

Minorities and the Recession-Era College Enrollment Boom

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A Social & Demographic Trends Report

Minorities and the Recession-Era College Enrollment Boom

By Richard Fry, Pew Research Center

Executive Summary

The recession-era boom in the size of freshman classes at four-year colleges, community colleges and trade schools has been driven largely by a sharp increase in minority student enrollment, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of new data from the U.S. Department of Education.

Freshman enrollment at the nation's 6,100 post-secondary institutions surged by 144,000 students from the fall of 2007 to the fall of 2008. This 6 percent increase was the largest in 40 years¹, and almost three-quarters of it came from minority freshman enrollment growth.

From 2007 to 2008 (the first year of the recession), the freshman enrollment of Hispanics at postsecondary institutions grew by 15%, of blacks by 8%, Asians by 6% and whites by 3%.

Some of this minority enrollment surge is a simple byproduct of demographic change. In a nation whose population of youths is far more diverse than its population of adults, each new year brings a slightly larger share of minority teenagers into the pool of potential college freshmen. In addition, the first year of the recession was a time when young Hispanics, in particular, were completing high school at record rates. According to Census Bureau surveys, the Hispanic high school completion rate reached an all-time high in October 2008 at 70%.² This was up 2.5 percentage points over October 2007—a larger increase than for any other racial or ethnic group.

Minority college students tend to be clustered more at community colleges and trade schools than at four-year colleges. Even so, the minority freshman enrollment spike from 2007 to 2008 occurred at all basic levels of postsecondary education. The makeup of the freshman class at the nation's less-than-four-year colleges and universities dropped from 55% white in 2007 to 53% white in 2008. Similarly, the composition of the freshman class at four-year schools dropped from 64% white in 2007 to 62% white in 2008.

The freshman enrollment boom has not been spread evenly across the nation's postsecondary institutions. Two-year institutions (most of which are community colleges) saw the greatest increase --- 11%. By contrast, the increase at four-year institutions was just 4% and the increase at less-than-two-year institutions (often referred to as trade schools) was 5%.

Another category that experienced large freshmen enrollment increases from 2007 to 2008 was the private for-profit institutions; these may include four-year colleges and universities, such as the University of Phoenix, as well as two-year and less-than-two-year institutions. Freshmen enrollment grew 11% at these schools.

¹ Fall 2008 is the latest year available on freshman enrollments based on the Department of Education's administrative data. However, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported in April that the rate of immediate college entry of high school graduates increased from October 2008 to October 2009 and was at its highest level on record. So the growth in the nation's college freshman ranks may have continued from 2008 to 2009; but we do not have official Department of Education data to confirm that.

² This is the share of all 18- to 24-year-olds who have completed high school.

(The growth of the private, for-profit schools as well as issues related to growing student debt burdens will be the subject of a U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions committee hearing on June 24th.)

At the level of individual institutions of higher education there has been vast disparity in rates of freshmen enrollment growth. Indeed, half of the total increase in freshmen enrollment occurred at just 109 colleges and universities out of nearly 6,100.

About this Report

This report is primarily based on fall freshman enrollment counts in the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) annual census of postsecondary institutions, the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Documentation on the underlying data can be obtained at NCES (2010c). Unless otherwise noted, freshman enrollment refers to first-time, full-time degree-seeking freshmen at postsecondary institutions that participate in Title IV programs. Census Bureau data on undergraduates were tabulated for the fifth section. The charts were prepared by research analyst Gabriel Velasco. Paul Taylor, director of the Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends project, provided editorial guidance. Daniel Dockterman did the number checking, and Marcia Kramer copy-edited the report.

A Note on Terminology

The terms “Latino” and “Hispanic” are used interchangeably in this report. All references to whites, blacks and Asians are to the non-Hispanic components of those populations.

I. Record Recession-Era Freshman Enrollment

In fall 2008, a record 2.6 million first-time, full-time freshmen were enrolled in the nation's postsecondary institutions. This was 144,000 more than the 2007 freshman class, a 6% increase, which was the largest since 1968 at the height of the Vietnam War.³

Booming freshman enrollments are the direct result of at least two factors. First, the nation's high school graduating class in 2008 (3.3 million) is estimated to have been the largest ever (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010a). Second, and more importantly, record rates of young high school completers are immediately enrolling in college. In October 2008, 68.6% of high school completers were enrolled in college in the fall immediately after completing high school (matching the previous high). In October 2009, a record 70% of recent high school completers immediately entered college (a historical high for the data series, which began in 1959) (Bureau of Labor Statistics,

Total First-Time, Full-Time Freshman Enrollment in Colleges, Universities and Trade Schools (Table 1)

