

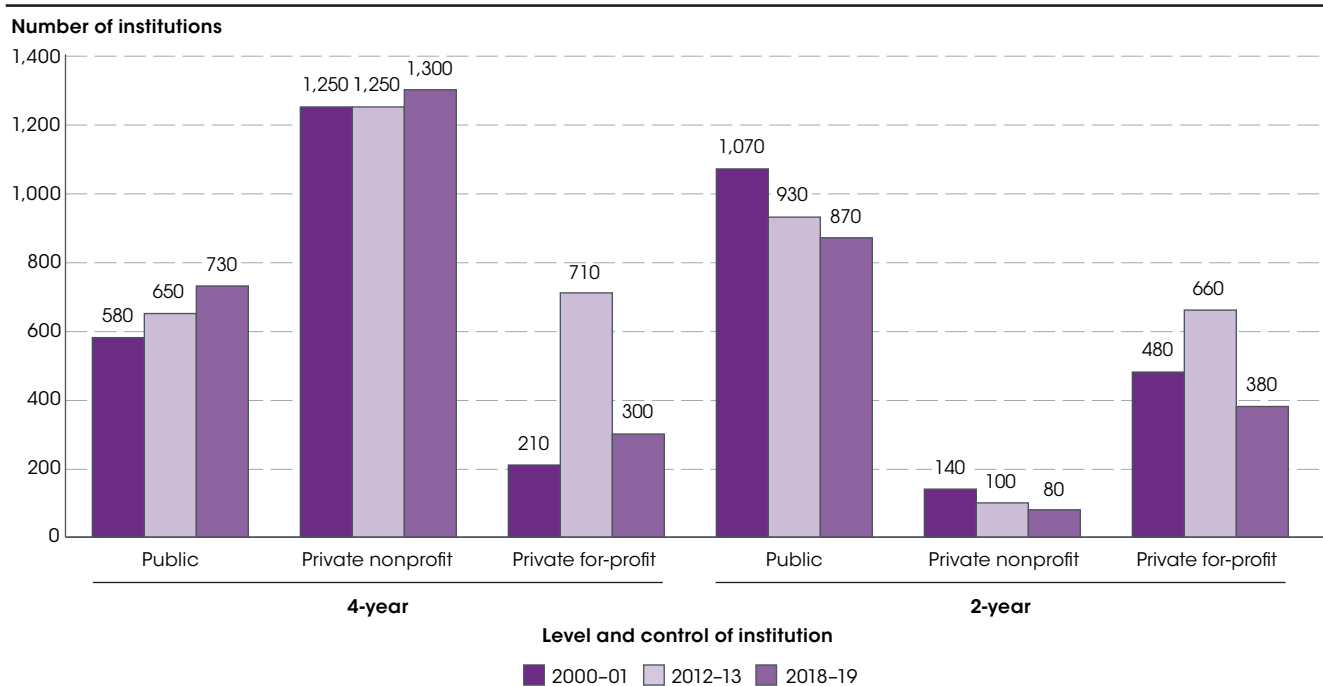
Characteristics of Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions

In academic year 2018–19, some 25 percent of 4-year institutions had open admissions policies (i.e., accepted all applicants), 30 percent accepted three-quarters or more of their applicants, 30 percent accepted from one-half to less than three-quarters of their applicants, and 14 percent accepted less than one-half of their applicants.

In academic year 2018–19, there were approximately 3,700 degree-granting institutions in the United States¹ with first-year undergraduates: 2,300 were 4-year institutions offering programs at the bachelor’s or higher degree level and 1,300 were 2-year institutions offering associate’s degrees and other certificates. Some of the differences in the characteristics of 4-year and 2-year institutions may be related to their differing institutional missions. Four-year institutions tend to have a broad range of instructional programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Some 4-year institutions have a strong research focus. The instructional missions of 2-year institutions

generally focus on providing a range of career-oriented programs at the certificate and associate’s degree levels and preparing students to transfer to 4-year institutions. 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 indicator enroll first-year undergraduates in degree-granting programs unless otherwise noted.

