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Signature™ REPORT

National Postsecondary Enrollment Trends

Before, During, and After the Great Recession

Project on Academic Success

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

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Executive Summary

1 Signature™ REPORT

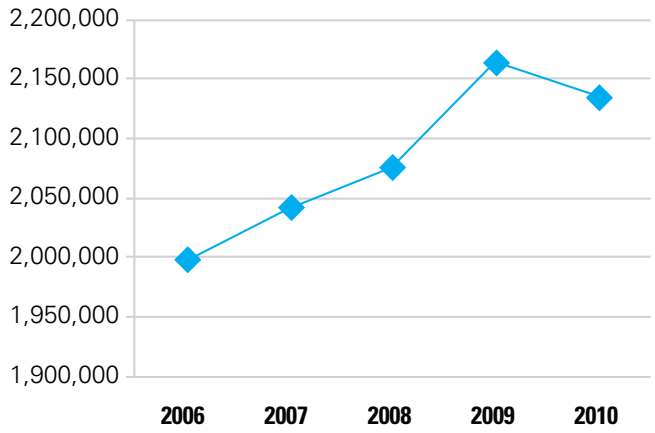
MAKING SENSE OF THE GREAT RECESSION OF 2007–2009

This report, *"National Postsecondary Enrollment Trends: Before, During, and After the Great Recession,"* brings to light emerging national and regional patterns among traditional-age, first-time students enrolling in colleges and universities during the fall term each year from 2006 through 2010 — before, during, and after the recession. Drawn from data housed at the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, this report explores:

- Total enrollment and changes across years, by institution sector and control;
- Enrollment totals and changes across years, nationally and by geographic region;
- Full-time and part-time enrollment by institution type and geographic region; and
- First-year retention and persistence rates, based on individual student pathways across institutions.

The results of these analyses show that changes in college enrollment accompanying the recent recession — thus far, and among traditional-age students — have not been as pronounced as many had previously feared. Nevertheless, findings point to distinct shifts in the college-going patterns of traditional-age, first-time students (Figure A).

Figure A: Total Enrollment by Cohort



Based on drops in real incomes, industrial activity, wholesale/retail sales, and employment, as well as GDP, analyses by the National Bureau of Economic Research (2008; 2010) dated the onset of the United States' recent economic recession at December 2007 and the end at June 2009. During this same period, the challenges facing higher education institutions included shifts in enrollment patterns, uncertainties regarding financial aid practices, and cuts in state support of public institutions — with all of these changes occurring amid increased federal and state pressures to meet national goals for increasing college degree attainment by 2020. Even in 2011, two years after the recession's end, the economy is, of course, not fully recovered. Unemployment remains high, state budgets continue to shrink, and family financial struggles have not subsided. Much uncertainty about how to plan for and respond to shifts in college enrollments remain.

This report represents an effort to help federal, state, and institutional policy makers better understand recent events, to facilitate institutions' efforts to anticipate changing student enrollments, and finally, to inform appropriate responses from policy makers at multiple levels. Four main points emerging from the study are summarized below.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE INCREASES DROVE OVERALL ENROLLMENT TRENDS

The changes that were seen among student cohorts during the years examined were largely the result of increases in community college enrollment, showing a characteristic "cresting wave" — rising through 2009 and then declining slightly in 2010. The increases were clear, but not as dramatic as the overall growth in community college enrollments when adult students are included.

Analyses suggest that these trends may have been driven by two groups of traditional-age students believed to have entered community colleges in larger numbers during this time: (1) students who, in a better economy, might have enrolled in other types of institutions but who may have chosen to enroll in community colleges instead during the recession, possibly to save money; and (2) students who, in a better economy, may have entered directly into the workforce after high school but who during this period may have chosen to enter college instead. These trends likely also reflect strategies employed by community colleges during this time, such as targeted marketing campaigns, as well as increased federal investment in the Pell grant program.

Enrollment declines at community colleges in 2010 coincided with the strains on capacity faced by many institutions during the 2009 surges in enrollment, as well as with the initial turn toward economic recovery. These findings underscore the importance of enhancing vertical transfer pathways for students who are entering community colleges as a first step toward a bachelor's degree. In addition, they help point to the need for continued state support and enhanced structural development within the two-year public sector.

PUBLIC FOUR-YEARS IN THE MIDDLE

As the recession deepened through 2008 and into 2009, a somewhat split enrollment pattern emerged across institution types, with enrollment increases leaning toward the two-year public sector and, to a lesser degree, the four-year private sector. In fact, the private sector appears to have maintained market share of student enrollments more effectively than was predicted.

This pattern may be attributable to several factors including, but not limited, to these:

- The likelihood that many financially secure families would have continued to be able to support students in attending more costly institutions even as the economy worsened. Meanwhile some middle income families, who likely felt more financial strain as a group, saw their traditional-age students opt for community colleges instead of the public four-year institutions they might have considered during better economic times.
- Recruitment efforts of private four-year colleges and universities targeting students more likely to enroll in their institutions.
- State budget cuts and strains on capacity faced by some public four-year institutions.

State policy makers are encouraged to consider the long-term ramifications that short-term budget solutions could have for the educational outcomes of their state's students.

ENROLLMENT INTENSITY SHIFTS WERE SLIGHT

The recession does not appear to have accompanied notable shifts in students' choices regarding full-time versus part-time enrollment. Nationally, four-year institutions saw virtually no change in the proportion of students attending full time. However, the proportion of students enrolling full time in public two-year institutions increased slightly during the recession. These findings, while not dramatic, suggest the

possibility that students who might otherwise have attended four-year institutions full time enrolled at community colleges in greater numbers and pursued full-time studies there instead.

PATTERNS DIFFERED ACROSS GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS

Enrollment trends were further examined in this study for patterns by U.S. Census region. Each region saw distinct enrollment patterns during the period explored, for example,

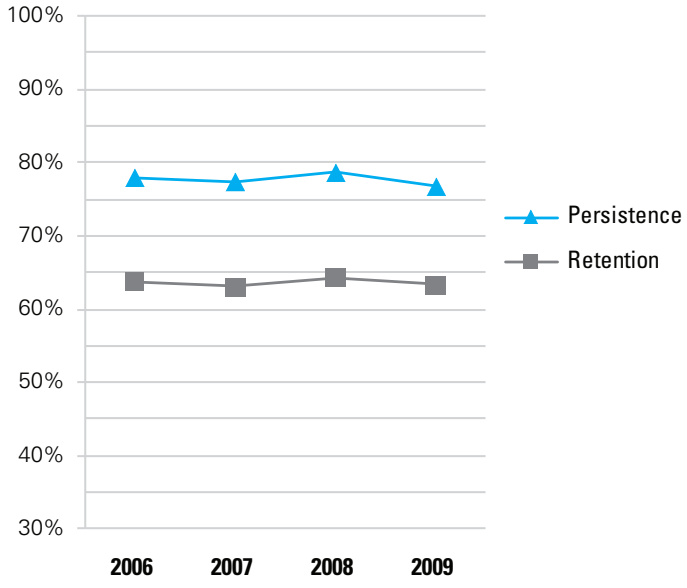
- In the Northeast, enrollment increases were largely concentrated in 2009. Other regions saw relatively large increases in 2009, but the West, Midwest, and South saw noticeable increases with the 2007 and 2008 cohorts as well;
- Midwest institutions saw less dramatic changes in enrollment, as compared to institutions in other regions;
- Enrollments in the South increased steadily through 2009 and dropped in 2010, reflecting the national pattern most closely of all the regions; and
- The West had greater proportions of students enrolled in public two-year institutions.

Moreover, relatively large enrollment increases in the West occurred earlier (e.g., in 2007) than in other regions. These differences are in part a result of the varying types of educational offerings provided within each region and may also reflect regional variations in economic conditions across the U.S.

STUDENT PERSISTENCE RATES OFFER A KEY VIEW ON STUDENT PATHWAYS

This report examines — and offers new estimates for — two often-cited but frequently conflated measures of student and institutional success: student retention (continued enrollment within the *same* institution) and student persistence (continued enrollment within *any* U.S. institution) (Figure B). Exploring these measures by institution sector, control, and region, this study's results show that persistence rates were considerably higher than retention rates in almost all institutional categories, with gaps between the two measures ranging from just under 10% to over 18%.

Figure B: Fall-to-Fall Retention and Persistence Rates by Entering Cohort



These findings point to the complexity of contemporary student pathways and suggest, furthermore, that retention-based measures alone could misrepresent the enrollment decisions of thousands of students each year. The report's highlighted results support calls for developing better instruments to evaluate institutional effectiveness and student success, by capturing student enrollment patterns beyond the walls of single institutions. Surprisingly, results showed relatively few shifts in retention and persistence coinciding with the recession. Through adapted enrollment management, recruitment, and financial aid strategies, institutions appear to have weathered these recent years better than many had anticipated.

ABOUT THE REPORT

"National Postsecondary Enrollment Trends: Before, During, and After the Great Recession" is the first report in a new series, called Signature Reports, from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. The Clearinghouse Signature Reports are developed to serve as a national resource for the continued study of student pathways and college enrollment patterns, and have immediate relevance for institutional, state, and federal policy. Future reports will examine student transfer patterns, graduation, and more.

Signature Reports are available at http://www.studentclearinghouse.org/signature/.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL STUDENT CLEARINGHOUSE RESEARCH CENTER

A non-profit organization formed in 1993, the National Student Clearinghouse continues to be the most trusted partner in the higher education community, serving as a single point of contact for real-time postsecondary enrollment and degree verifications.

The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, the research arm of the non-profit organization, collaborates with higher education institutions, states, school districts, high schools, and educational organizations as part of a national effort to better inform education leaders and policymakers. Through accurate longitudinal data outcomes reporting, the Research Center enables better educational policy decisions leading to improved student outcomes.

Headed by Dr. Don Hossler, a published expert in student achievement and college choice and enrollment, the Research Center directs a variety of Clearinghouse research studies regarding student access and success outcomes. Dr. Doug Shapiro, senior research director of the Research Center, offers complementary experience in postsecondary enrollment trend statistics, demographic challenges, and markets for highly-educated labor.

You can learn more about the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center and read our latest reports online at http://research.studentclearinghouse.org.

ABOUT THE PROJECT ON ACADEMIC SUCCESS AT INDIANA UNIVERSITY

The Project on Academic Success (PAS), part of the Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University, engages in practice- and policy-oriented research toward a better understanding of opportunity and equity in postsecondary education and of the multiple pathways of 21st century students to postsecondary academic success and employment. http://pas.indiana.edu.

Introduction

MAKING SENSE OF THE GREAT RECESSION OF 2007–2009

Based on drops in real incomes, industrial activity, wholesale/retail sales, and employment, as well as GDP, analyses by the National Bureau of Economic Research (2008; 2010) dated the onset of the United States' recent economic recession at December 2007 and the end at June 2009. Higher education media coverage during this economic crisis highlighted enrollment managers' concerns about unpredictable shifts in enrollment patterns (Desmond, 2008; Jaschik, 2008a, 2008b; Supiano, 2009a), increases in community college enrollments (Moltz, 2008; Mullin & Phillippe, 2009), uncertainties in financial aid practices (Supiano, 2009b), and cuts in state support of public institutions (Carlson, 2009; Douglass, 2008; Moltz, 2009), all of which occurred amidst increased federal and state pressures to meet national goals for increasing college attainment by 2020.

By 2008 and 2009, many institutional and state policy makers faced uncertainty about how to plan for and respond to shifts in enrollment — and much uncertainty remains. Even now, two years after the official end of the recession in June 2009, unemployment remains high, state budgets are still shrinking, and family finances are still under stress. Throughout this national discussion, commentators have shared projections and impressions in attempts to help higher education policy makers and stakeholders anticipate and navigate the recession's impact on postsecondary institutions and college students nationwide.

The following report brings to this discussion a detailed look at what actually happened in the economic crisis — through an examination of college enrollment figures before, during, and after the recession. Drawn from broad national data housed at the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, these figures on first-time-in-college enrollments of recent high school graduates in fall 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010 reveal emerging patterns across institution types, student time-status, and region.

COLLEGE ENROLLMENT IN THE RECENT RECESSION

To plan for the achievement of national goals for educational attainment, policy makers at institutional, state, and federal levels need more detailed information about national and regional college enrollment patterns during the recent recession. While conventional wisdom tells us that postsecondary enrollments go up in hard economic times, the actual effects are more complex than can be captured in such a simple formula. Increased layoffs may certainly have sent greater numbers of adult learners to colleges and universities for retraining or for more advanced credentials. At the same time, however, the housing crisis and the broader effects of the recession have strained family finances across the country, leaving many with fewer resources to invest in the education of traditional-age students. Adding further complexity to the mix, institutions have responded to these circumstances by expanding outreach efforts, targeting recruitment toward students who are more likely to enroll, and increasing institutional aid in some cases to maintain stability in enrollments despite the uncertainties brought on by the economic crisis (McHooley, 2010; Pals, 2009; Travis, 2009). Moreover, national policy may have played a part as well, as suggested in a recent study that linked higher community college enrollments in 2009 to increases in Pell grants (Adams, 2011; Hagedorn, Kinkead, Katsinas, Friedel, & Kennauer, 2011; Pals, 2009).

For colleges and universities serving traditional-age students to achieve their goals, institutional policy makers need an understanding of how these students' college-going behaviors have changed in the context of the recent economic crisis — so that they can make decisions about the number of students to admit, the allocation of campus-based financial aid, the institution's budget, and the campus's course offerings. To craft policies that will achieve the desired enrollment outcomes including college access and completion,

policy makers need knowledge about and clear insights into the effects of the Great Recession on students' postsecondary enrollment patterns.