	2008	2007	Freshman Enrollment Increase
Total	2,588,675	2,445,015	6%
Race/ethnicity			
White	1,520,507	1,481,925	3%
Hispanic	300,584	260,315	15%
Black	367,432	339,175	8%
Asian/Pacific Islander	146,802	137,996	6%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	25,163	24,703	2%
Nonresident alien	55,160	49,591	11%
Race/ethnicity unknown	169,603	151,310	12%
Two or more races	<u>3,424</u>	_____	
	2,588,675	2,445,015	
Level			
Four-year	1,609,299	1,554,729	4%
Two-year	857,781	774,641	11%
Less than two-year	<u>121,595</u>	<u>115,645</u>	5%
	2,588,675	2,445,015	
Institutional Size			
Under 1,000	278,801	278,448	0%
1,000 - 4,999	621,745	601,075	3%
5,000 - 9,999	446,491	428,157	4%
10,000 - 19,999	526,867	500,481	5%
20,000 and above	<u>714,771</u>	<u>636,854</u>	12%
	2,588,675	2,445,015	
Public vs. Private			
Public	1,740,766	1,642,889	6%
Private	847,909	802,126	6%
Not-for-profit	502,723	491,745	2%
For-profit	<u>345,186</u>	<u>310,381</u>	11%
	2,588,675	2,445,015	

Note: Colleges, universities and trade schools includes all postsecondary institutions that participate in Title IV.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics. Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). fall enrollment data.

³ The freshman enrollment figures in this report refer to first-time, full-time, degree-seeking undergraduates. Unless otherwise noted, freshmen at all postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs are included, including those at institutions that don't grant degrees.

2010).

This growth in freshman enrollment coincided with greatly diminished labor market opportunities facing the nation's youths. The official Bureau of Labor Statistics unemployment rate for teens ages 16 to 19 rose to 21% in December 2008 (from 17% at the recession's onset in December 2007). The teen labor market deteriorated even more in 2009. By October 2009, teen unemployment reached its highest level (28%) in the history of the series dating back to 1948. By many labor market indicators, youths have been among the groups most severely affected by this recession (Hipple, 2010).

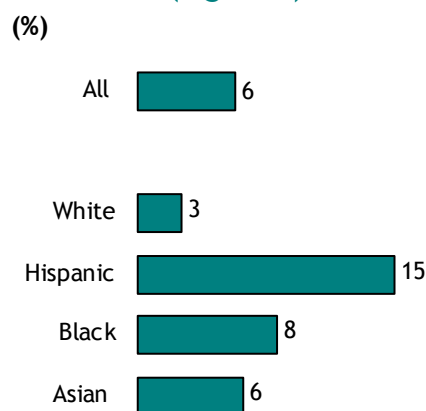
The strong growth in freshman enrollment suggests that youths do "adapt to circumstances." That is, when faced with a decline in employer demand, they boost their school enrollment and continue living with their parents rather than striking out on their own (Card and Lemieux, 2000). Some detailed empirical studies indicate that U.S. college enrollments in modern times have behaved countercyclically (Dellas and Sakellaris, 2003; Betts and McFarland, 1995). Labor economists point out that a youth's opportunity costs or forgone labor market earnings are one of the larger costs of pursuing college. During a recession, forgone earnings may be diminished and college effectively cheaper.

This report examines the most recent available college freshman enrollment data to look at the characteristics of these freshmen as well as the nature of the institutions that are educating them. In some ways, the freshman enrollment boom has been quite widespread and in other ways highly circumscribed. In terms of student characteristics, the enrollment boom seems to have been broad-based. For example, both male and female freshman enrollment increased 6%. The next section shows that much of the freshman growth was due to minority or nonwhite students. Reflecting the changing demographics of the nation's high school graduating classes, around three-quarters of the freshman enrollment boom is due to minority freshman enrollment growth. Furthermore, the minority freshman growth was not confined to two-year colleges and less-than-two-year institutions. The minority growth was widespread in terms of the basic tiers of higher education.

The third and fourth sections of the report examine the impact of the growth on specific postsecondary institutions. It shows that the enrollment boom was concentrated in certain states and highly focused on a very small number of large colleges and universities. Of the 144,000 increase in freshman enrollment, about 72,000 occurred at just 109 colleges and universities, so less than 2% of the nation's colleges and universities accommodated half of the enrollment boom.

The fifth section returns to focus on students and examines the impact of the recession on student employment. The last section examines whether large freshman classes have continued since 2008.

Minority Freshman Enrollment Growth Outpaced White Freshman Enrollment Growth, 2007-2008 (Figure 1)



Note: Whites, blacks and Asians are non-Hispanic. Asians include Pacific Islanders.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics. Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), fall enrollment data.

