

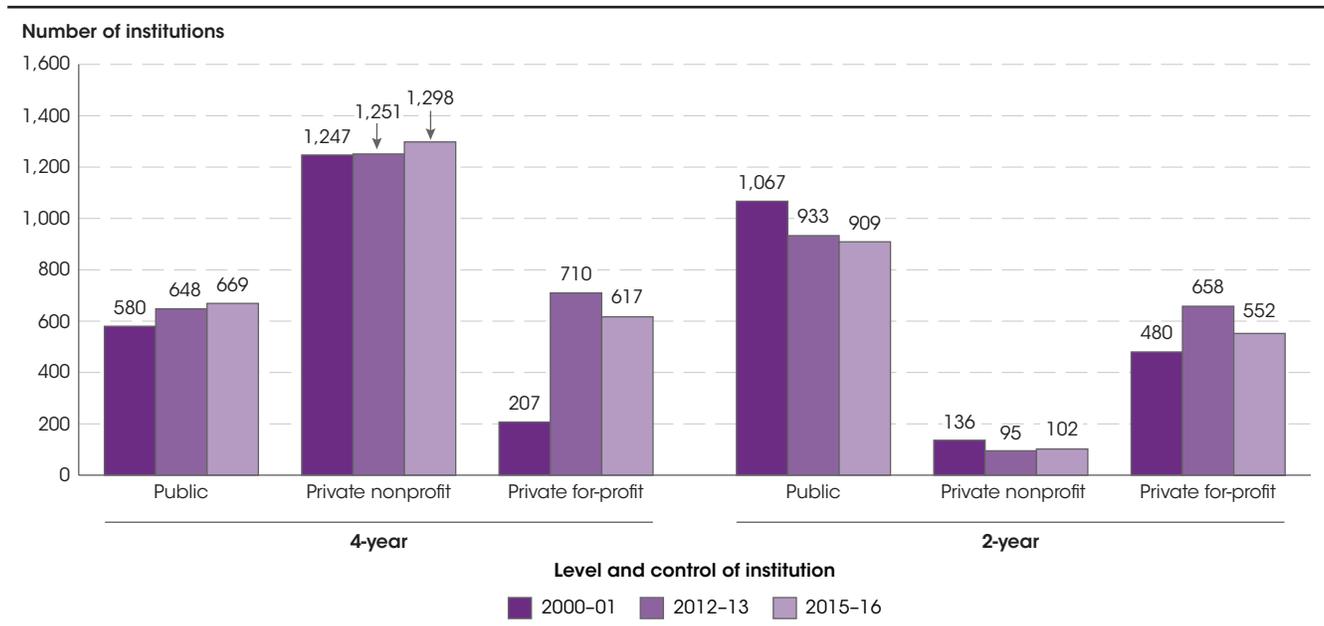
Characteristics of Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions

In academic year 2015–16, some 28 percent of 4-year institutions had open admissions policies (accepted all applicants), an additional 29 percent accepted three-quarters or more of their applicants, 30 percent accepted from one-half to less than three-quarters of their applicants, and 13 percent accepted less than one-half of their applicants.

In academic year 2015–16, there were 4,147 degree-granting institutions in the United States with first-year undergraduates: 2,584 were 4-year institutions offering programs at the bachelor’s or higher degree level and 1,563 were 2-year institutions offering associate’s degrees. Some of the differences in characteristics of 2-year and 4-year institutions may be related to their differing institutional missions. The instructional missions of 2-year institutions generally focus on student instruction and related activities that often include providing a range of career-oriented programs at the certificate and associate’s degree levels and preparing students for transfer to 4-year institutions. Four-year institutions tend to have a broad

range of instructional programs at the undergraduate level leading to bachelor’s degrees. Many 4-year institutions offer graduate-level programs as well, and some 4-year institutions have a strong research focus. Degree-granting institutions may be governed by publicly appointed or elected officials, with major support from public funds (public control) or by privately elected or appointed officials, with major support from private sources (private control). Private institutions may be operated on a nonprofit or for-profit basis. All institutions in this analysis enroll first-year undergraduates in degree-granting programs.

Figure 1. Number of degree-granting institutions with first-year undergraduates, by level and control of institution: Academic years 2000–01, 2012–13, and 2015–16



NOTE: Degree-granting institutions grant associate’s or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Excludes institutions not enrolling any first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduates.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2000 and Fall 2012, Institutional Characteristics component; and Winter 2015–16, Admissions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2013*, table 305.30; and *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 305.30.