Figure 1. Number of degree-granting institutions with first-year undergraduates, by level and control of institution: Academic years 2000–01, 2012–13, and 2018–19



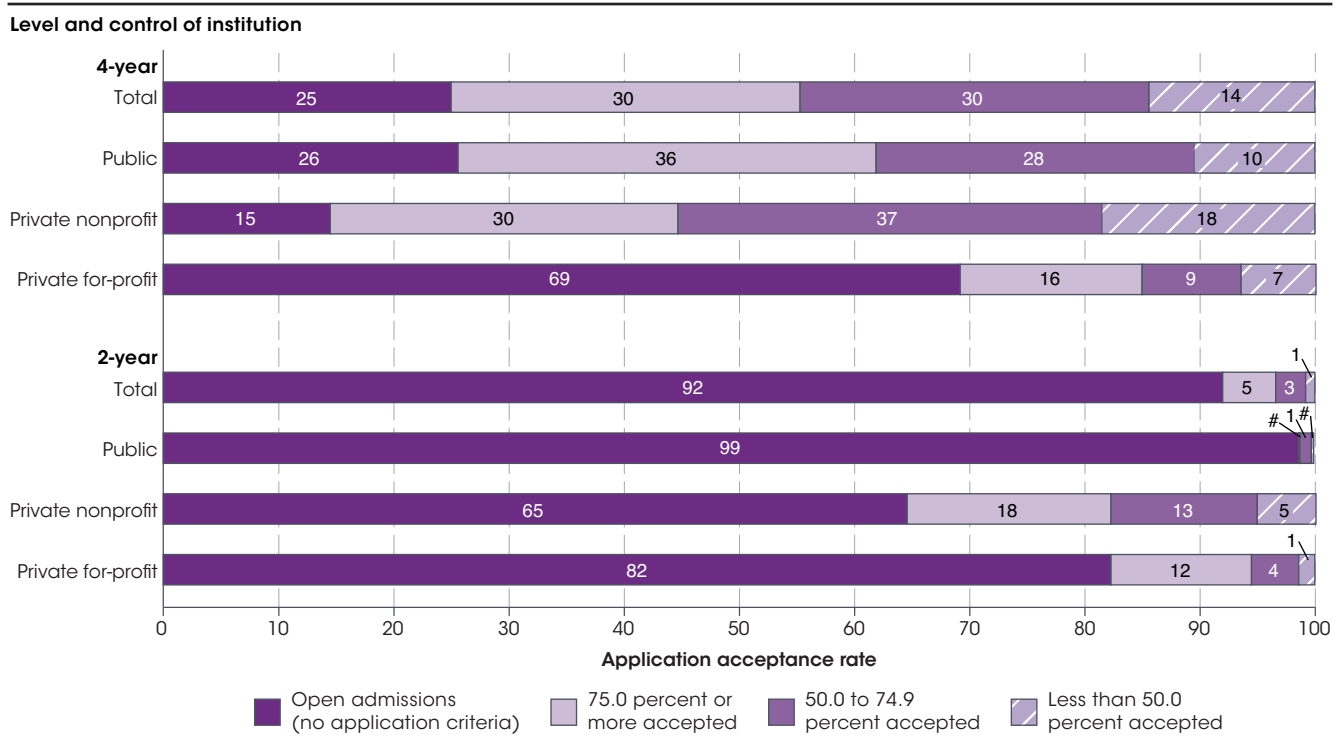
NOTE: Degree-granting institutions grant associate’s or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Excludes institutions not enrolling any first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduates. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data. 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 2018–19, Admissions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2013*, table 305.30; and *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, table 305.30.

In academic year 2018–19, the number of public 4-year institutions (730) was 25 percent higher than in 2000–01 (580), and the number of private nonprofit 4-year institutions (1,300) was 4 percent higher than in 2000–01 (1,250). In contrast, the number of private for-profit 4-year institutions fluctuated. Between 2000–01 and 2012–13, the number of private for-profit 4-year institutions more than tripled, from 210 to 710. After peaking in 2012–13, the number of private for-profit 4-year institutions declined to 300 in 2018–19, which was 45 percent higher than the number of such institutions in 2000–01.