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II. Growth in Freshmen by Race/Ethnicity

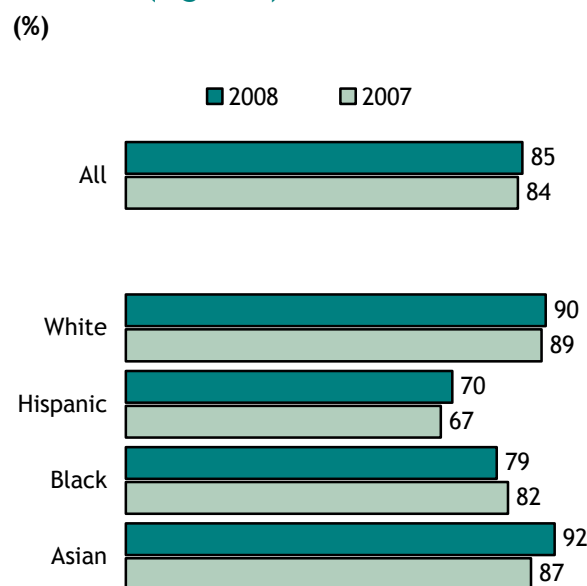
Large freshman enrollment growth was evident among the nation's racial and ethnic minorities. Overall freshman enrollment was up 6%. Hispanic freshmen increased by 40,000 compared with 2007, a 15% increase in enrollment and the largest of any of the major racial/ethnic groups (Figure 1 and Table 1).⁴ In comparison, freshman enrollment of black students increased by 8% and of Asians by 6%. White freshman enrollment increased 3% over 2007.

Not all college and universities are the same, and an important distinction concerns which colleges and universities the additional minority freshmen attended. Minority college students are concentrated at two-year colleges and less-than-two-year institutions in comparison with their white peers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010b). Among undergraduates at four-year colleges and universities, minority undergraduates on average enroll at the less academically selective institutions compared with white undergraduates (Alon and Tienda, 2005).

The recent large increase in minority freshman enrollment was not disproportionately concentrated in the lower tiers of postsecondary education—that is, two-year colleges and less-than-two-year institutions. Total freshman enrollment increased by 144,000 students. White freshman enrollment increased by about 39,000 over all postsecondary institutions, so white freshmen accounted for about 27% of the freshman increase. The increase in white freshmen did not disproportionately occur at four-year schools. Total freshman enrollment at four-year institutions increased by about 55,000 freshmen, of whom only about 12,000 were white. So white freshmen accounted for about 23% of the freshman growth at four-year colleges and universities. Alternatively, nonwhites accounted for about 73% of the freshman growth throughout postsecondary education and about 77% of the growth at four-year schools.

Another way to grasp “who went where?” is to examine the racial composition of the freshman cohorts in each year. In 2007, whites made up 55% of the freshmen at less-than-four-year institutions. In 2008, whites were only 53% of the freshmen in these lower tiers of postsecondary education. But, at least in terms of broad tiers or categories of higher education, whites were less prevalent everywhere. In 2007, whites constituted 64% of the

High School Completion Rates of 18- to 24-Year-Olds (Figure 2)



Note: Whites, blacks and Asians are non-Hispanic. Asians include Pacific Islanders.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, October Current Population Survey

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⁴ Beginning with the fall 2008 data collection, the IPEDS altered the racial/ethnic classification of students to allow institutions to report students of “two or more races.” So in principle the racial/ethnic classification of freshmen in 2008 is not comparable to 2007’s. In practice, only 3,424 first-time, full-time freshmen reported being of “two or more races” in 2008 (or 0.1%), so the racial/ethnic identity of freshmen in 2008 is comparable to 2007.

freshmen at four-year colleges; by 2008, the white share of freshmen at four-year schools had diminished to 62%.

In short, since 2007 there has been significant growth in minority freshmen (particularly Hispanic) and there has been significant minority freshman growth in each tier of postsecondary education, including four-year colleges and universities.

Explaining Robust Minority Freshman Growth

Given lag times in the availability of data, it is difficult to fully disentangle all the causes of the growth in minority freshman enrollment since 2007. For example, one possible explanation is that there has been a disproportionate increase in the number and share of minority students among the

nation's high school graduating senior classes. The most authoritative figures on the characteristics of high school graduating classes are compiled by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), but as of April 2010, the most recent school year for which NCES had published such data was 2006-2007.

However, Census Bureau household surveys provide more timely snapshots that allow for an examination of a closely related indicator: the number of 16- to 24-year-olds who completed high school in the calendar year of the survey. And, indeed, these data indicate that minority youth accounted for much of the growth in the number of 16- to 24-year-olds who recently completed high school. From October 2007 to October 2008, the total number of recent high school completers increased by about 200,000 (Table 2). The estimated number of white recent high school completers increased by about 47,000 over that period, so whites accounted for only about 24% of the growth in the stock of young high school completers. These data strongly suggest that the minority freshman college enrollment spike that occurred from 2007 to 2008 is closely related to the minority high school completion spike that occurred the same year.