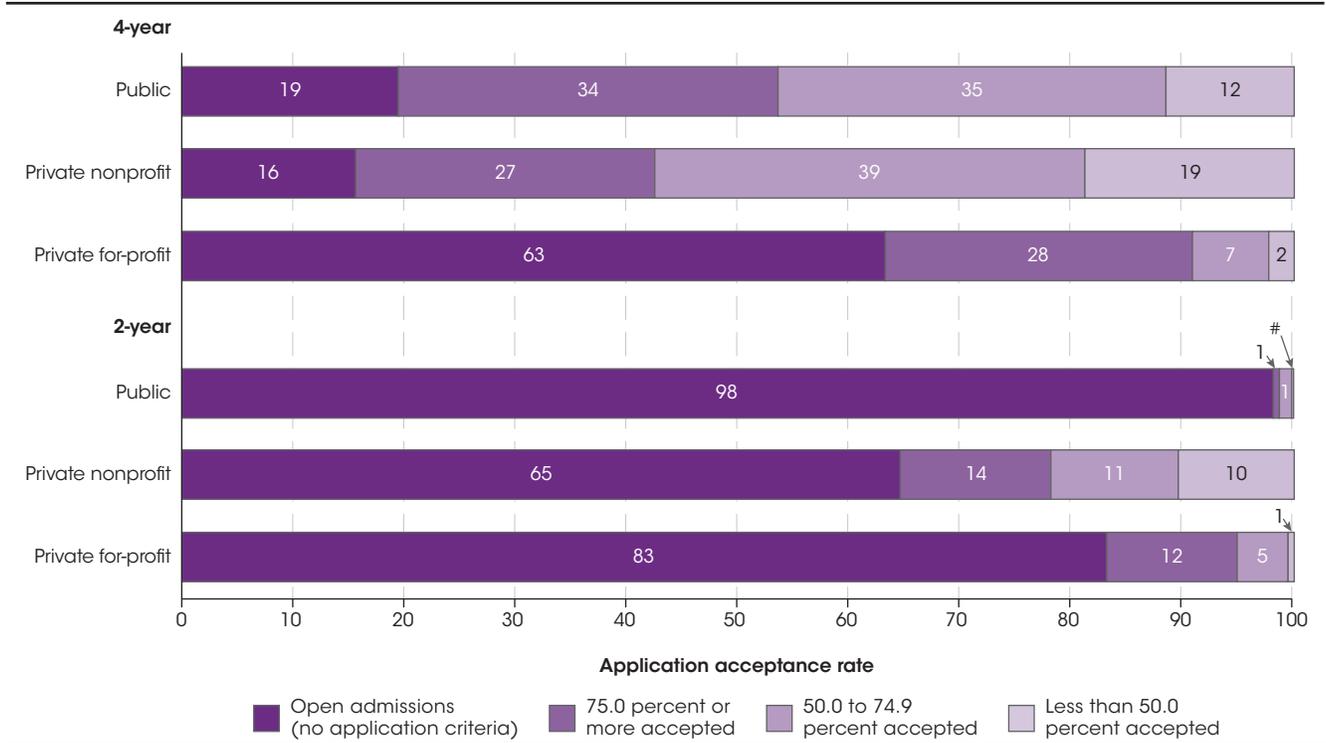
In 2015–16, the number of public 4-year institutions (669) was 15 percent higher than in 2000–01 (580) and the number of private nonprofit 4-year institutions (1,298) was 4 percent higher than in 2000–01 (1,247). In contrast, there was fluctuation in the number of

private for-profit 4-year institutions. Between 2000–01 and 2012–13, the number of private for-profit 4-year institutions more than tripled, from 207 to 710. After peaking in 2012–13, the number of private for-profit 4-year institutions declined to 617 in 2015–16.

The number of public 2-year institutions declined from 1,067 in 2000–01 to 933 in 2012–13 and 909 in 2015–16. The number of private nonprofit 2-year institutions fluctuated from 136 in 2000–01 to 95 in 2012–13 and 102 in 2015–16. The number of private for-profit 2-year

institutions also fluctuated during this period, but not as widely as the number of private for-profit 4-year institutions. Between 2000–01 and 2012–13, the number of private for-profit 2-year institutions increased from 480 to 658, and then declined to 552 in 2015–16.

Figure 2. Percentage distribution of application acceptance rates at degree-granting institutions with first-year undergraduates, by level and control of institution: Academic year 2015–16



Rounds to zero.

