Postsecondary Revenues by Source

Between 2007–08 and 2012–13, revenues from tuition and fees per full-time-equivalent (FTE) student increased by 17 percent at public institutions (from $5,478 to $6,415, in constant 2013–14 dollars) and by 7 percent at private nonprofit institutions (from $18,550 to $19,866). At private for-profit institutions, revenues from tuition and fees were 7 percent higher in 2012–13 than in 2007–08 ($16,135 vs. $15,110).

In academic year 2012–13, total revenues at degree-granting postsecondary institutions, in current dollars, were $328 billion at public institutions, $202 billion at private nonprofit institutions, and $25 billion at private for-profit institutions. At public institutions, the largest percentage of total revenues, some 44 percent, came from government sources (which include federal, state, and local government grants, contracts, and appropriations). At private nonprofit institutions and private for-profit institutions, student tuition and fees constituted the largest percentage of total revenues (32 and 91 percent, respectively). It is important to note that Pell grants are included in the federal grant revenues at public institutions but tend to be included in tuition and fees and auxiliary enterprise revenues at private nonprofit and private for-profit institutions. Thus, revenue data are not comparable across these categories.

Figure 1. Percentage distribution of total revenues at degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by institutional control, level, and source of funds: 2012–13

There were general patterns in the primary sources of revenues across institutional levels (i.e., between 2-year and 4-year institutions), but there were notable differences in the percentages from these revenue sources. For example, revenues from government sources were the largest source of revenue at both 4-year and 2-year public institutions (38 and 71 percent, respectively). Revenues from tuition and fees were the largest source...
of revenue for both 4-year and 2-year private nonprofit institutions (32 and 68 percent, respectively) and both 4-year and 2-year private for-profit institutions (91 and 90 percent, respectively). Investment returns or investment income varied by institutional control and level. Revenues from these investments accounted for 19 percent of total revenues at 4-year private nonprofit institutions in 2012–13, compared with 4 percent of total revenues at 4-year public institutions, and 3 percent at 2-year private nonprofit institutions. Investment income accounted for less than half of 1 percent of total revenues for other types of 4-year and 2-year degree-granting postsecondary institutions.

Figure 2. Revenues from tuition and fees per full-time-equivalent (FTE) student for degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by institutional control and level: 2007–08 and 2012–13

Between 2007–08 and 2012–13, the percentage change in revenues from tuition and fees per full-time-equivalent (FTE) student varied by institutional control and level. Revenues per FTE student are reported in constant 2013–14 dollars, based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI). During this period, revenues from tuition and fees per FTE student increased by 17 percent at public institutions (from $5,478 to $6,415) and by 7 percent at private nonprofit institutions (from $18,550 to $19,866). At private for-profit institutions, revenues from tuition and fees were 7 percent higher in 2012–13 than in 2007–08 ($16,135 vs. $15,110). At public institutions, revenues from tuition and fees per FTE student increased by 17 percent at 4-year institutions (from $8,802 to $7,422), and they were 1 percent higher at 2-year institutions ($2,394 vs. $2,367). At private nonprofit institutions, revenues from tuition and fees per FTE student increased by 7 percent at 4-year institutions (from $19,926 to $18,604), while revenues were 1 percent higher at 2-year institutions ($12,659 vs. $12,528). At private for-profit institutions, revenues from tuition and fees per FTE student at 4-year institutions were 8 percent higher in 2012–13 than they were in 2007–08 ($16,313 vs. $15,124), and they were 3 percent higher at 2-year institutions ($15,496 vs. $15,065).

At public institutions, revenues from tuition and fees were 42 percent higher in 2012–13 than in 2007–08, whereas revenues from government sources were 7 percent higher. As a result, the percentage of revenues from tuition and fees was higher in 2012–13 (21 percent) than in 2007–08 (18 percent), and the percentage of revenues from government sources was lower in 2012–13 (44 percent) than in 2007–08 (49 percent).

Revenues per FTE student from all government sources at public institutions decreased by 11 percent from 2007–08 to 2012–13 (from $15,237 to $13,520). In 2012–13, revenues per FTE student from all government sources were 6 percent lower than in 2007–08 at private nonprofit institutions ($7,769 vs. $8,259) and were 23 percent lower at private for-profit institutions ($853 vs $1,107).
The percentage change between 2007–08 and 2012–13 in state and local government revenues per FTE student varied by institutional control and level. During this period, revenues per FTE student from state and local sources decreased by 24 percent at 4-year public institutions (from $12,748 to $9,686), 18 percent at 2-year public institutions (from $8,138 to $6,682), 32 percent at 4-year private nonprofit institutions (from $871 to $588), 51 percent at 2-year private nonprofit institutions (from $1,002 to $491), and 38 percent at private for-profit 2-year institutions (from $171 to $107). State and local revenues per FTE student were 37 percent higher in 2012–13 than in 2007–08 at 4-year private for-profit institutions ($59 vs. $43); however, the amounts remained relatively small.

Revenues from federal sources have shown varying patterns of change between 2007–08 and 2012–13 across degree-granting postsecondary institutions. At public institutions, federal revenues per FTE student were 16 percent higher in 2012–13 than in 2007–08 ($4,953 vs. $4,261). Federal funding per FTE student was 5 percent higher in 2012–13 than in 2007–08 at 4-year public institutions ($5,910 vs. $5,642) and increased by 63 percent at 2-year public institutions (from $2,051 to $3,340). Compared with 2007–08, revenues per FTE student from federal sources at public institutions in 2012–13 were 3 percent lower at private nonprofit institutions ($7,387 vs. $7,182). At 4-year private nonprofit institutions, federal revenues were 3 percent lower in 2012–13 than in 2007–08 ($7,228 vs. $7,431); at 2-year private nonprofit institutions, federal revenues were 33 percent lower ($1,666 vs. $2,496). Revenues per FTE student from federal sources at private for-profit institutions were 24 percent lower in 2012–13 than in 2007–08 ($784 vs. $1,034). At 4-year private for-profit institutions, federal revenues were 18 percent lower in 2012–13 than in 2007–08 ($743 vs. $906); at 2-year private for-profit institutions, federal revenues were 36 percent lower ($932 vs. $1,450).

Reference tables: Digest of Education Statistics 2014, tables 333.10, 333.40, and 333.55
Related indicators: Expenses of Postsecondary Institutions (indicator 38)

Glossary: Consumer Price Index (CPI), Full-time-equivalent (FTE) enrollment, Private for-profit institution, Private institution, Private nonprofit institution, Public school or institution, Revenue, Tuition and fees