Estimated 16- to 24-Year-Old Recent High School Completers (Table 2)

Race/Ethnicity	October 2008	October 2007	Increase	Share of the Increase
Total	3,150,888	2,955,265	7%	100%
White	2,090,521	2,043,243	2%	24%
Hispanic	457,597	355,251	29%	52%
Black	416,010	416,209	0%	0%

Notes: "Recent High School Completers" refers to individuals ages 16 to 24 who graduated from high school or completed a GED in the calendar year of the survey (January through October). Whites and blacks are non-Hispanic. Other races not shown.

Source: Table 201 of the National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics 2009*

Census data also show that the high school completion rate reached an all-time high of 84.9% in October 2008 (Figure 2), and that high school completion rates for both white and Hispanic 18- to 24-year-olds reached all-time highs in 2008.⁵

The number of recent Hispanic high school completers grew by 29% from October 2007 to October 2008, according to the Census Bureau household survey. There are more Hispanic college freshmen in part because more Hispanic youths are finishing high school.

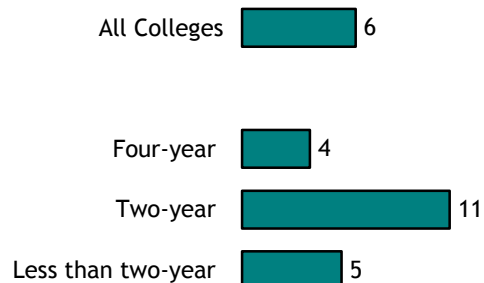
III. Who's Educating the Additional Freshmen?

Level

Consistent with Census Bureau data on broader college enrollment (Fry 2009), the increase in freshman enrollment has been greatest at two-year colleges and universities (Figure 3). Full-time freshman enrollment increased 11% at two-year colleges from 2007 to 2008.⁶ This compares with a 5% increase at less than two-year institutions and 4% at four-year colleges and universities.⁷

Freshman Enrollment Growth Greatest at Two-Year Colleges, 2007-2008 (Figure 3)

(%)

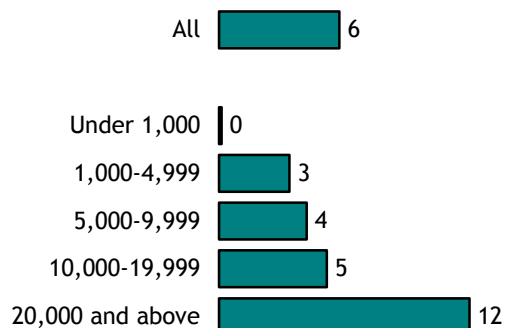


Source: National Center for Education Statistics. Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), fall enrollment data.

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Recent Freshman Enrollment Growth Greatest at Big Colleges, 2007-2008 (Figure 4)

(By size of student body)



Source: National Center for Education Statistics. Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), fall enrollment data.

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⁵ Census high school completion rates count as completers youths who graduate with a high school diploma as well as those attaining equivalent credentials (GEDs).

⁶ Freshman enrollment at all two-year colleges increased 11%, but two-year colleges individually experienced their own unique freshman growth. Section IV characterizes the distribution of individual college freshmen growth rates.

⁷ The National Center for Education Statistics IPEDS distinguishes between four-year institutions that are highly residential, primarily residential, and primarily nonresidential. At the national level, there was little difference in the freshman growth among four-year institutions by their residential status.

Institution Size

Freshman enrollment growth occurred disproportionately at the nation's largest colleges and universities. From 2007 to 2008, the overall freshman enrollments at colleges and universities with at least 20,000 students grew by 12% (Figure 4). Freshman enrollment growth at postsecondary institutions in the smaller institutional size categories generally was below the national 6% increase.

The attraction of freshmen to the nation's largest colleges and universities may be related to the fact that the schools are predominantly public colleges and universities. In fall 2008, 87% of institutions with at least 20,000 students were publicly operated. Public colleges and universities tend to be less expensive than private institutions of higher education. The average price for a full-time, full-year, dependent undergraduate in 2007-08 was estimated to be \$26,300 at private, not-for-profit four-year institutions (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010b).⁸ A similar student at a private, for-profit less-than-four-year institution paid \$19,900. The comparable undergraduate at public four-year and two-year institutions paid about \$15,500 and \$10,200 to attend, respectively.

However, while the fact that large institutions of higher education are predominantly publicly run is beyond dispute, the freshman enrollment data analyzed here do not verify that big public college and universities are cheaper nor that the institutions with the largest recent freshman growth rates are less expensive. Section IV shows that some large private four-year colleges are among the nation's fastest-growing institutions in terms of first-time, full-time freshman enrollment.