The literature on the relationship between postsecondary enrollments and national economic changes has consistently found that college enrollments are sensitive to economic trends and in general are countercyclical (Breneman, 2008; Ewing, Beckert, & Ewing, 2010; Kantrowitz, 2010; Long, 2004). Historically, that is, research in this area has consistently shown increases in postsecondary enrollment to be associated with economic downturns.

Because increases in college enrollments during an economic downturn largely reflect the return to the classroom of older adults displaced from the workforce for new or further training (Kantrowitz, 2010), however, the changes in enrollments among younger, traditional-age students during the same period may be comparatively muted — requiring more detailed analysis. Yet the need now for such analysis is clear. Among respondents to a midrecession survey of households with college-bound high school students (Longmire & Company, 2008), nearly half reported that since the recession had hit, their plans for college had changed — either "somewhat" or "dramatically." As even previously financially secure families have experienced financial strain during this period, the number of them changing plans and looking at less expensive educational options, including community colleges, has likely increased (Mullin & Phillippe, 2009).

WHAT WE CAN GAIN BY EXAMINING ENROLLMENT PATTERNS

For policy and practice that is robust and adaptive within the context of the recession, a better understanding of the enrollment patterns of traditional-age first-time college students is important in addressing several key concerns for higher education institutions and higher education policy:

- *Developing a more detailed view of students' college choice processes during the recession:* Information on the changing enrollments of students entering college within two years of finishing high school can throw light on students' college-choice decisions within the context of the recession.
- *Gaining insights for institutions' enrollment and retention policies and practices:* A national-scale view of traditional-age students' enrollment patterns can provide information that institutions need for admissions planning and for extending and adapting efforts surrounding student retention and completion. Moreover, this type of report can help colleges and universities better understand how students' enrollment decisions may have changed or not changed, thus enabling them to better tailor their own enrollment management strategies to the current environment.
- *Forecasting the educational attainment of the current generation:* Because the educational access and pathways of recent high school graduates will be instrumental in reaching national educational attainment goals for the next ten years, it is important to understand the pathways of traditional-age students entering college during the Great Recession. This is particularly important given current population trends showing smaller cohorts graduating from U.S. high schools beginning in 2009 (Hussar & Bailey, 2009; Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education [WICHE], 2008).

WHAT TO FIND IN THIS REPORT

This report brings to light emerging national patterns among traditional-age students enrolling in colleges and universities from fall 2006 through fall 2010 — the years just before, during, and after the Great Recession. The tables and figures presented explore

- Total enrollment by institution sector and control;
- Rates of change, showing how enrollments shifted across the five entering cohorts, by institution sector and control;
- Full-time and part-time enrollment by institution type and geographic region;
- Enrollment by geographic region; and
- Initial results on student retention (continued fall-to-fall enrollment in the same institution) and persistence (continued fall-to-fall enrollment in any institution within the data set).

Coming Up in the Next Signature Report

The Clearinghouse's second Signature Report, which focuses on student transfer patterns, will examine

- National transfer rates for students who start in various institution types (sector and control) — looking across multiple cohorts,
- Student transfer rates by geographic region, and
- Transfer rates for full-time and part-time students enrolled in various types of institutions and across geographic regions.

A NOTE ON THE DATA

Data Source

The data for this report were taken from the StudentTracker℠ database, administered by the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC), which tracks 93% of college enrollments across all postsecondary institutions nationwide, including all institution types — four- and two-year institutions, and public and private institutions, including for-profit as well as nonprofit institutions. The results reported here are weighted in order to provide the most accurate possible reflection of all U.S. institutions. Moreover, institutional participation remained stable during a period of steadily increasing coverage in the NSC data. A complete explanation of national coverage rates and the weights used to ensure that results reflect enrollment nationally can be found in Appendices A and B.

The enrollments captured in this report are based on student-level data and represent an unduplicated headcount of students across all institutions. This is different from many existing data sets, including the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), that are not structured so as to be able to identify multiple concurrent enrollments by individual students. A student enrolled part time at two different institutions, for example, would be counted only once in this report. In 2008, the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) conducted external validity checks on NSC data by using the data to track two cohorts of students for up to nine years. They concluded that the data led to reasonable estimates of degree completion rates and that, by accounting for students who transfer, NSC data in fact yielded rates 15 to 18 percentage points higher than the same-institution completion rates reported through IPEDS (NCHEMS, 2008).

NSC data encompass 93% of U.S. college enrollment in all Title IV institutions and allow researchers to track students longitudinally across institutions and states. The reach of NSC data, therefore, allows researchers, institutions, and policy makers to explore the real and consequential distinction between two outcomes that are often conflated — student retention and student persistence. Experts and policy organizations have long noted the important distinction between retention as an institutional phenomenon and persistence as a student behavior. One implication of this, certainly, is that students may persist toward

the goal of college graduation without being "retained" by the institution they are enrolled in during any one term. As many students now enroll in multiple institutions over the course of their postsecondary education, the ability to track student persistence — continued enrollment across institutions — has immediate relevance for institutional, state, and federal policy, as well as for research and enrollment planning. To explore the opportunities for insight provided by national tracking of student-level data, one section of this report focuses on comparisons of retention and persistence results shown across the years of this study and broken out by institution type, both nationally and by region.

NSC data do not currently include demographic information on students. Consequently, the results summarized in this report give a national view of enrollment behavior, showing by a unique headcount the number of students enrolled in various types of institutions, but do not break enrollments out by race, ethnicity, or gender, for example.

Cohort Definition

The analyses in this report are based on student enrollment records for five cohorts of entering students — namely, traditional-age (under age 21) first-time-in-college students who enrolled in U.S. higher education institutions in the fall semester of each year from 2006 to 2010. This approach resulted in cohorts that approximate the familiar category of first-time first-year students. Two differences are important to note, however. The cohorts considered here consist only of students who are under age 21 and who have no prior enrollment record within the two years of NSC data preceding the entering fall term. Thus, first-time first-year students who were age 21 or older at the time of entering are not included in the analyses. In addition, NSC data do not include universal designations for class year. Consequently, the sample may include students with more than 30 Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), or dual enrollment credits and who, despite first-time status, may not be considered freshmen by their institutions. Finally, it merits noting that all tables and figures in this report and the appendices showing enrollment patterns for private institutions include both for-profit and nonprofit privates. A careful review of the data used in this report, however, revealed very few traditional-age students who enrolled in for-profit colleges and universities. Thus, these results largely reflect enrollment patterns for nonprofit private institutions. Please see Appendix A for further details on cohort selection for these analyses.

Several features of the cohort definition used in this report result in some discrepancies as compared with enrollment figures drawn from IPEDS. As mentioned above, in order to approximate first-time status in this report, we have limited the cohort to students under age 21. While IPEDS includes students of any age in reports on first-time first-year students, our sample is focused only on traditional-age students, and for that reason both the absolute numbers reported here and the increases shown are likely to be smaller than those reported in IPEDS.

Researchers face considerable complexity in operationalizing the category of first-time student in analyses, depending on the strengths and limitations of the data sets used. NSC and the Project on Academic Success (PAS) balanced competing priorities in selecting a method for identifying cohorts to be studied in this report. On the one hand, NSC data allow researchers to capture a unique headcount of students nationally and, therefore, to follow individual students, while accounting for concurrent enrollments. In addition, NSC data allowed us to establish first-time enrollment status empirically — i.e., by searching for prior enrollments — rather than relying on institutional reporting, which may be limited by idiosyncratic definitions as well as by errors in institutions' transactional records. On the other hand, the approach we have used here has limitations as well. For example, as mentioned previously, this cohort definition does not allow us to exclude entering students who are technically not first-year students because they have accumulated high numbers of AP, IB, or dual enrollment credits.

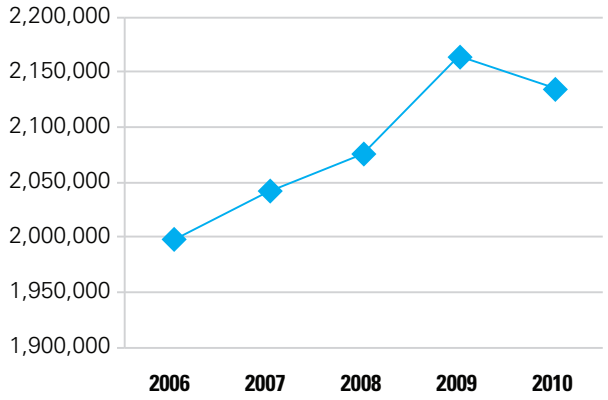
ENROLLMENT ACROSS INSTITUTIONS

Over the five years covered by this report, total fall enrollment increased by 6.9%, from 1,997,990 in an unduplicated headcount of students enrolled in 2006 to 2,135,476 in 2010 (see Table 1). The year-to-year changes in these totals fluctuated, showing increases of 2.2% in 2007, 1.7% in 2008, and 4.3% in 2009, and a drop of 1.4% in 2010. These trends show both similarities with and differences from countercyclical trends typically described during economic recessions. Kantrowitz's (2010) study of college enrollment trends during recessions highlights the tendency for total college enrollments (including older and returning students) to increase during and up to two years after a recession. However, in his reporting of the most recent recession, Kantrowitz finds enrollments to have increased steeply around the onset of the recession in 2007, with much slighter increases in 2008, 2009, and 2010. In this report, we see a longer delay in these increases, with enrollments increasing steeply one to two years after the recession's onset, continuing to increase after the recession's end, and decreasing within one year after, in 2010. These varying results highlight the differences between the college-going behaviors of traditional-age students and those of older students. They also reflect institutions' efforts to meet the challenges posed to this population by hard economic times.

Table 1. Total Enrollment by Cohort

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Total
Weighted Count	1,997,990	2,041,844	2,076,287	2,165,950	2,135,476	—
Rate of Change from Previous Year	—	2.19%	1.69%	4.32%	-1.41%	6.88%

Figure 1. Total Enrollment by Cohort*



**This figure is based on data shown in Table 1, above.*

Recent calculations and predictions of high school graduates across the U.S. show an overall increase in the number of graduates from spring 2007 to spring 2008 (Hussar & Bailey, 2011). This may partially contribute to the postsecondary enrollment increases reflected in our data for fall 2007 and 2008 compared to data for the previous year. However, the number of high school graduates is estimated to have decreased by 0.22% between 2008 and 2009 (calculations based on NCES figures [Hussar & Bailey, 2011]) — a period during which the number of college enrollments shown in this report increased by 4.32%.

This suggests that — consistent with observations about the countercyclicality of college enrollments — totals increased during and just after the recession.

Total enrollment of traditional-age first-time students increased steadily from 2006 to 2008, reached a peak in fall 2009, and then in 2010 dropped to a level anticipated by rates of change shown in 2007 and 2008. Apart from an exceptionally high increase in 2009, enrollments appeared to climb by a steady rate — nearly a straight line — as shown in Figure 1, above.

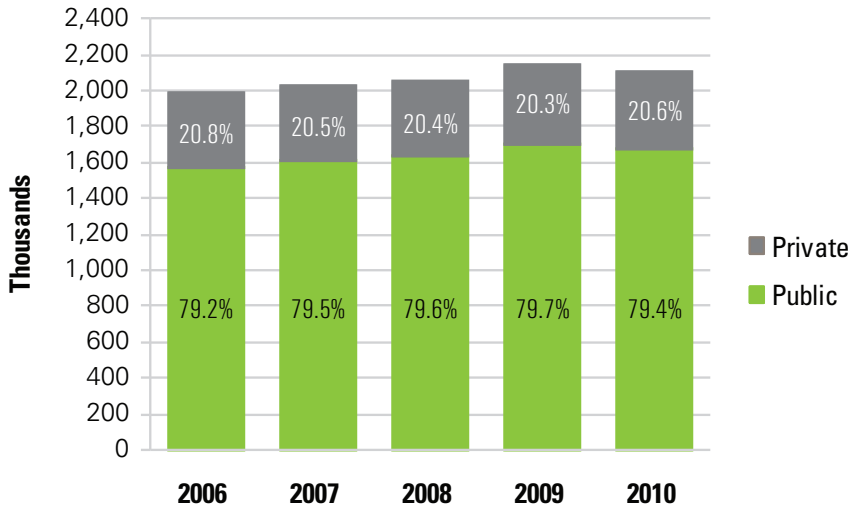
ENROLLMENT ACROSS INSTITUTIONS

The proportion of traditional-age first-time students enrolled in public versus private institutions remained quite constant across these years, with approximately 80% of these students enrolled in public institutions and 20% in private institutions (see Figure 2A).

Although four-year institutions consistently enrolled a higher proportion of students compared to their two-year counterparts, the number of students in the two-year sector increased from 2006 to 2009 (see Figure 2B). The two-year sector market share followed an up-steady-up pattern, but then that sector lost 1.6% of its market share in 2010 compared to the previous year.