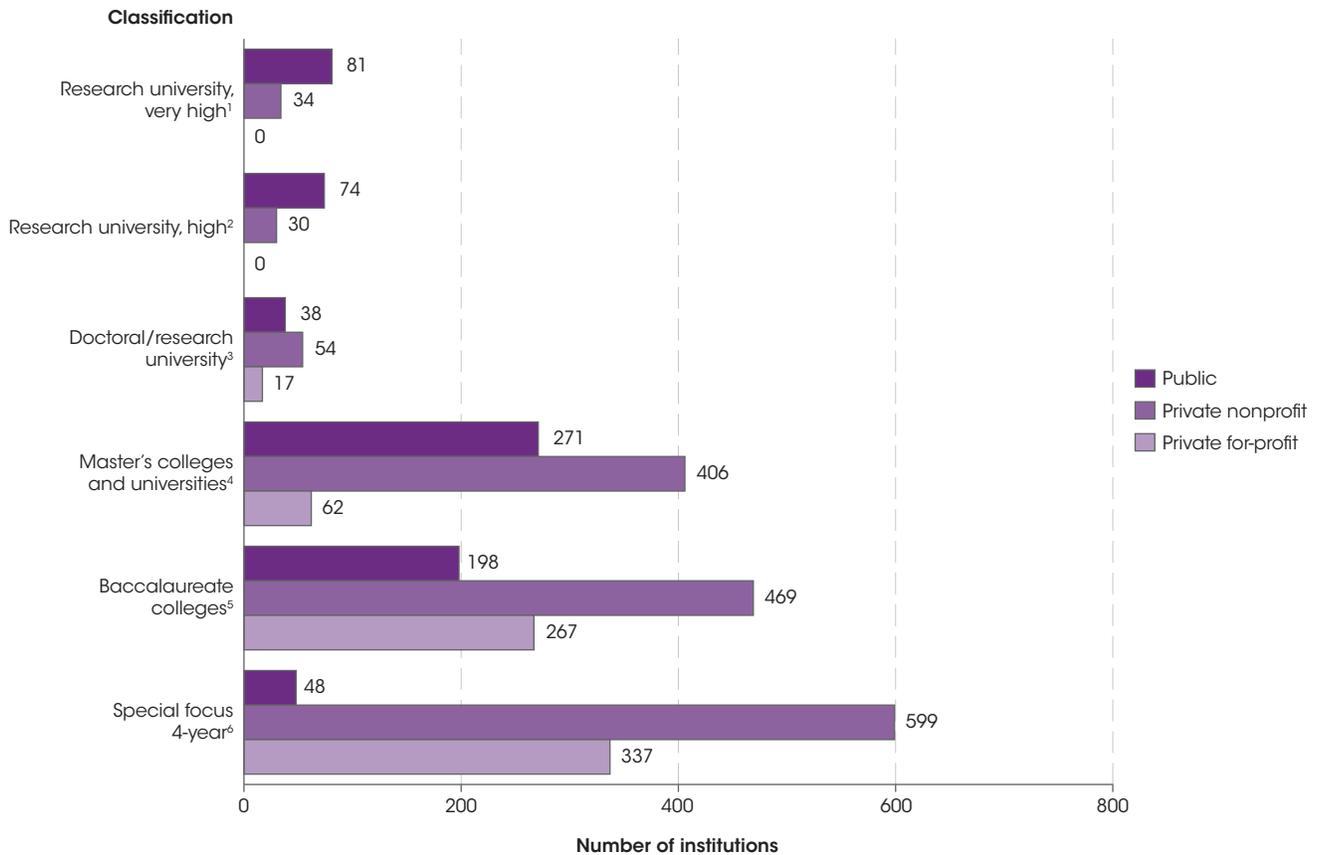
NOTE: Degree-granting institutions grant associate's or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Excludes institutions not enrolling any first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduates. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded estimates. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Winter 2015–16, Admissions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 305.40.

Admissions policies varied among public, private nonprofit, and private for-profit institutions at both the 2-year and 4-year levels in 2015–16. For example, the percentage of 4-year institutions that had open admissions policies (i.e., accepted all applicants) ranged from 63 percent at private for-profit institutions to 19 percent at public institutions and 16 percent at private nonprofit institutions. In contrast, 19 percent of private nonprofit 4-year institutions and 12 percent of public 4-year institutions accepted less than one-half of their applicants, whereas 2 percent of private for-profit 4-year institutions did so.

Most 2-year institutions (91 percent) had open admissions policies in 2015–16. Open admissions policies were in operation at 98 percent of public 2-year institutions and 83 percent of private for-profit 2-year institutions, compared to 65 percent at private nonprofit 2-year institutions. A higher percentage of private nonprofit 2-year institutions were selective than public and private for-profit 2-year institutions. Ten percent of private nonprofit 2-year institutions accepted less than one-half of their applicants, whereas less than 1 percent of public 2-year institutions and 1 percent of private for-profit 2-year institutions did so.