Total First-Time, Full-Time Freshman Enrollment in Colleges, Universities and Trade Schools, by State (Table 3)

	2008	2007	Freshmen Enrollment Increase
United States	2,588,675	2,445,015	6%
California	290,048	239,470	21%
District of Columbia	10,353	8,936	16%
Arizona	73,404	64,688	13%
Alabama	45,305	40,338	12%
Nevada	12,241	10,985	11%
Georgia	76,328	68,847	11%
Alaska	2,814	2,543	11%
Connecticut	31,535	28,973	9%
Hawaii	7,498	6,902	9%
Indiana	63,815	58,913	8%
New Mexico	15,850	14,684	8%
Oregon	26,294	24,399	8%
Louisiana	37,230	34,657	7%
Washington	38,773	36,110	7%
Idaho	11,256	10,596	6%
Missouri	52,296	49,395	6%
Illinois	103,990	98,398	6%
Arkansas	24,606	23,428	5%
North Dakota	8,516	8,122	5%
New Jersey	64,466	61,566	5%
Montana	7,730	7,383	5%
Maine	11,114	10,665	4%
Kansas	26,979	25,903	4%
Colorado	45,527	43,716	4%
North Carolina	72,356	69,493	4%

Note: Colleges, universities and trade schools includes all postsecondary institutions that participate in Title IV.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics. Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). fall enrollment data.

⁸ The figures cited are the "net price of attendance" or an estimate of the average tuition and fees, books and an allowance for living expenses minus grant aid received. Financial aid received through tax credits is not included in the calculation of net price.

There is some evidence that incoming freshmen at four-year colleges and universities are increasingly concerned about their ability to finance their education. The 2009 Cooperative Institutional Research Program's American Freshman Survey indicated that 55% of 2009 freshmen have "some concerns" about finances, the highest level since 1971 (Higher Education Research Institute, 2010).

State

The boom in freshman enrollment from 2007 to 2008 was highly concentrated in a limited number of states. Most states experienced less than a 6% increase in the freshmen in their college and universities (Table 3). Consistent with the above-average growth of Hispanic freshmen, postsecondary institutions in California experienced a 21% increase in total first-time, full-time freshman enrollment from 2007 to 2008. The increase in freshmen in California alone accounts for 35% of the nation's total freshman enrollment increase. Arizona, Nevada and New Mexico are also heavily Latino states, and postsecondary institutions in those states also experienced above-average growth in freshman enrollment.⁹

Public vs. Private

Nationally, freshman enrollments were up

Total First-Time, Full-Time Freshman Enrollment in Colleges, Universities and Trade Schools, by State (Table 3, cont.)

	2008	2007	Freshmen Enrollment Increase
United States	2,588,675	2,445,015	6%
Vermont	7,382	7,101	4%
Iowa	35,098	33,763	4%
Tennessee	53,884	51,866	4%
Virginia	69,052	66,557	4%
Texas	161,209	155,524	4%
Wyoming	5,527	5,352	3%
Maryland	40,663	39,419	3%
New York	195,113	189,208	3%
Pennsylvania	131,935	128,000	3%
West Virginia	18,125	17,596	3%
Massachusetts	72,006	70,099	3%
South Carolina	37,854	36,922	3%
Kentucky	35,864	34,999	2%
Florida	135,188	132,094	2%
Michigan	82,620	80,917	2%
Ohio	102,581	100,989	2%
Rhode Island	16,105	15,933	1%
Wisconsin	50,352	49,815	1%
Utah	24,141	23,918	1%
South Dakota	8,025	7,956	1%
Mississippi	30,056	29,865	1%
New Hampshire	12,071	12,056	0%
Minnesota	47,568	47,855	-1%
Nebraska	16,483	16,677	-1%
Delaware	8,363	8,575	-2%
Oklahoma	31,086	32,849	-5%

Note: Colleges, universities and trade schools includes all postsecondary institutions that participate in Title IV.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics. Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), fall enrollment data.