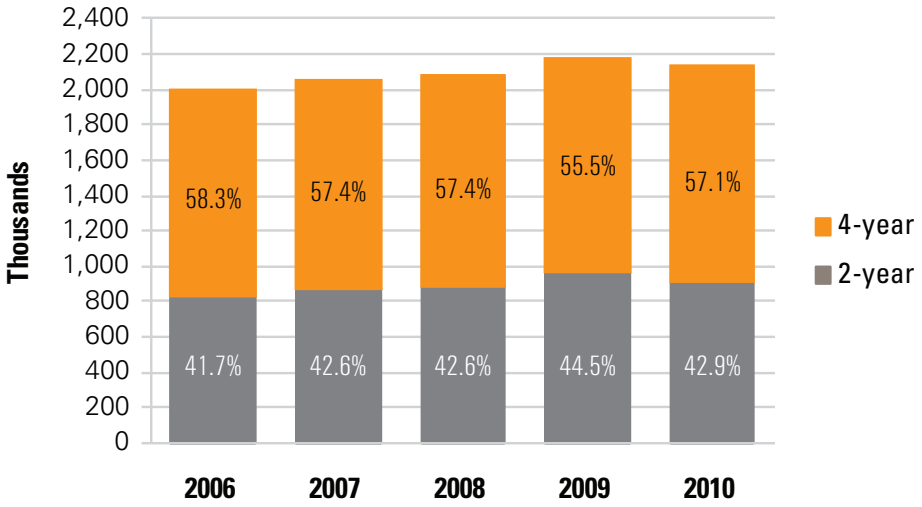
These yearly enrollment changes by sector suggest that during this economic recession, greater numbers of traditional-age students opted to enroll in two-year colleges, many of which have relatively lower cost of attendance. Work by the American Association of Community Colleges (i.e., Mullin & Phillippe, 2009) noted enrollment surges also in the two-year sector in 2009 and attributed this increase not only to individual college choice decisions to save money but also to enhanced structural capacity and intentional community outreach activities implemented at community colleges across the nation.

Figure 2A. Enrollment by Control*



This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 1.

Figure 2B. Enrollment by Sector*



This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 2.

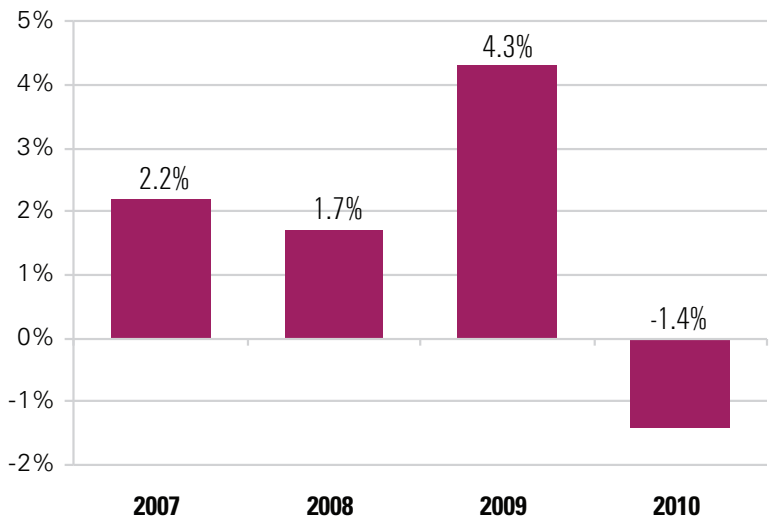
RATE OF CHANGE IN ENROLLMENT ACROSS YEARS

While the table and figures on the previous pages show enrollment numbers and distributions by sector and control across the five-year span identified for this study, looking at the year-to-year rate of change for each cohort can help illuminate important nuances in these enrollment trends.

The rate of change between cohorts revealed distinct fluctuations, with an enrollment surge (4.3%) between fall 2008 and 2009 and a slight decrease (1.4%) in cohort size between 2009 and 2010 (see Figure 3). As noted in the previous tables, even seemingly small percentage-point changes reflect the enrollment decisions of thousands of students each year.

The pattern of year-to-year change in enrollment was much more volatile at two-year colleges — compared to the four-year sector, where changes appeared relatively small.

Figure 3. Rate of Change from Previous Fall, Beginning Cohort Enrollment*

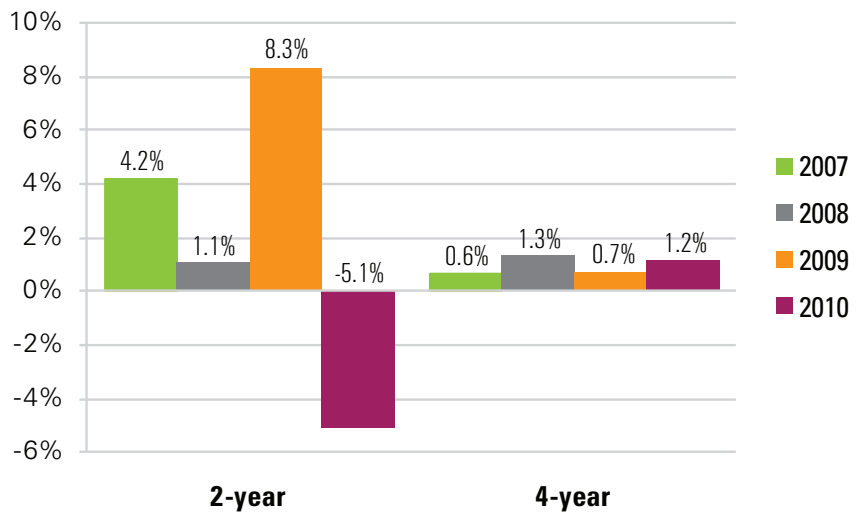


**This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 3.*

RATE OF CHANGE IN ENROLLMENT ACROSS YEARS

Specifically, enrollment in the two-year sector increased by 8.3% between the 2008 and 2009 cohorts, followed by a 5.1% decrease in year 2010 (see Figure 4). By comparison, the four-year sector saw cohort-to-cohort changes that were less pronounced, although they still showed similar alternation between larger and smaller increases. For example, the 2008 cohort enrolled in four-year institutions was 1.3% larger than the 2007 cohort; but in the following year, 2009, the cohort was only 0.7% larger. Some of these results show discrepancies with parallel analyses of IPEDS data. For example, first-time first-year student counts in IPEDS show a much greater increase for two-year institutions between 2007 and 2008, compared with the 1.1% increase shown here. These discrepancies are likely due to differences in cohort definition, as described in depth elsewhere in this report — i.e., the determination of first-time status and the age for inclusion in the study. This report describes the enrollment of traditional-age first-time students, while IPEDS analyses also include students over age 20 — a group that typically enrolls in college in greater numbers during hard economic times.

Figure 4. Rate of Change from Previous Fall, Beginning Cohort Enrollment by Sector*



**This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 4.*

The relative volatility of the two-year sector enrollments nationally raises concerns about how this may have been experienced regionally, particularly in regions with extensive community college systems such as the South and West. Regional differences aside, however, enrollment drops at two-year colleges in 2010 were experienced across the nation's community colleges. Fluctuations in 2009 and 2010 may reflect institutional and state contexts as well as actions taken by colleges in response to the economic crisis. Increases in enrollment strained institutional capacity at many two-year colleges — a situation exacerbated by state budget cuts — pushing some, for example, to consider enrollment caps (Ashburn, 2011; Mullin & Phillipe, 2009).

Later sections in this report consider regional contexts in more detail, looking in particular at enrollments by institution type and by full-time and part-time enrollment intensity (e.g., see Figures 9A–17D and 21A–22D).

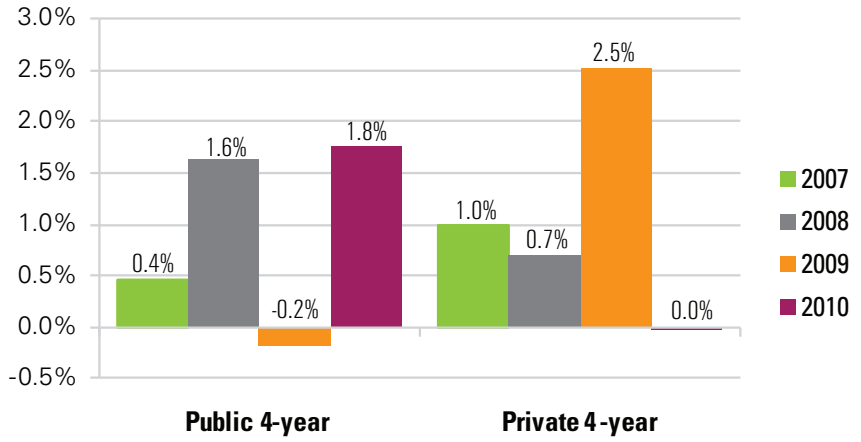
Despite fluctuations in the rate of change between cohorts and despite a decline in enrollment between 2009 and 2010, it is important to note that, overall, 2010 enrollments were substantially higher than prerecession levels.

RATE OF CHANGE IN ENROLLMENT ACROSS YEARS

From fall 2006 to fall 2010, enrollment changes were slight in both the public and private four-year sectors (as shown in Figure 5). Interestingly, for years when enrollment expanded more rapidly in public four-year institutions — for example, 1.6% in 2008 and 1.8% in 2010 — the expansion of the private sector was slower: 0.7% and 0.0%. However, private institutions did not see the enrollment declines that some observers had suggested might take place (Haas, 2009; Hesel, 2010). Indeed, enrollments increased in two of the three years since the start of the Great Recession, and the decline in 2010 was modest. Private institutions have traditionally employed more sophisticated policies and practices to shape their enrollments; the enrollment patterns evidenced at private institutions in particular may reflect the success of the enrollment management techniques at these institutions.

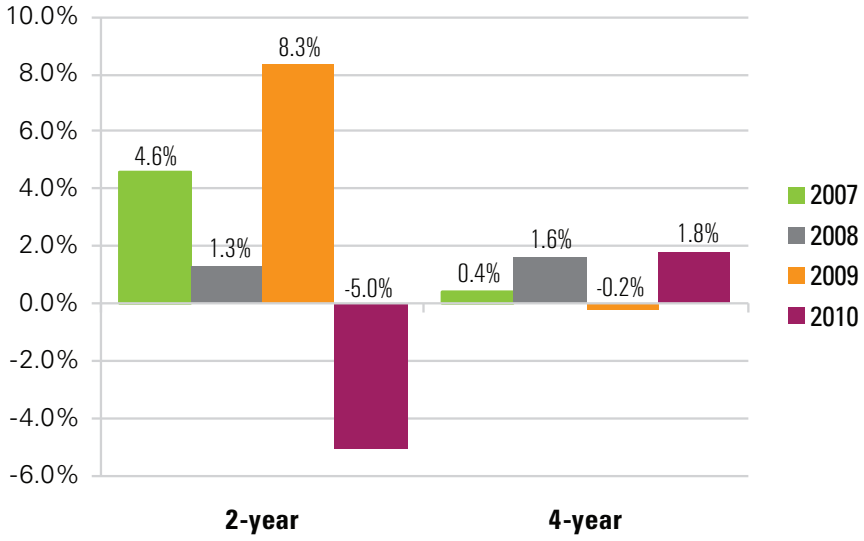
The enrollment trend within public institutions appeared to fluctuate most in the two-year sector, with an increase of 8.3% from 2008 to 2009 and a dip of 5.0% from 2009 to 2010 (see Figure 6). Despite this relative volatility, enrollment in public two-year institutions was still notably higher in 2010 than before the recession — reaching a net gain of more than 9% over 2006 figures.

Figure 5. Rate of Change from Previous Fall, Beginning Cohort Enrollment by Control, 4-Year Sector*



*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 5.

Figure 6. Rate of Change from Previous Fall, Beginning Cohort Enrollment by Sector, Public Institutions*



*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 6.

INTENSITY OF ENROLLMENT

In general, across all institution types, the share of part-time enrollment compared to full-time enrollment showed only small increases across years (see Table 2 and Figure 7).

Full-time status is here defined by the institutions but generally represents enrollment in 12 or more credit hours for the fall semester, while part-time status typically represents enrollment in fewer than 12 credit hours.

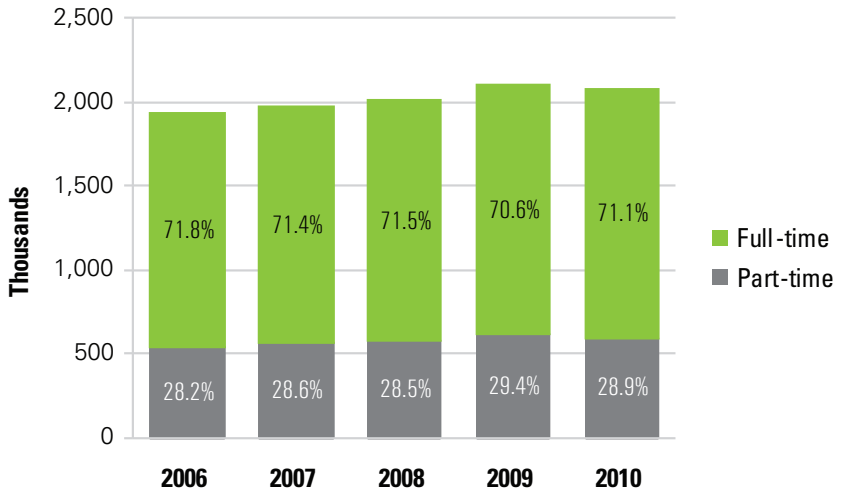
Trends in unduplicated enrollment for both full-time and part-time students resemble the trend in total enrollment across the five entering cohorts. That is, enrollment increased steadily from 2006 to 2009 yet dropped in 2010 (see Figure 7).

The relative share of unduplicated part-time and full-time enrollments remained quite stable across most years — except for 2009, when the share of part-time students increased approximately 1%.