Figure 3. Number of 4-year degree-granting institutions, by classification and control of institution: Fall 2015



¹ Research universities with a very high level of research activity.

² Research universities with a high level of research activity.

³ Institutions that award at least 20 doctor's degrees per year, but did not have a high level of research activity.

⁴ Institutions that award at least 50 master's degrees per year but fewer than 20 doctorates.

⁵ Institutions that primarily emphasize undergraduate education. Also includes institutions classified as 4-year under the IPEDS system, which had been classified as baccalaureate/associate's colleges in the Carnegie system because they primarily award associate's degrees.

⁶ Institutions that award degrees primarily in single fields of study, such as medicine, business, fine arts, theology, and engineering.

NOTE: Degree-granting institutions grant associate's or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Relative levels of research activity for research universities were determined by an analysis of research and development expenditures, science and engineering research staffing, and doctoral degrees conferred, by field. Further information on the research index ranking may be obtained from <http://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/>.

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 317.40.

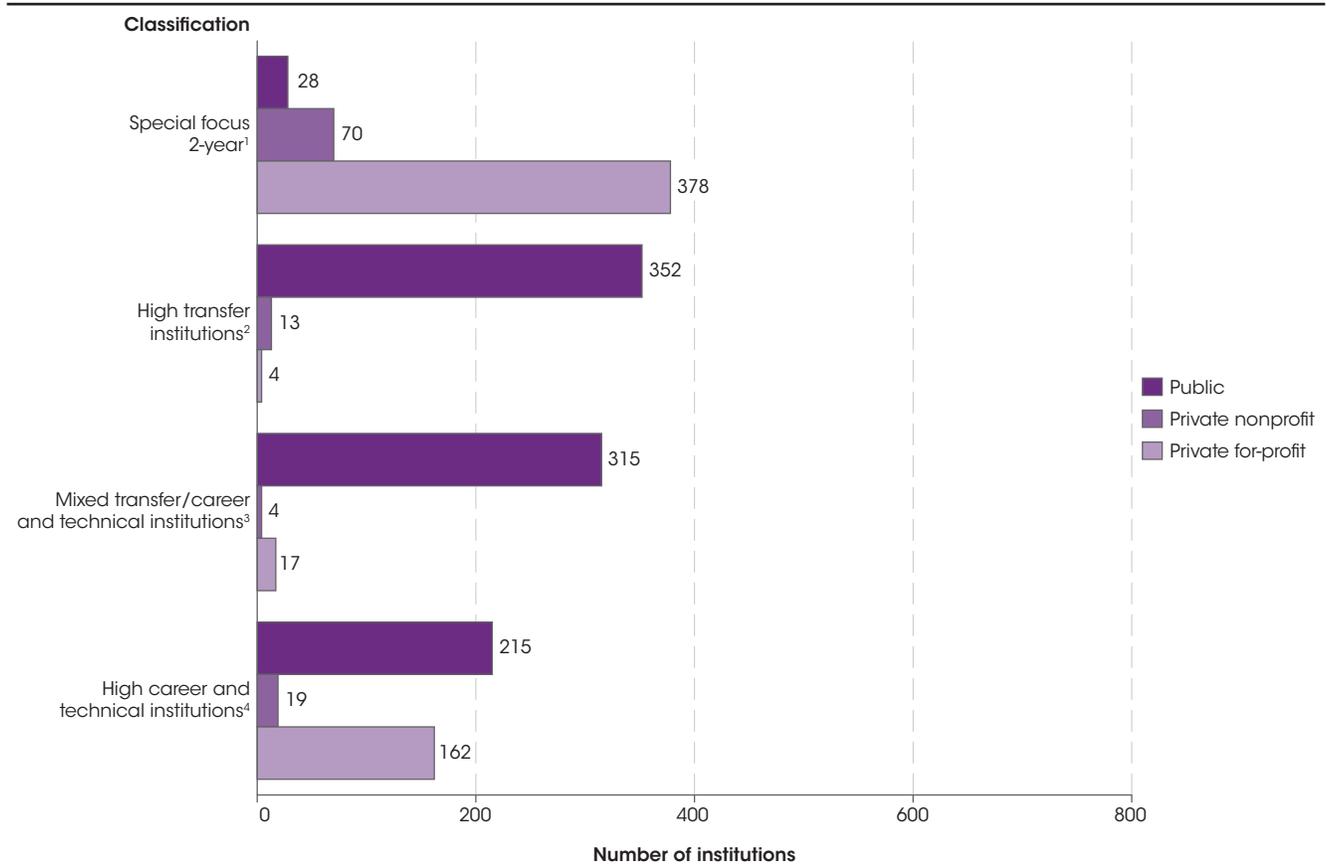
Another way to classify institutions beyond just the level (2-year vs. 4-year) is by Carnegie classification, which takes into account such considerations as the types of degrees offered as well as institutional mission. Institutions that confer 4-year or higher degrees are classified in broad aggregate categories: doctoral and research universities (institutions that award at least 20 doctor's degrees per year); master's colleges and universities (institutions that award at least 50 master's degrees per year but fewer than 20 doctorates); baccalaureate colleges (institutions that have at least one baccalaureate degree program and primarily emphasize undergraduate education); and special focus 4-year (institutions that award degrees primarily in single fields or related fields of study, such as medicine, business, fine arts, theology, and engineering, at both undergraduate and graduate levels).