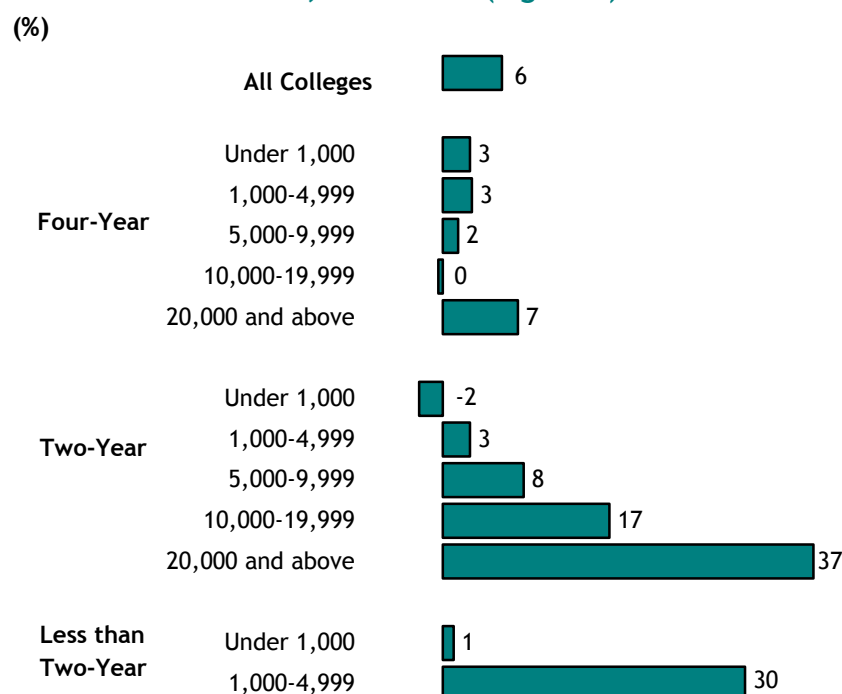
⁹ This geographic concentration contrasts with the widespread increase in college enrollment recently noted by the Brookings Institution in its *2010 State of Metropolitan America* report. It reports that the college enrollment rate of 18- to 24-year-olds was up in 91 of the nation's 100 largest metropolitan areas. No attempt is made to reconcile these findings with the geographic concentration noted here, other than to note that they examine metropolitan dispersion rather than state dispersion; they examine enrollment trends since 2000, while this report focuses on very recent changes; and their data refer to the location of the person, while the data here refer to enrollment by the state of the institution, not the student.

6% from fall 2007 to fall 2008 and there was little difference in freshman class growth in private versus publicly operated postsecondary education. Freshman enrollments in the aggregate rose 6% in both spheres (Table 1).¹⁰

Level and Institution Size

Only 3% of the nation's two-year colleges have at least 20,000 students, but these large two-year colleges experienced the greatest growth in freshman enrollment (Figure 5). Freshman enrollment at two-year colleges with more than 20,000 students increased by 37% from 2007 to 2008. At two-year colleges with 10,000 to 19,999 students, freshman enrollment was up 17%. The tendency for enrollment growth to be greatest at large institutions was not confined to the two-year sector. Among four-year colleges and universities, those with more than 20,000 students experienced the greatest growth (7%).

Large Two-Year Colleges Experienced Largest Increase in Freshman Enrollment, 2007-2008 (Figure 5)



Source: National Center for Education Statistics. Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), fall enrollment data.

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IV. Freshman Enrollment Growth at the College Level

The above discussion examined recent freshman enrollment growth in terms of broad categories or sectors of higher education. The assertion that much of the enrollment boom occurred at large public institutions does not imply that all large public institutions experienced booming enrollment in their freshman class. Rather, there is a distribution of freshman growth rates, and some (large public) institutions experienced booming freshman enrollments and some (large public) institutions did not. This section characterizes the growth of freshman enrollment between 2007 and 2008 at the level of the individual institution, enabling individual institutions to assess how their recent freshman enrollment growth compares to peers.

¹⁰ The aggregate 6% freshman growth at private postsecondary institutions conceals differences in growth between not-for-profit institutions and for-profit institutions. From 2007 to 2008, freshmen at not-for-profit colleges and universities grew 2%, while (on a smaller base) freshman growth at for-profit institutions was 11%.

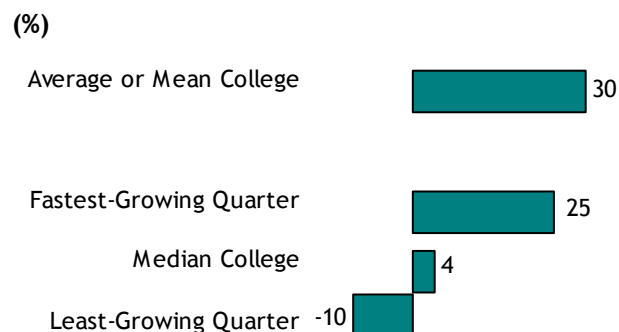
A total of 5,867 postsecondary institutions reported first-time, full-time freshman enrollment in both fall 2007 and fall 2008. The typical or median postsecondary institution reported that freshman enrollment increased 4% between 2007 and 2008 (Figure 6). In other words, half the postsecondary institutions had growth in excess of 4% and half had growth of 4% or less. One-quarter of postsecondary institutions reported that their freshman enrollment dropped 10% or more between 2007 and 2008. The fastest-growing quarter of postsecondary institutions reported that freshman enrollment grew by at least 25%.

While freshman enrollment in the entire two-year college sector increased 11% (Figure 3), the typical or median two-year college experienced 6% growth in its first-time, full-time freshman enrollment from 2007 to 2008 (Figure 7). That is, half of the nation's two-year colleges experienced freshman growth in excess

of 6% and half had growth of 6% or less.