Table 2. Intensity of Enrollment Across Cohorts

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Part-time	544,728	564,663	573,920	616,829	598,747
Full-time	1,388,565	1,411,236	1,439,743	1,483,118	1,475,667
Total	**1,933,293**	**1,975,899**	**2,013,663**	**2,099,947**	**2,074,413**

Figure 7. Intensity of Enrollment Across Cohorts*

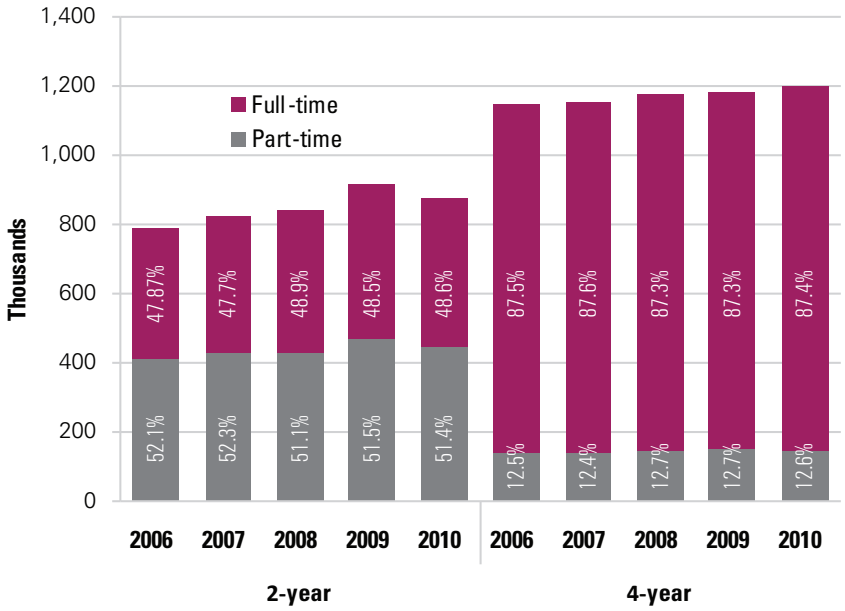


**This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 7.*

INTENSITY OF ENROLLMENT

Part-time shares in the two-year sector declined slightly between 2006 and 2010, with a larger drop in 2008 and then a partial recovery in 2009 and 2010 (see Figure 8). Overall numbers, however, show slight increases in part-time enrollment in the two-year sector, reflecting the fact that the decline in share was not as large as the overall growth in numbers. More students enrolling full time at two-year institutions may indicate a shift of some students who might have attended a four-year institution full time choosing instead to enroll at a two-year institution while maintaining their intended enrollment intensity.

Figure 8. Intensity of Enrollment by Sector*

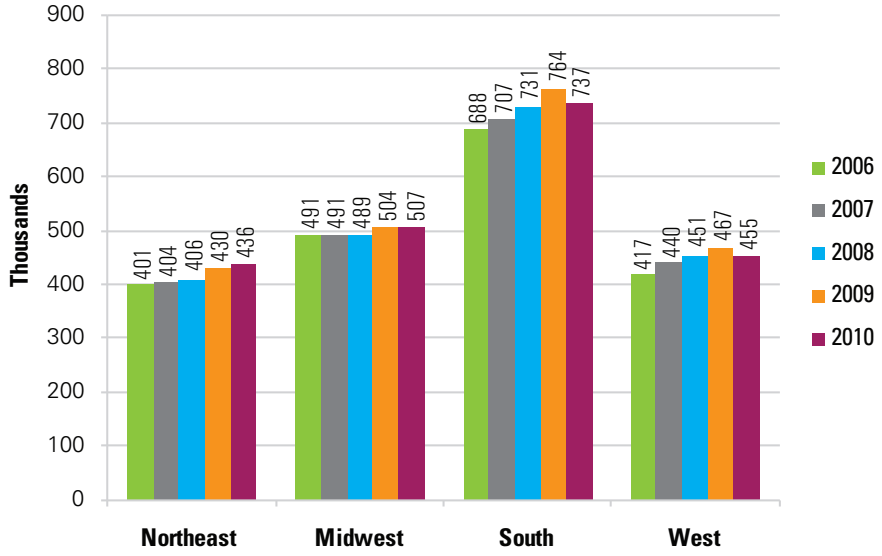


This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 8.

REGIONAL ENROLLMENTS

The South enrolled the largest number of traditional-age first-time students across years, followed by the Midwest, the West, and the Northeast (see Figure 9). Most of the increases from 2006 to 2009 took place in the South and West, which saw nearly all of the decline in 2010. The largest residential populations in the U.S. are in the South and West regions (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007; see Appendix C for more detail). In addition, NCES data show that in 2009 and 2010 high school graduate cohorts decreased nationally and in all regions except the South (Hussar & Bailey, 2011). Given these contextual factors, therefore, these enrollment results appear to follow regional demographic patterns more closely than any specific variations in regional economic conditions.

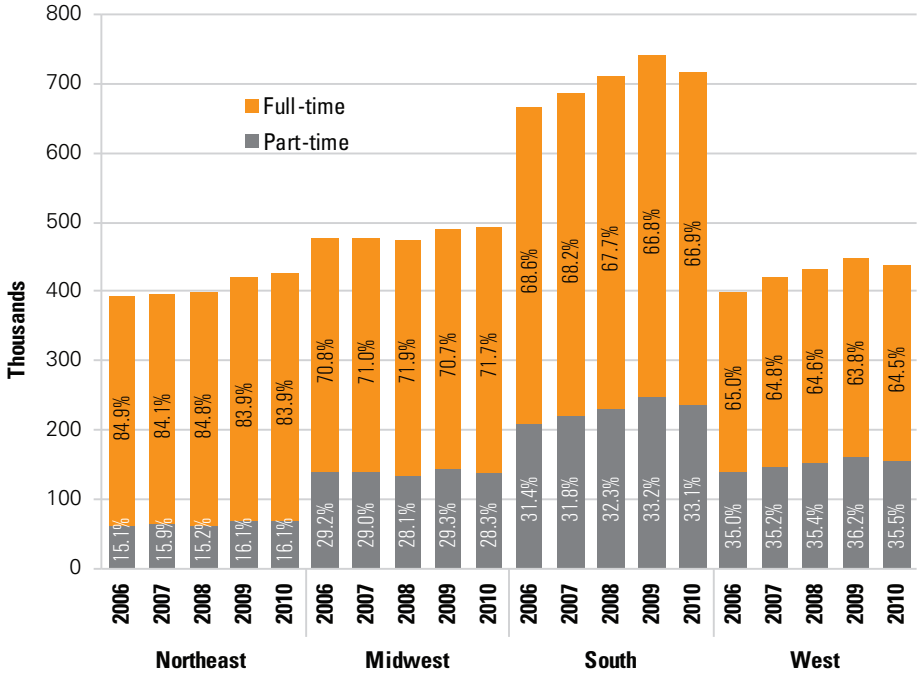
Figure 9. Enrollment by Region*



*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 9.

All four regions saw slight to moderate changes between full-time and part-time enrollment shares (see Figure 10). The patterns across regions shown here may be influenced by the distribution — discussed previously — of different types of institutions across different geographical areas. For example, the South and West regions enrolled greater proportions of students in two-year institutions — institutions that tend to enroll greater proportions of part-time students.

Figure 10. Intensity of Enrollment by Region*

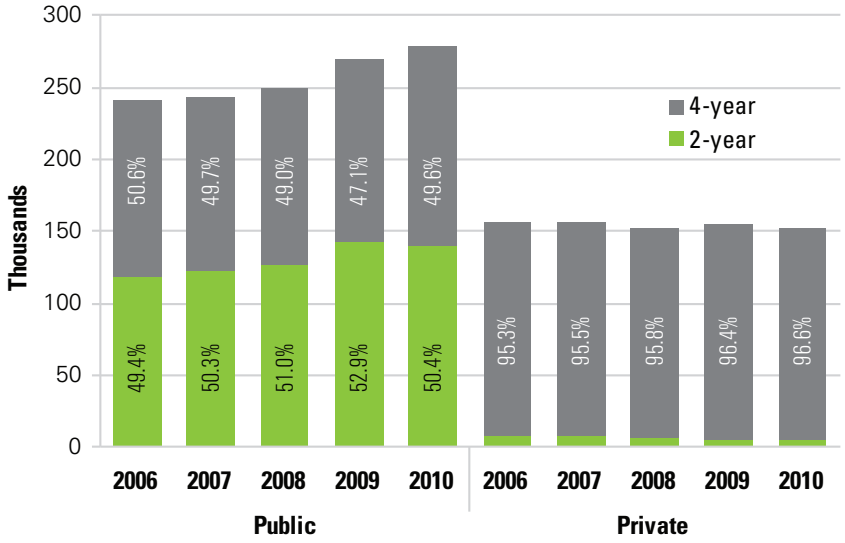


*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 10.

ENROLLMENT BY SECTOR AND CONTROL: THE REGIONS

A closer examination of the Northeast region by sector and control suggests that gains in the share of students enrolled within community colleges through 2009 were accompanied by decreases in the proportion of students enrolled in the public four-year sector (see Figure 11A). That is, trends in the public sector reflected the overall pattern of enrollment.

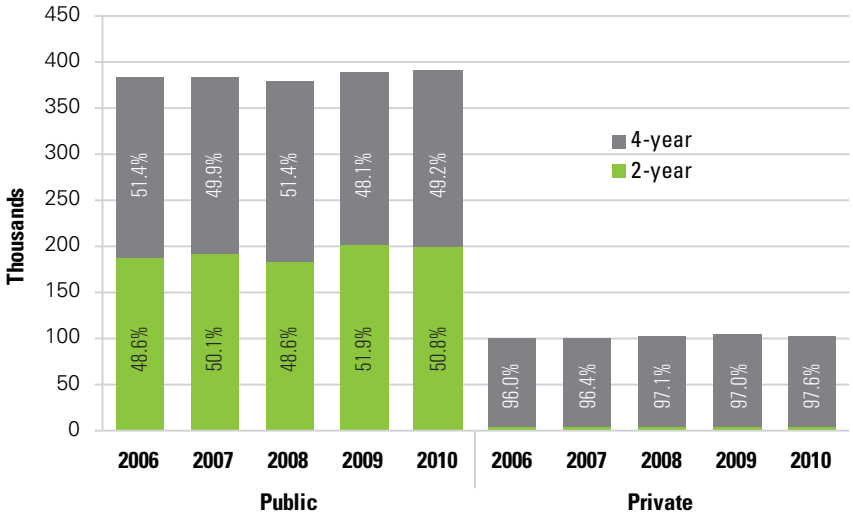
Figure 11A. Enrollment by Sector and Control, Northeast Region*



**This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 11.*

No clear enrollment trend was evident in the Midwest region (see Figure 11B). Although slight fluctuations were seen across the years, the changes were small compared to the other regions. The stability of these enrollments across the years could reflect the observation that the recession hit the Midwest later and more slowly than it did other regions, such as the West and Northeast.

Figure 11B. Enrollment by Sector and Control, Midwest Region*

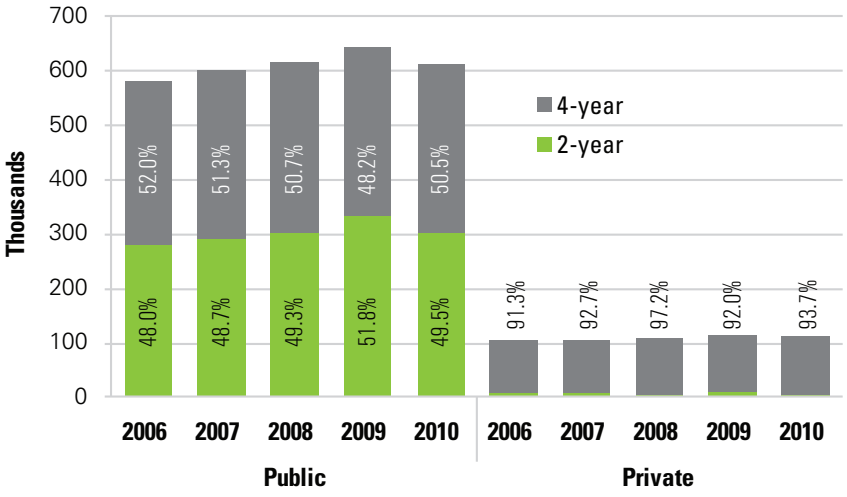


**This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 12.*

ENROLLMENT BY SECTOR AND CONTROL: THE REGIONS

Given that the South has the largest population of traditional-age college students among these four regions, it is not surprising that the trends in the South were similar to those in the country as a whole (see Figure 11C). That is, national trends during these years reflected changes occurring in the largest, most populous region.

