2-year institutions in 2015 than in 2010. Between 2010 and 2015, enrollment

patterns varied by control and level of institution. For example, undergraduate enrollment at private nonprofit 2-year institutions was 53 percent higher in 2015 than in 2010, whereas enrollment at private for-profit 2-year institutions was 48 percent lower in 2015 than in 2010. Between 2015 and 2026, undergraduate enrollment at 2-year institutions is projected to increase by 21 percent (from 6.5 million to 7.8 million students), while enrollment at 4-year institutions is projected to increase by 9 percent (from 10.5 million to 11.5 million students).

**Figure 6. Percentage of undergraduate students at degree-granting postsecondary institutions who enrolled exclusively in distance education courses, by control and level of institution: Fall 2015**

NOTE: Degree-granting institutions grant associate's or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Distance education uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor as well as to support regular and substantive interaction between the student and the instructor synchronously or asynchronously. Technologies used for instruction may include the following: the 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 videocassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs, only if the videocassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs are used in a course in conjunction with the technologies listed above.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Spring 2016, Fall Enrollment component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 311.15.

Distance education<sup>1</sup> courses and programs provide students with flexible learning opportunities. In fall 2015, more than a quarter of undergraduate students (4.9 million) participated in distance education, with 2.1 million students, or 12 percent of total undergraduate enrollment, exclusively taking distance education courses. Of the 2.1 million undergraduate students who exclusively took distance education courses, 1.3 million were enrolled at institutions located in the same state in which they resided, and 767,000 were enrolled at institutions in a different state.

The percentage of undergraduate students enrolled exclusively in distance education courses differed by

institutional control. In fall 2015, the percentage of students at private for-profit institutions who exclusively took distance education courses (49 percent) was more than three times that of students at private nonprofit institutions (14 percent) and more than five times that of students at public institutions (9 percent). In particular, 61 percent of students at private for-profit 4-year institutions exclusively took distance education courses. This percentage is larger than the percentage of students at any other control and level of institution who exclusively took distance education courses. (Percentages at these institutions ranged from 2 percent at private nonprofit 2-year institutions to 14 percent at private nonprofit 4-year institutions.)

#### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Distance education uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor as well as to support regular and substantive interaction between the student and the instructor synchronously or asynchronously. Technologies used for instruction may include the following: the 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 videocassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs, only if the videocassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs are used in a course in conjunction with the technologies listed above.

**Reference tables:** *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, tables 303.70, 306.10, and 311.15

**Related indicators and resources:** Postbaccalaureate Enrollment, Immediate Transition to College, College Enrollment Rates, Characteristics of Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions, Distance Education in Postsecondary Institutions [*web-only*], Community Colleges [*The Condition of Education 2008 Special Analysis*], Differences in Postsecondary Enrollment Among Recent High School Completers [*The Condition of Education 2016 Spotlight*]

**Glossary:** Control of institutions, Degree-granting institution, Distance education, Enrollment, Full-time enrollment, Part-time enrollment, Postsecondary institutions (basic classification by level), Private institution, Public school or institution, Racial/ethnic group, Undergraduate students