The aggregate enrollment figures suggested that two-year college growth outstripped four-year college growth, and that is true at the institutional level as well. Half of the nation's four-year colleges and universities experienced freshman growth in excess of 2%, while

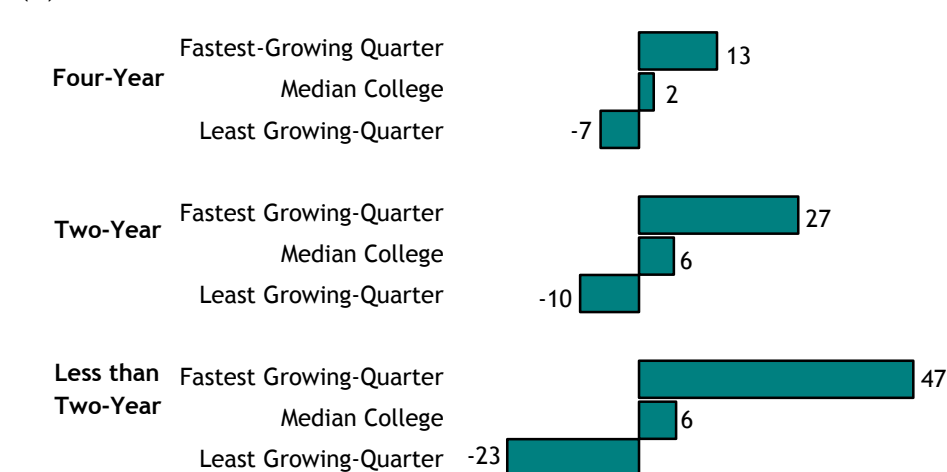
Freshmen Enrollment Growth Uneven among Nation's 5,867 Postsecondary Institutions (Figure 6)



Source: National Center for Education Statistics. Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), fall enrollment data.

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Freshmen Enrollment Growth Varied Within College Type (Figure 7)



Source: National Center for Education Statistics. Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), fall enrollment data.

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half of the nation's two-year institutions experienced freshman growth in excess of 6%. The largest-growing quarter of four-year institutions had freshman growth rates of 13% or greater, but one-quarter of two-year schools had growth of at least 27%.

Finally, Section I showed that the “biggest got bigger” during the Great Recession in that the nation's largest

Large Colleges with Largest 2007 to 2008 Freshmen Enrollment Growth (Table 4)

	State	2008	2007	Increase
Public Two-Year Colleges				
Fresno City College	California	2,998	547	448%
Riverside Community College	California	3,043	931	227%
Mesa Community College	Arizona	1,695	680	149%
Santa Ana College	California	1,343	592	127%
East Los Angeles College	California	1,500	811	85%
Long Beach City College	California	2,011	1,151	75%
College of the Canyons	California	1,534	965	59%
Mt San Antonio College	California	2,826	1,802	57%
Chaffey College	California	1,771	1,142	55%
Santa Rosa Junior College	California	1,843	1,226	50%
Public Four-Year Colleges				
Arizona State University	Arizona	8,458	6,977	21%
University of Oregon	Oregon	4,193	3,508	20%
College of Southern Nevada	Nevada	2,085	1,783	17%
University of Missouri-Columbia	Missouri	5,702	4,904	16%
University of Nevada-Las Vegas	Nevada	3,026	2,606	16%
George Mason University	Virginia	2,476	2,175	14%
University of Connecticut	Connecticut	3,596	3,167	14%
Weber State University	Utah	1,665	1,468	13%
California State University-Northridge	California	4,513	3,982	13%
Kennesaw State University	Georgia	2,639	2,330	13%
Private Four-Year Colleges				
American Public University System	West Virginia	121	28	332%
Grand Canyon University	Arizona	343	101	240%
Ashford University	Iowa	1,656	802	106%
Strayer University	District of Columbia	245	124	98%
Capella University	Minnesota	5	3	67%
DeVry University-Illinois	Illinois	1,292	987	31%
University of Phoenix-Online Campus	Arizona	30,759	25,346	21%
American Intercontinental University Online	Illinois	10,678	9,112	17%
George Washington University	District of Columbia	2,449	2,123	15%
Nova Southeastern University	Florida	517	489	6%

Note: “Large colleges” refers to postsecondary institutions with at least 20,000 students.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics. Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), fall enrollment data.

colleges and university campuses attracted the most additional freshmen in percentage terms. Many of the nation's largest colleges and universities indeed experienced this. Freshman enrollment at the typical or median college or university with at least 20,000 students grew by 5% or more from 2007 to 2008, outstripping the 4% growth experienced by the garden-variety college or university reported above (Figure 6).

Table 4 focuses on the nation's largest colleges and universities and reports the large colleges that experienced the greatest growth in first-time, full-time freshman enrollment from 2007 to 2008. California institutions dominate the list of large community colleges with burgeoning freshman enrollments. A few private for-profit four-year institutions are among the nation's largest colleges and universities, and some of them had large increases in freshman enrollment and are online institutions.