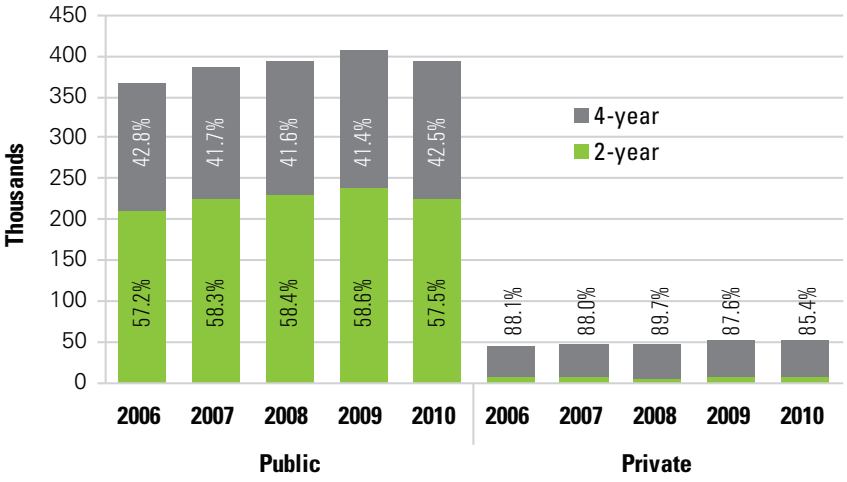
Figure 11C. Enrollment by Sector and Control, South Region*



This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 13.

The West experienced some of the earliest and harshest impacts of the recession. The enrollment pattern before, during, and after the recession in the West coincided with a crashing housing market and rising unemployment as well as with enrollment surges in California's community colleges and public university systems (see Figure 11D). Curiously, four-year private colleges and universities — including many high-cost institutions — did not see major decreases in enrollment, perhaps suggesting that these trends reflected attempts by institutions to maintain enrollments by extending recruitment and financial aid practices, as well as the countercyclical phenomenon of students pursuing higher education amidst decreased opportunity-costs in hard economic times.

Figure 11D. Enrollment by Sector and Control, West Region*

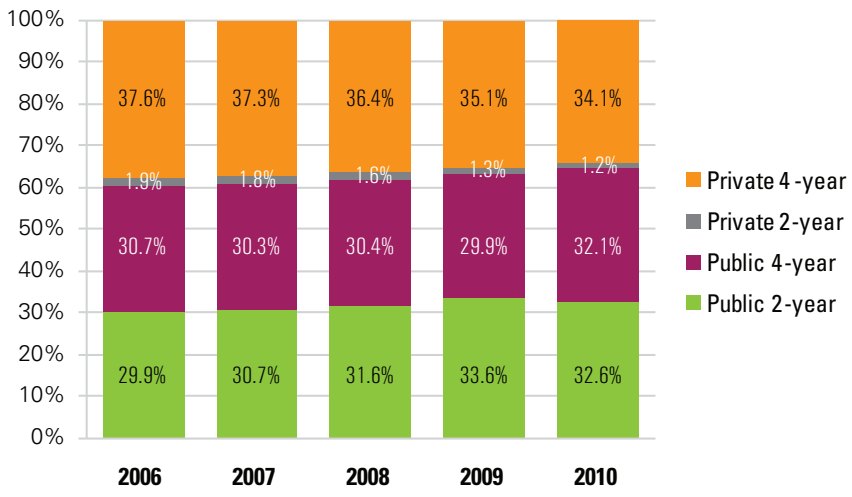


This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 14.

ENROLLMENT SHARE CHANGE BY SECTOR AND CONTROL

The Northeast region saw a large shift in proportion of enrollment from private four-year institutions, the largest sector in this region, to public institutions across the five cohorts examined here (see Figure 12A). In the public sector, two-year institutions enjoyed a market share of traditional-age first-time enrollment similar to that of their four-year counterparts over the five years. An exception in this pattern emerged in 2009, however, when public two-year institutions enrolled approximately 4% more students than public four-year institutions enrolled. In absolute numbers, the two-year public sector expanded steadily from 2006 to 2009.

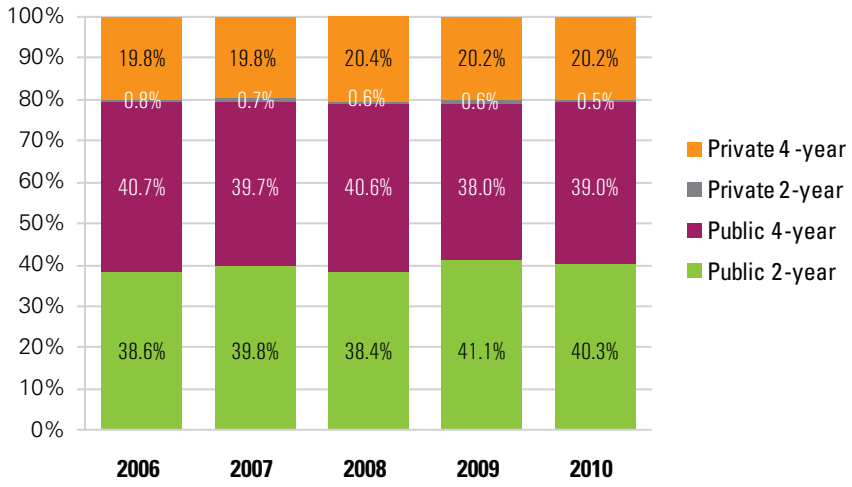
Figure 12A. Enrollment Share Change by Sector and Control, Northeast Region*



*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 11.

Approximately 80% of traditional-age first-time students in the Midwest were enrolled in public institutions, whereas the Midwest private four-year sector maintained its 20% share over the five cohorts (see Figure 12B). The Midwest region saw a notable overall shift in relative size of enrollment from public four-year to public two-year institutions from 2006 to 2010. However, the respective market shares of these two sectors showed some fluctuations from year to year.

Figure 12B. Enrollment Share Change by Sector and Control, Midwest Region*

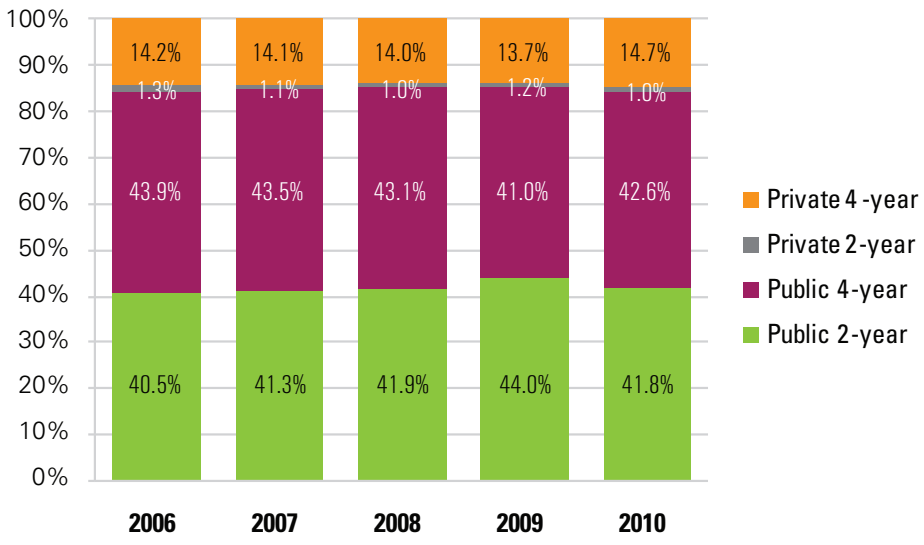


*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 12.

ENROLLMENT SHARE CHANGE BY SECTOR AND CONTROL

In the South (results shown in Figure 12C), year-to-year changes in all sectors were slight to moderate for all years except 2009, when the public two-year sector expanded by more than 2% (while the public four-year sector shrank by about 2% that year), after which the public two-year enrollment share returned to its 2008 level.

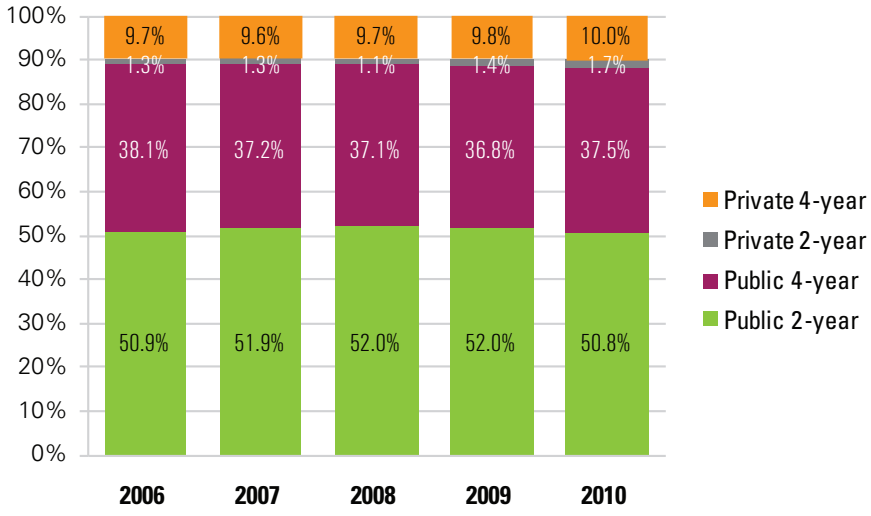
Figure 12C. Enrollment by Sector and Control, South Region*



This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 13.

The West saw the largest proportion of enrollment in the public sector (approximately 90%, as shown in Figure 12D), within which two-year institutions enrolled more than half of all traditional-age first-time freshmen. The year-to-year changes in the public two-year sector mirrored shifts in the opposite direction in the public four-year sector, possibly suggesting a shift in the college choice process for some students who in better economic times might have entered four-year public institutions but enrolled in their two-year counterparts instead.

Figure 12D. Enrollment by Sector and Control, West Region*



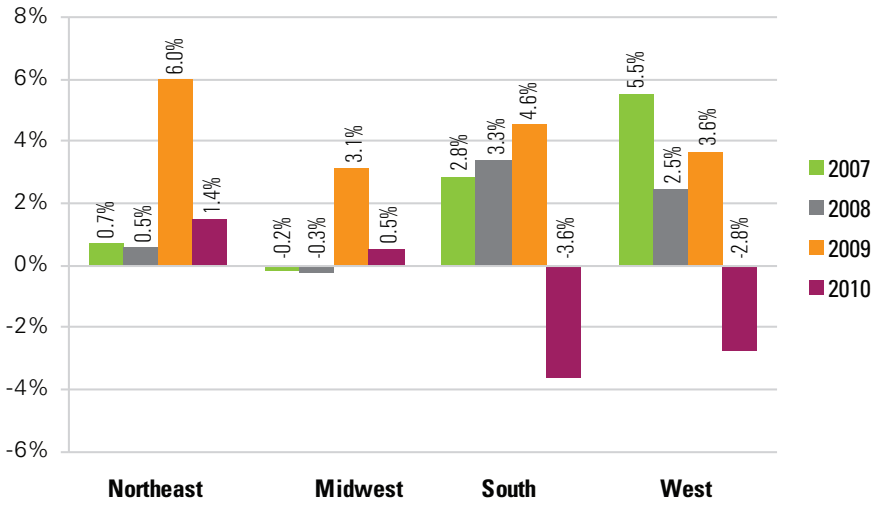
This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 14.

RATE OF CHANGE IN ENROLLMENT ACROSS REGIONS

Figure 13 shows that year-to-year changes in enrollment differed across regions as well. Specifically, the Northeast saw the greatest rate of change in 2009 — an increase of approximately 6% — and relatively slower growth in other years. Enrollment in the Midwest saw smaller fluctuations across the years, despite a moderate 3.1% increase from 2008 to 2009. The South enjoyed a steady increase in traditional-age first-time enrollment from 2006 to 2009 (by 2.8%, 3.3%, and 4.6% across the respective years), followed by a 3.6% drop in enrollment in 2010 — resulting in totals still substantially higher than prerecession levels. To a great extent, differences across cohorts in these years in the West resembled the enrollment patterns of the South, except for an enrollment surge in the West in 2007. These patterns may reflect regional differences in higher education systems and differing distribution of institutions across types.

Further, large declines in enrollments in the West may have reflected the steep budget cuts to education in several large western states early in the economic recession — in California and Arizona in particular. As a result of these pressures, some traditionally open-access institutions (i.e., some state universities and community colleges) employed strategies such as enrollment caps, reductions in tuition discounting, and selective admissions.

Figure 13. Rate of Change from Previous Fall, Beginning Cohort Enrollment by Region*

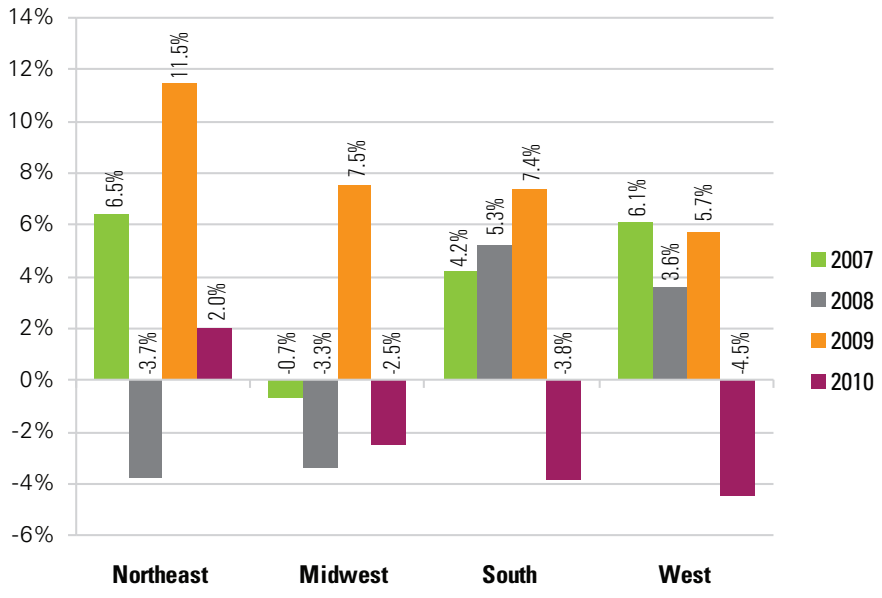


**This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 15.*

RATE OF CHANGE IN ENROLLMENT ACROSS REGIONS

For both the South and the West, part-time enrollment grew steadily from 2006 to 2009, but dropped by 3.8% and 4.5%, respectively, between 2009 and 2010 with enrollment intensity patterns in both regions resembling national trends (see Figure 14). In contrast, institutions in the Northeast experienced a moderate drop of 3.7% in part-time student enrollments from 2007 to 2008, followed by a major increase of 11.5% in 2009. The Midwest also saw substantial growth (7.5%) in part-time enrollment in 2009 yet decreases in other years. These results point to the possibility that the overall decreases in 2010 part-time enrollment reflected changes in enrollments at community colleges — where larger proportions of students attend part-time — and may have been at least partly attributable to the strains on capacity experienced by community colleges in particular as well as institutions' adaptations of course scheduling, financial aid, recruitment, and admissions practices to cope with increased enrollments in the context of budget cuts.