In 2015–16, there were more baccalaureate colleges (934) and master's colleges and universities (739) than doctoral universities (328). Doctoral universities are further classified into one of three categories based on a measure

of research activity. Among the 328 doctoral universities, 219 institutions were classified as research institutions with a very high (115) or high (104) level of research activity. The remaining 109 institutions awarded at least 20 doctor's degrees per year, but did not have a high level of research activity.

Special focus institutions accounted for approximately one-third of all 4-year institutions in 2015–16. There were more doctoral (193), master's (271), and baccalaureate institutions (198) than special focus 4-year institutions (48) among public institutions in 2015–16. On the other hand, the number of special focus 4-year institutions was higher than the number of doctoral, master's, and baccalaureate institutions in both the private nonprofit and private for-profit institution categories. (Among private nonprofit institutions, there were 599 special focus 4-year, 118 doctoral, 406 master's, and 469 baccalaureate institutions; among private for-profit institutions, there were 337 special focus 4-year, 17 doctoral, 62 master's, and 267 baccalaureate institutions.)

Figure 4. Number of 2-year degree-granting institutions, by classification and control of institution: Fall 2015



¹ Institutions that award degrees primarily in single fields of study, such as medicine, business, fine arts, theology, and engineer.

² Institutions that award 50 percent or more of their awards in career and technical programs.

³ Institutions that award 30 to 49 percent of their awards in career and technical programs.

⁴ Institutions that award less than 30 percent of their awards in career and technical programs.

NOTE: Degree-granting institutions grant associate's or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs.

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 317.40.

Institutions that conferred associate's degrees as the highest degree level offering are further divided into subcategories according to program focus (i.e., transfer, career and technical, mixed transfer/career, and special focus 2-year). Among schools classified at the 2-year level, 315 out of 336 mixed transfer/career and technical institutions and 352 out of 369 high transfer institutions were under public control. As for special focus 2-year institutions, 378 out of 476 were private for-profit institutions and 70 were private nonprofit institutions. In addition, out of 396 high career and technical institutions, 215 were public, 162 were private for-profit institutions, and 19 were private nonprofit institutions.

Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) are degree-granting institutions established prior to 1964 with the principal mission of educating Black Americans. In 2015–16, there were 102 HBCUs in operation—51 were public institutions and 51 were

private nonprofit institutions. Other institutions serving specific populations included 39 colleges and universities identified by the Women's College Coalition as women's colleges in 2016. Another group of institutions serving specific populations are tribal colleges, which are members of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium and, with few exceptions, are tribally controlled and located on reservations. About three-quarters of the 35 tribally controlled institutions in operation in 2015–16 were public institutions.

In addition, for fiscal year 2016 the U.S. Department of Education categorized 415 institutions as Eligible Hispanic-Serving Institutions. These institutions are eligible to apply for a number of grant programs through the Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) division in the Department's Office of Postsecondary Education. Eligible institutions meet various program criteria and have at least 25 percent Hispanic student enrollment.¹

Endnotes:

¹ For more information on Hispanic-Serving Institutions, including a list of Eligible Hispanic-Serving Institutions for fiscal year 2016, please see <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/itudes/hsidivision.html>.

Reference tables: *The Digest of Education Statistics 2013*, table 305.30; *The Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, tables 305.30, 305.40, 312.30, 312.50, 313.10, and 317.40

Related indicators and resources: Undergraduate Enrollment, Postbaccalaureate Enrollment, Postsecondary Institution Revenues, Postsecondary Institution Expenses, Characteristics of Postsecondary Faculty, Community Colleges [*The Condition of Education 2008 Special Analysis*]

Glossary: Associate's degree, Bachelor's degree, Control of institutions, Degree-granting institution, Doctor's degree, Master's degree, Postsecondary education, Postsecondary institutions (basic classification by level), Private institution, Public school or institution, Undergraduate students