The number of public 2-year institutions declined 13 percent from 1,100 in 2000–01 to 930 in 2012–13

and subsequently 7 percent to 870 in 2018–19 for a total decline of 19 percent from 2000–01 to 2018–19. The number of private nonprofit 2-year institutions decreased 30 percent from 140 in 2000–01 to 100 in 2012–13 and was 80 in 2018–19. The number of private for-profit 2-year institutions 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 by 37 percent, from 480 to 660, and then declined by 42 percent to 380 in 2018–19. Overall, the number of private for-profit 2-year institutions was 21 percent lower in 2018–19 than in 2000–01.

Figure 2. Percentage distribution of application acceptance rates at degree-granting institutions with first-year undergraduates, by level and control of institution: Fall 2018



Rounds to zero.

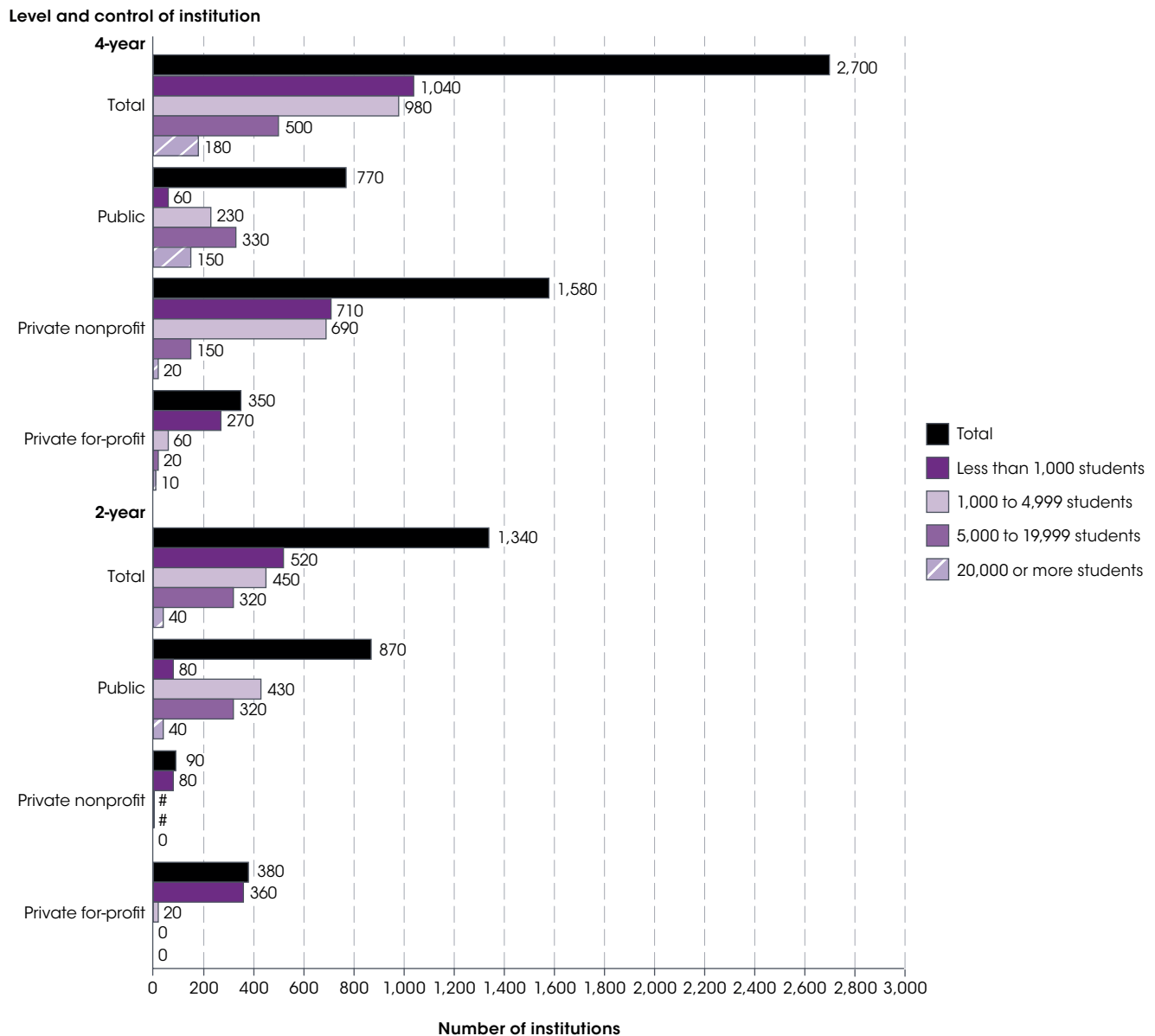
NOTE: Degree-granting institutions grant associate's or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Excludes institutions not enrolling any first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduates. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data. 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 2018–19, Admissions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, table 305.40.