Figure 14. Rate of Change from Previous Fall, Part-Time Beginning Cohort Enrollment by Region*

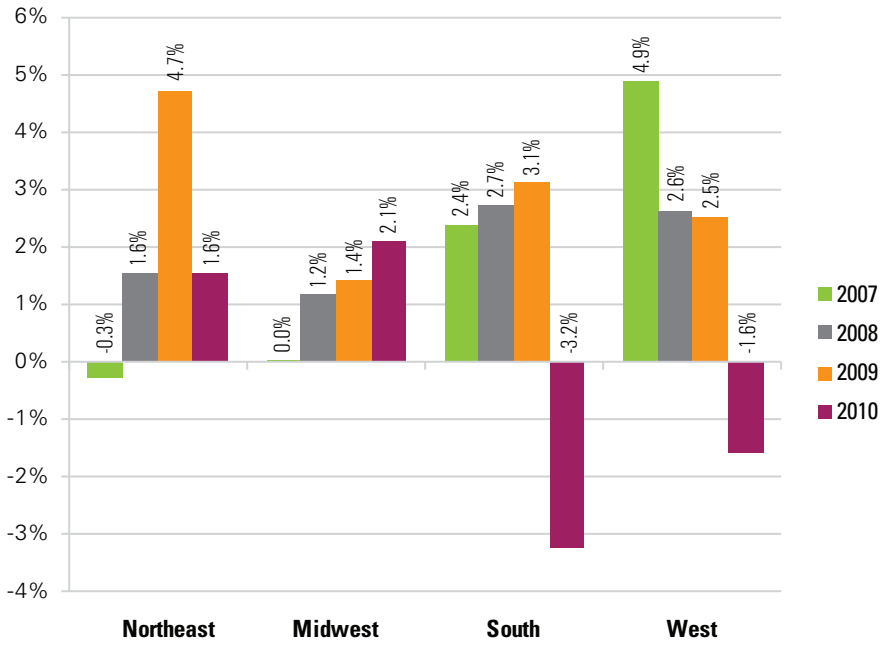


*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 16.

RATE OF CHANGE IN ENROLLMENT ACROSS REGIONS

In both the South and the West, trends in full-time enrollment resembled those in part-time enrollment but were smaller in magnitude (Figure 15). The Midwest's full-time enrollment grew continuously over the five years of the analysis, and the Northeast region saw a general increase of full-time enrollment that peaked in 2009, with rates up 4.7% from 2008 levels.

Figure 15. Rate of Change from Previous Fall, Full-Time Beginning Cohort Enrollment by Region*

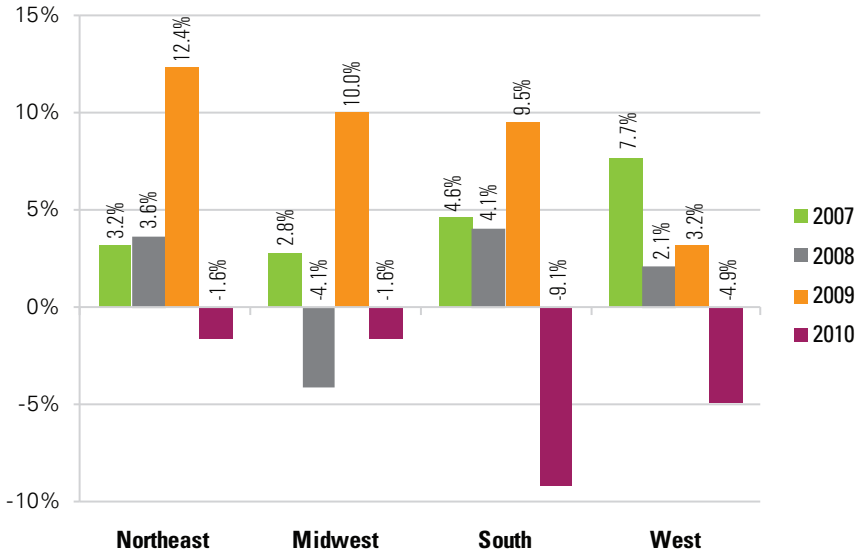


This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 17.

RATE OF CHANGE IN ENROLLMENT ACROSS REGIONS

Except for the Midwest, all regions showed similar trends of declines or lesser increases in full-time enrollment between 2009 and 2010, in contrast to greater increases in the previous year (see Figure 16). This may be in part attributable to a later and relatively less severe experience of the economic recession seen in the Midwest as compared to other regions. Further, the Northeast, South, and West experienced surges in enrollment in fall 2009, when traditional-age students may have adjusted their enrollment decisions in response partly to economic conditions (consistent with the delayed countercyclicality noted by Kantrowitz [2010]) and when institutions were changing recruitment, admissions, and financial aid practices to cope with economic transitions.

Figure 16. Rate of Change from Previous Fall, Beginning Cohort Enrollment, Public Two-Year Institutions by Region*



**This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 18.*

Except for moderate to large increases across the board in 2009, no consistent patterns across regions emerged from the examination of changes in beginning cohort enrollment at public two-year institutions specifically. New community college enrollments in both the Northeast and the South grew steadily from 2006 to 2008, and the growth rate peaked for both regions (12.4% in the Northeast and 9.5% in the South) in fall 2009, followed in fall 2010 by a slight decrease (-1.6%) in the Northeast and a significant decrease (-9.1%) in the South, returning enrollments to the level seen there in 2008.

The peak growth (7.7%) in the West appeared in fall 2007. As in other results seen in this report, the largest surge in enrollments occurred earlier in the West than in other regions, perhaps coinciding with the relatively early onset and severity of the housing crisis in California and other western states. In contrast to other regions, Midwestern public two-year institutions showed a clear decrease (4.1%) in enrollment of the 2008 beginning cohort, indicating that community college enrollments declined even beyond the smaller increase the previous year.

RATE OF CHANGE IN ENROLLMENT ACROSS REGIONS

For a more in-depth look at enrollments within regions, the next set of charts details changes across cohorts entering different institution types in each region in turn.

In the Northeast public four-year sector (Figure 17A), the rate of change increased steadily from 2007 to 2010, indicating that greater increases in beginning cohort enrollments occurred each year during that time. As discussed previously in this section, a contrasting trend was seen in the Northeast public two-year sector, where the rate of change increased steadily from 2006 to 2008, surged in 2009, and then declined in 2010.

Figure 17A. Rate of Change from Previous Fall, Beginning Cohort Enrollment by Sector and Control, Northeast Region* **

**This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 19.*

*** Due to small number of institutions, results for private two-years are excluded from this and all subsequent charts.*

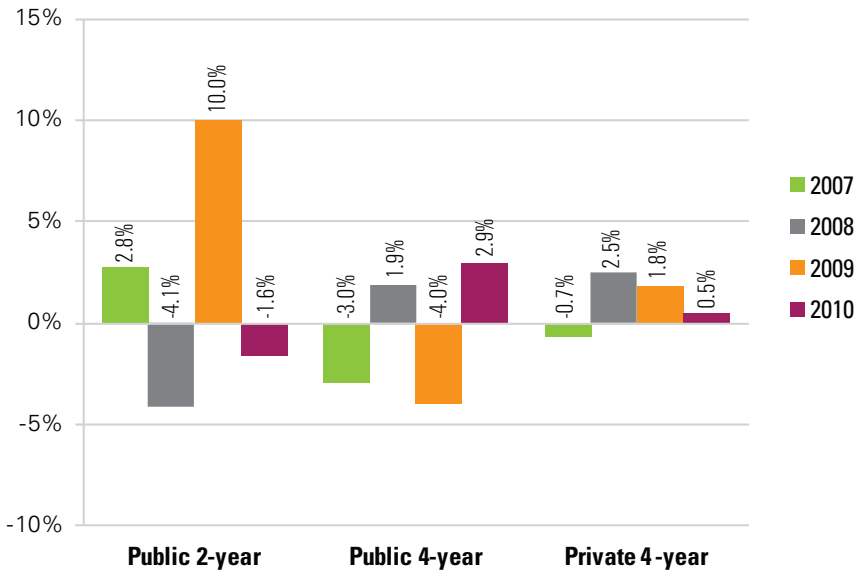
In the Northeast as elsewhere, changes in enrollment growth in the private four-year sector were smaller than in other sectors. These results suggest perhaps that private four-year institutions — especially in this region, where many selective private colleges and universities are located — were relatively buffered from the enrollment changes that in other sectors coincided with the economic crisis. These notably unchanging enrollments across recession years occurred, it seems, despite the relatively higher cost of attendance associated with many private four-year institutions.

Nevertheless, actions taken by private institutions — including targeting students most likely to enroll for recruitment and admission, increasing institutional financial aid, and in some cases discontinuing need-blind admissions (Brint, 2010; McHooley, 2010; Pals, 2009; Travis, 2009) — suggest that, the relative fixedness of the enrollment numbers aside, private four-year colleges and universities were experiencing changes during the economic crisis.

RATE OF CHANGE IN ENROLLMENT ACROSS REGIONS

In the Midwest (Figure 17B), increases in public two-year sector enrollment coincided (in 2007 and 2009) with decreases in the public four-year sector. It is not clear how the year-to-year fluctuations reflect the economic changes in the region as a whole, and as we noted we cannot suppose that changes are the result of the recession and poor economy alone. Yet, with these caveats in mind, the surge of enrollment in public two-year institutions in 2009 and the moderate increase in public four-year institutions in 2010 could suggest that some price-sensitive students might have enrolled in public two-year institutions as opposed to public four-year institutions during the economically difficult time but that as the economy improved they chose public four-year institutions. Further research on these patterns and questions is necessary, however, before we can draw firm conclusions about the role of the economy in these descriptive findings.

Figure 17B. Rate of Change from Previous Fall, Beginning Cohort Enrollment by Sector and Control, Midwest Region*

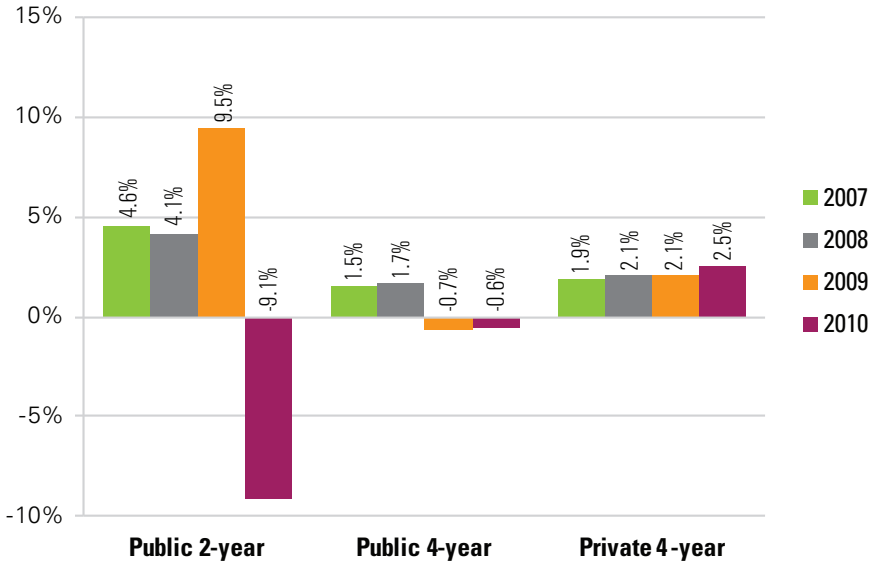


*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 20.

RATE OF CHANGE IN ENROLLMENT ACROSS REGIONS

Public two-year institutions in the South (Figure 17C) experienced more conspicuous changes in enrollment than other sectors in that region. As noted previously, moderate yearly increases in beginning cohort enrollment were seen in fall 2007 (4.6%) and 2008 (4.1%), while more sizable growth (9.5%) occurred in 2009, followed by a significant drop (9.07%) in 2010, returning enrollments to the 2008 level. We note also that private four-year institutions in this region saw slightly greater growth each year.