V. Work Activity of the Nation's Young Undergraduates

The economic recession commencing in December 2007 appears to have diminished the employment levels of the nation's college students. Granted, the labor market is not as central to undergraduates' well-being as it is to their non-enrolled counterparts. Nonetheless, until recently, most young undergraduates did work. Work and college have not been mutually exclusive endeavors, and the long-run trend has been increased employment among young undergraduates, particularly female students (Fitzpatrick and Turner, 2006).

The most recent available Census Bureau data on college enrollment and labor force status reveal that job-holding among the nation's young undergraduates has declined. The share of undergraduates who were employed has fallen under 50% (Table 5). As of March 2009, 9% of 18- to 24-year-old undergraduates were

Labor Market Status of 18- to 24-Year-Old Undergraduates (Table 5)

	All 18- to 24-Year-Olds			Labor Market Indicators of 18- to 24-Year-old Undergraduates		
	Population	Undergraduates	Undergraduate (%)	Employment to Population	Unemployment Rate	Labor Force Participation Rate
2009	28,470,000	9,611,000	34%	49%	9%	54%
2008	28,220,000	9,468,000	34%	52%	6%	55%
2007	28,250,000	9,258,000	33%	53%	5%	56%
2006	27,810,000	9,086,000	33%	54%	7%	58%
2005	27,850,000	9,028,000	32%	52%	7%	56%
2004	27,620,000	9,260,000	34%	52%	7%	56%
2003	27,260,000	8,788,000	32%	52%	7%	56%
2002	27,140,000	8,567,000	32%	54%	8%	58%
2001	26,810,000	8,381,000	31%	58%	5%	61%
2000	26,390,000	8,125,000	31%	54%	6%	57%
1999	25,840,000	8,147,000	32%	55%	6%	58%
1998	25,070,000	7,875,000	31%	56%	6%	60%
1997	24,830,000	7,682,000	31%	56%	7%	60%
1996	24,710,000	7,629,000	31%	54%	8%	58%
1995	25,000,000	7,136,000	29%	55%	6%	59%
1994	25,250,000	7,676,000	30%	53%	8%	57%
1993	24,160,000	7,234,000	30%	53%	7%	57%
1992	24,300,000	7,242,000	30%	51%	8%	56%
1991	24,700,000	7,467,000	30%	52%	7%	57%
1990	25,110,000	7,244,000	29%	52%	6%	55%
1989	25,460,000	7,249,000	28%	53%	6%	56%
1988	25,770,000	7,040,000	27%	51%	7%	55%
1987	26,270,000	6,941,000	26%	51%	7%	55%
1986	26,870,000	7,011,000	26%	51%	8%	55%

Note: Includes all 18- to 24-year-old civilians in the non-institutionalized population and not in the armed forces

Source: March Current Population Survey Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS).

unemployed, up from 5% in March 2007.

Perhaps because they are better educated, undergraduates fare better in some facets of the labor market than do 18- to 24-year-olds who are not in college. For example, the unemployment rate in March 2009 of non-enrolled 18- to 24-year-olds was 19%, compared with 9% for 18- to 24-year-old undergraduates. But since the onset of the recession, the deterioration in the labor market appears comparable for undergraduates and non-enrolled youths. The unemployment rate for non-enrolled 18- to 24-year-olds was 11% in March 2007, so unemployment has nearly doubled for both non-enrolled youths and young undergraduates between March 2007 and March 2009.

The labor market for the nation's undergraduates has likely deteriorated further since March 2009. March 2010 data are not yet available, but the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics has reported labor market statistics for 16- to 24-year-olds enrolled in college (which includes graduate students) as of October 2009. Unemployment for those in college was 12% (up from 8% in October 2008). In October 2009, 45% of 16- to 24-year-old college students had jobs (down from 50% in October 2008).

VI. Has the Enrollment Boom Persisted?

More than two years have elapsed since the start of the recession. This report documents the nature of the changes in freshman enrollment early in the recession. Has the freshman enrollment boom persisted in 2009? Because of lags in the release of nationally representative data, it is difficult to know. For example, neither the October 2009 Current Population Survey nor the 2009 American Community Survey has been released.

Freshman classes partly reflect the underlying size of the high school graduating classes. We don't know the size of the nation's high school graduating class. NCES projects that the 2007-2008 class was about 3.3 million and that the 2008-2009 class was also about 3.3 million. So the number of college-eligible youths does not appear to have diminished.

In April, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that in October 2009 the immediate college enrollment rate of high school graduates was at its highest level on record.

These considerations suggest that even greater numbers of freshmen may have enrolled in colleges and universities as the recession continued in 2009. But we will not know for sure until more data become available.

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