Admissions policies varied among public, private nonprofit, and private for-profit institutions at both the 4-year and the 2-year levels in fall 2018. For example, the percentage of 4-year institutions that had open admissions policies (i.e., accepted all applicants) was 69 percent at private for-profit institutions, 26 percent at public institutions, and 15 percent at private nonprofit institutions. Accordingly, a lower percentage of private for-profit 4-year institutions (7 percent) accepted less than one-half of their applicants than did public (10 percent) and private nonprofit (18 percent) 4-year institutions.

Most 2-year institutions (92 percent) had open admissions policies in 2018–19. Some 99 percent of public 2-year institutions and 82 percent of private for-profit 2-year institutions had open admissions policies, compared with 65 percent of private nonprofit 2-year institutions. Five percent of private nonprofit 2-year institutions accepted less than one-half of their applicants, compared with 1 percent of private for-profit 2-year institutions and less than 1 percent of public 2-year institutions.

Figure 3. Number of degree-granting institutions, by level and control of institution and enrollment size: Fall 2018



Rounds to zero.

NOTE: Degree-granting institutions grant associate's or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Excludes institutions with no enrollment reported separately from the enrollment of an associated main campus. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Spring 2019, Fall Enrollment component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, table 317.40.

In fall 2018, the approximately 4,000 degree-granting institutions that enrolled both undergraduate and graduate students varied in enrollment size, from institutions enrolling fewer than 200 students to institutions enrolling more than 30,000 students. Despite the sizable number of small degree-granting colleges and universities, most students attended larger colleges and universities. Some 39 percent of institutions (1,600 institutions) had an enrollment size of fewer than 1,000 students, yet these institutions enrolled 3 percent

of all students. Conversely, institutions with 20,000 or more students made up 6 percent of institutions (220 institutions) yet enrolled 38 percent of all students. Midsized institutions that enrolled between 1,000 and 4,999 students made up 35 percent of all institutions and enrolled 18 percent of all students, while those that enrolled between 5,000 and 19,999 students made up 20 percent of all institutions and enrolled 41 percent of all students.

Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) are degree-granting institutions established prior to 1964 with the principal mission of educating Black Americans. In fall 2018, there were 101 degree-granting 4-year and 2-year HBCUs in operation—51 were public institutions and 50 were private nonprofit institutions.

In addition, for fiscal year 2016 (the most current year for which data were available at time of release) 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 Division in the Department's Office of Postsecondary Education. Eligible

institutions meet various program criteria and have at least 25 percent Hispanic student enrollment.²

In fall 2018, thirty-four tribal colleges were members of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium. With few exceptions, tribal colleges are tribally controlled and located on reservations. Seventy-nine percent of the 34 tribally controlled institutions in operation in 2018–19 were public institutions.

Other institutions serving specific populations in fall 2018 included 36 colleges and universities identified by the Women's College Coalition as women's colleges.

Endnotes:

¹ Includes the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

² 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/idades/hsidivision.html>.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*; tables 305.30, 305.40, 312.30, 312.50, 313.10, and 317.40; *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, table 305.30; *Digest of Education Statistics 2013*, table 305.30

Related indicators and resources: [Characteristics of Postsecondary Faculty](#); [Characteristics of Postsecondary Students](#); [Postbaccalaureate Enrollment](#); [Postsecondary Institution Expenses](#); [Postsecondary Institution Revenues](#); [Spotlight B: Characteristics of Postsecondary Institutions Serving Specific Minority Racial/Ethnic Groups](#) [*Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups*]; [Undergraduate Enrollment](#)

Glossary: Associate's degree; Bachelor's degree; Control of institutions; Degree-granting institution; Doctor's degree; Historically Black colleges and universities; Master's degree; Postsecondary education; Postsecondary institutions (basic classification by level); Private institution; Public school or institution; Tribal colleges and universities; Undergraduate students; Women's colleges