Figure 17C. Rate of Change from Previous Fall, Beginning Cohort Enrollment by Sector and Control, South Region*

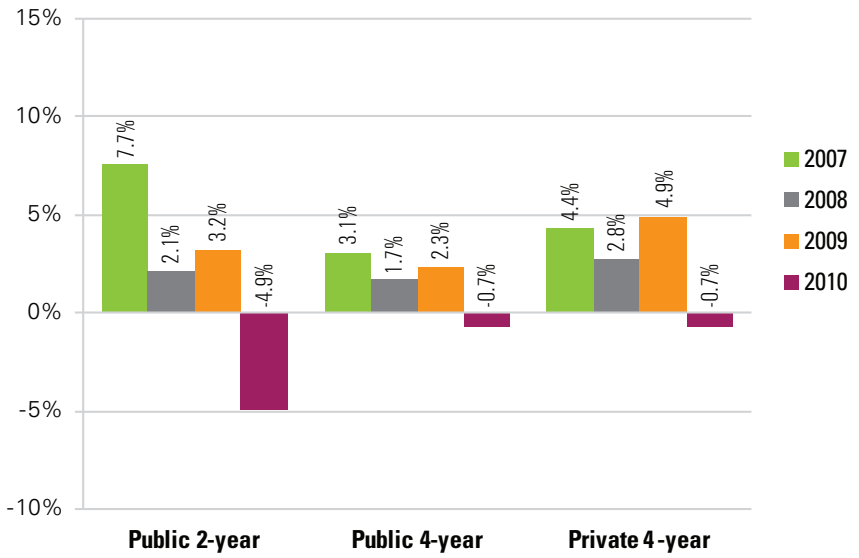


*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 21.

RATE OF CHANGE IN ENROLLMENT ACROSS REGIONS

In the West (Figure 17D), higher education sectors demonstrated similar trends in rate of change in beginning fall cohort enrollment, with the most conspicuous changes occurring in the public two-year sector, followed by the private and public four-year sectors. Across all sectors in the West, relative increases compared to the previous year's beginning cohorts were highest in 2007 and 2009, while enrollment changes were smaller for the 2008 cohort and were negative for the 2010 cohort. These results are consistent with the patterns seen in other region-by-region analyses in this report — with the largest increases occurring earlier in the West than in other regions.

Figure 17D. Rate of Change from Previous Fall, Beginning Cohort Enrollment by Sector and Control, West Region*



*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 22.

RETENTION AND PERSISTENCE

As noted previously, NSC data allow for the empirical exploration of two key educational outcomes — retention and persistence — in new ways that allow researchers to draw an empirically grounded and meaningful distinction between these often-conflated measures. Retention, a more commonly used measure, is defined here as continued enrollment or degree completion within the same higher education institution for the fall semesters of a student's first and second year. In contrast, persistence is defined as continued enrollment or degree completion at any U.S. higher education institution for the fall semesters of a student's first and second year. According to this definition, persisters are students who continued their enrollment in higher education from their first to second year (or completed a degree) at any institution — including an institution different from the one where they enrolled initially. Thus, nonpersisters are considered to be those students who stopped out of higher education altogether following their first year of enrollment in higher education. Particularly given the limitations of many data sets, the opportunity to examine and compare both retention and persistence rates is an important advantage — with many implications for institutions and policy makers. We begin to explore the distinction in this report.

Table 3. Fall-to-Fall Retention* and Persistence Rates by Entering Cohort**

	2006	2007	2008	2009
Retained	1,274,549	1,288,395	1,336,399	1,372,457
Retention Rate	63.79%	63.10%	64.36%	63.37%
Persisted	1,557,588	1,580,206	1,633,416	1,661,051
Persistence Rate	77.96%	77.39%	78.67%	76.69%
Total	**1,997,990**	**2,041,844**	**2,076,287**	**2,165,950**

Retention is defined as continued enrollment (or degree completion) within the* **same *higher education institution for the fall semesters of a student's first and second year.*

***Persistence is defined in this report as continued enrollment (or degree completion) at* **any** *higher education institution – including one different from the institution of initial enrollment – in the fall semesters of a student's first and second year.*

As shown in Table 3, first-to-second-year persistence rates were generally about 13% higher than retention rates across cohorts, underscoring the point that much research based on retention measures — a conventional measure used in many "student persistence" studies — underestimates the number of students who continue in higher education. Between-cohort comparisons suggest that the 2008 cohort — who entered during the second year of the recession — demonstrated relatively higher retention (64.4%) and persistence (78.7%) rates than the other four cohorts shown in Table 3.

The 2009 cohort, in contrast, appears to have persisted at a lower rate — approximately 2% lower nationally — reflecting a moderate yet noteworthy overall change in the reenrollment decisions of the 2009 cohort versus those entering in previous years. Moreover, although 2009 retention rates also dropped slightly from the previous year, they remained relatively more static across the five cohorts. Thus, in 2009, although similar proportions of students continued enrollment in the institutions where they began (i.e., were retained), lower proportions of students continued enrollment at a different institution (i.e., persisted).

RETENTION AND PERSISTENCE

The trends here are notably different from those reported by other national measures of student retention — particularly those of the NCES Graduation Rate Survey (GRS), an annual component of the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Several differences between IPEDS data and the data presented here help explain these discrepancies. Because it is comprised of institution-level data, IPEDS reports student cohort retention rates from year to year and is unable to report student persistence across institutions. Important differences in sample definitions contribute to different results as well.

Differences in data definitions and cohort selection criteria (see the blue box on this page) have implications for the results in this report. Thus, NSC results will differ from IPEDS particularly in the trends at community colleges, where many students attend part time and many may also be excluded from IPEDS as non-degree-seeking students. These students are, in contrast, included in NSC results on enrollment, retention, and persistence.

Retention and persistence rates should also be understood in the context of institution type (e.g., four-year, two-year, public, private). Students who began at private four-year institutions had higher retention and persistence rates than did students who initially enrolled in other types of institutions — followed by public four-year, public two-year, and private two-year enrollees.[1] Disaggregating by sector and control, we also observe that the lower overall persistence for the 2009 cohort compared to previous cohorts appears to have been concentrated almost entirely in the public two-year sector.

Often overlooked in education policy debates, the differences in retention rates (a typical measure of institutional success) and persistence rates (generally not captured by research studies because of data limitations) were particularly revealing in this analysis. The difference between retention rates and persistence rates by institution type averaged more than 13% across the years of this report. For community colleges, the institutions most harshly judged by these measures, the difference was greater than for all other institution types across the years examined here — with the retention rates for students who first enrolled in the public two-year sector more than 15% lower than the persistence rates. This difference reflects the high rates of transfer among students starting at two-year institutions even in their first year. Because regions differ in terms of the types of higher education institutions available, it is important also to understand retention and persistence in geographic contexts. We consider these patterns in the next section.

Definitions and Cohort Selection: NSC Signature Report Compared to IPEDS

Age
The cohorts studied in this report are restricted to students 20 years old and younger who were entering college for the first time; this selection produces cohorts of traditional-age students, whereas IPEDS examines first-time students of any age.

First-Time Status
IPEDS uses self-reported institutional data to determine students' first-time status, while NSC data classify students as first-time college entrants, based on national tracking of enrollments. A student is designated as "first-time" if he or she shows no previous enrollment in any higher education institution for two years prior to the initial fall.

Degree-Seeking Status
The GRS retention rates reported by IPEDS rely on institution-level self-reports on degree-seeking status and only include data for students enrolled full time. NSC data presented in this report differ on these points as well in that they do not account for degree-seeking status and include both part-time and full-time students.

[1] *Due to the low participation rates of these institutions in NSC as well as the low student enrollments within private two-year institutions nationwide, data for private two-year institutions are not presented within this section. Please see Appendix A for more information regarding the data, Appendix B for coverage rates, and Tables 23–32 in Appendix D for the retention and persistence rates of these institutions across institution type and region.*

RETENTION AND PERSISTENCE

In this section, we present two views of student retention and persistence — national and regional. Within each view, we present retention and persistence, first, for the overall cohort and, second, for the full-time cohort.

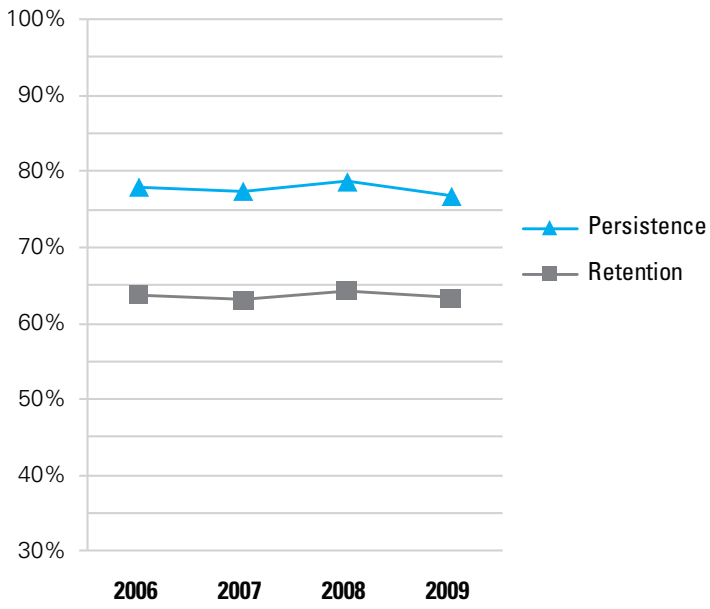
Retention vs. Persistence: The Distinction in the Definitions

Retention is defined in this report as continued enrollment (or degree completion) within the *same* higher education institution in the fall semesters of a student's first and second year.

Persistence is defined in this report as continued enrollment (or degree completion) at *any* higher education institution — including one different from the institution of initial enrollment — in the fall semesters of a student's first and second year.

Overall, these results did not show large drops in retention, as would be expected if students had transferred in large numbers to lower-cost institutions (see Figure 18). Similarly, drops in persistence that might have resulted from great numbers of students dropping out entirely were not apparent.

Figure 18. Fall-to-Fall Retention and Persistence Rates by Entering Cohort*

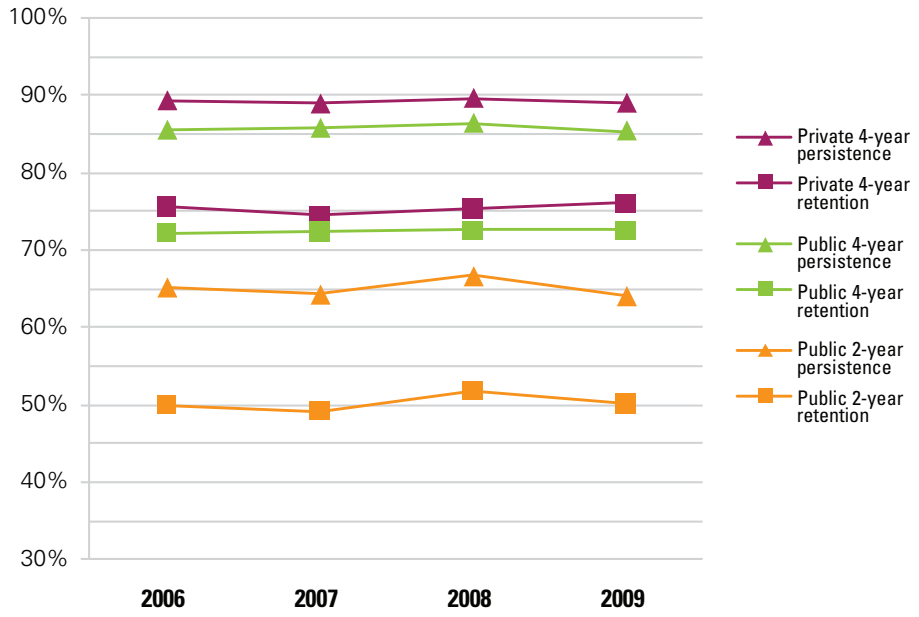


**This figure is based on data shown in Table 3, page 29.*

RETENTION AND PERSISTENCE

The relative stability in retention and persistence rates during these years suggests that adaptive strategies of institutions and states, in addition to increases in Pell grants, may have been chiefly responsible for maintaining retention and persistence (see Figure 19).

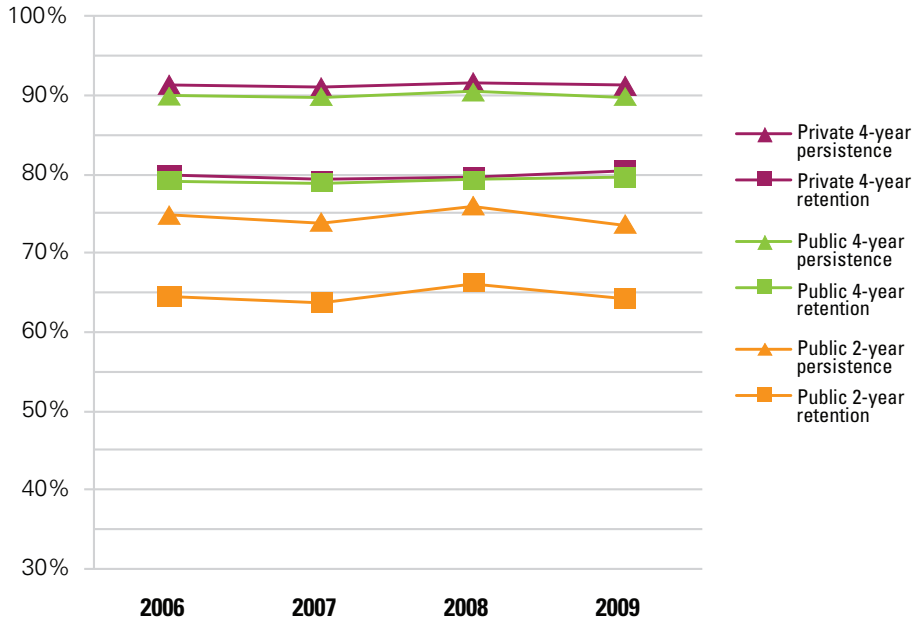
Figure 19. Retention and Persistence Rates by Sector and Control*



This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 23.

In general, fall-to-fall retention and persistence for beginning full-time students were similar across cohorts and across public and private four-year institutions (see Figure 20). The difference between retention and persistence rates was approximately 10% within the four-year sector. Full-time beginning cohorts in the public two-year sector had lower retention and persistence rates than their four-year counterparts had. Interestingly, the 2008 full-time cohort beginning in the public two-year sector during the second year of the recession showed slightly higher retention and persistence rates than other cohorts showed.

Figure 20. Fall-to-Fall Retention and Persistence, Beginning Full-Time Students*



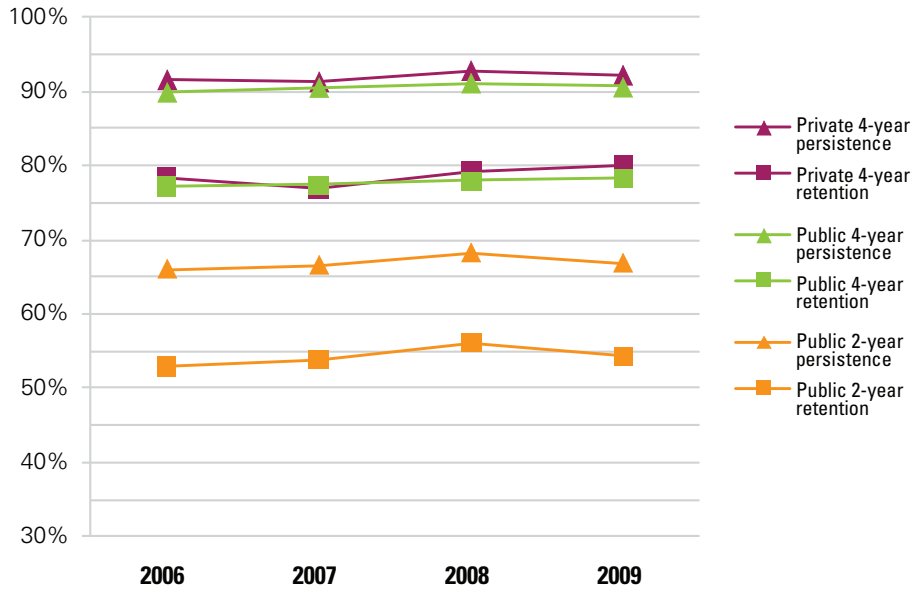
This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 24.

RETENTION AND PERSISTENCE BY SECTOR AND CONTROL: THE REGIONS

The Northeast (Figure 21A) reflected national trends in terms of retention and persistence rates by institution type, yet variations appeared. In particular, the four-year sector in this region seemed to have the highest retention and persistence rates compared to other regions, and the differences between public and private four-year institutions appeared to be relatively small. The high concentration of highly selective private institutions within the Northeast may partially explain these dissimilarities across regions, as could state policy differences with regard to public funding of higher education institutions.

Differences in rates across regions became more apparent as the recession deepened. Although public two-year institutions consistently had the lowest retention and persistence rates as compared to all other institution types, trends showed these rates at the peak with the entering cohort of 2008. Whereas public four-year rates remained relatively stable and private four-year rates fluctuated, retention and persistence rates for students who initially enrolled in public two-year institutions increased for each cohort through the entering class of 2008 and decreased for the 2009 cohort.

Figure 21A. Cohort Retention and Persistence Rates by Sector and Control, Northeast Region*

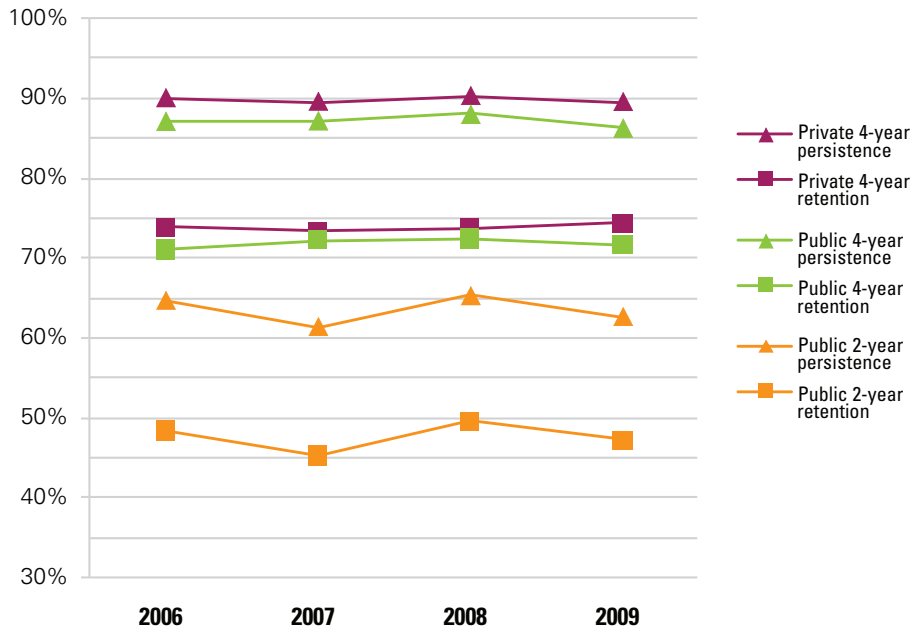


*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 25.

RETENTION AND PERSISTENCE BY SECTOR AND CONTROL: THE REGIONS

The retention and persistence patterns in the Midwest four-year sector also resembled those of the nation as a whole (see Figure 21B). However, while Midwestern students entering two-year colleges in 2007 showed lower rates on both measures than other cohorts, those entering in 2008 had higher rates of retention and persistence. Most notably, the difference between retention and persistence rates at Midwestern public two-year institutions was as much as 16.5%.

Figure 21B. Cohort Retention and Persistence Rates by Sector and Control, Midwest Region*

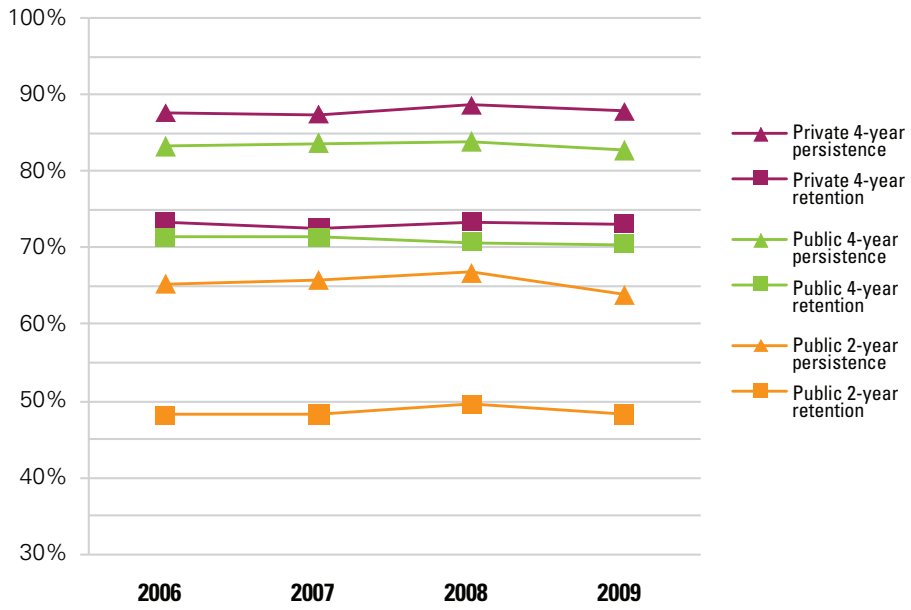


This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 26.

RETENTION AND PERSISTENCE BY SECTOR AND CONTROL: THE REGIONS

In the South (Figure 21C), compared to other cohorts, the 2008 entering cohort showed slightly higher retention and persistence rates in all institution types, except for public four-year institutions. In addition, the two-year sector saw considerable variation in continuing enrollment across cohorts, peaking for the 2008 entering cohort and dropping for the 2009 cohort.

Figure 21C. Cohort Retention and Persistence Rates by Sector and Control, South Region*

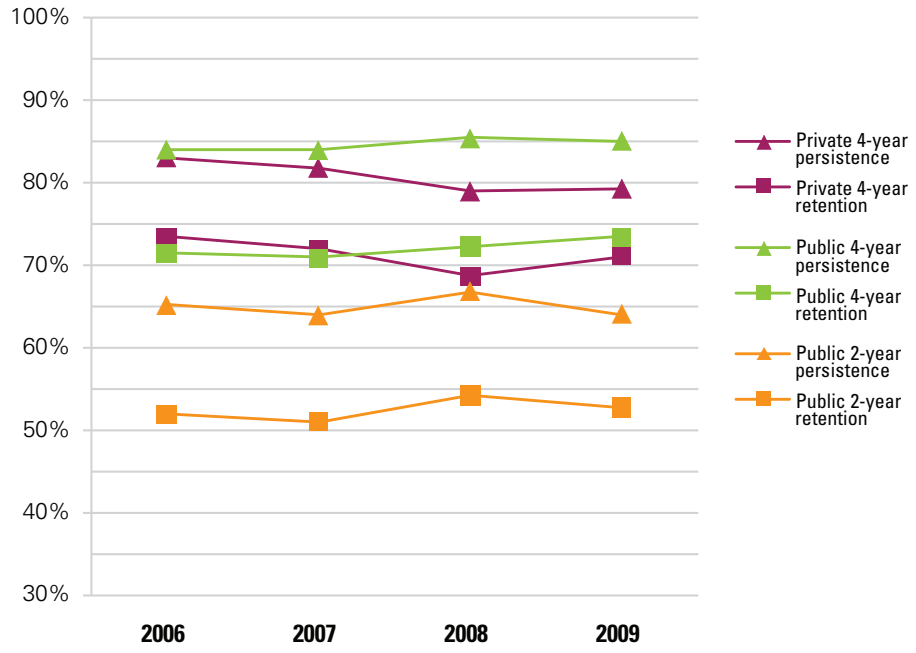


*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 27.

RETENTION AND PERSISTENCE BY SECTOR AND CONTROL: THE REGIONS

The West showed a distinctive pattern in retention and persistence rates across cohorts (see Figure 21D). Contrary to trends in higher education generally as well as trends in the other regions, public four-year institutions in the West saw the highest persistence rates among institution types. Moreover, the gap in persistence between the public and private four-year sectors expanded as the economic recession deepened. These results suggest the possibility that some students who enrolled in more expensive (private) institutions may have stopped out during these years of particular financial strain. Likewise, students who began in public institutions might have perceived more varied options for reenrolling in less expensive institutions. These possibilities — supported by theory and research on college enrollment during economic recessions — offer some source of explanation, although it is important to acknowledge that more factors were in play than the economy alone.

Figure 21D. Cohort Retention and Persistence Rates by Sector and Control, West Region*



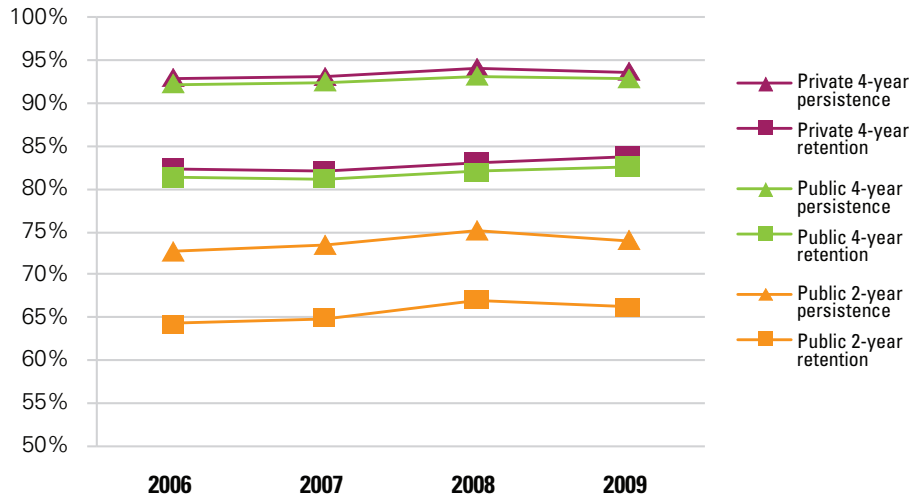
This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 28.

Further, although student retention fluctuated slightly, persistence rates at public four-year institutions outpaced those of private four-year institutions from cohort to cohort. While students who began in public institutions tended to continue in the same institution, those who began in private institutions were more likely to change institutions or to stop out. The recovery of retention in the four-year sector as represented by the 2009 cohort seemed to coincide with the technical end of the recession — although it is important to note that economic and fiscal conditions remained difficult for many families and higher education institutions, as unemployment rates remained high and education budgets continued to be trimmed well into the following academic year. For students in the West who began in the two-year sector, both retention and persistence rates fluctuated across cohorts; and the gaps between these rates among students who started at two-year institutions remained constant and sizeable — at around 14 percentage points — across the years examined here.

RETENTION AND PERSISTENCE BY SECTOR AND CONTROL: THE REGIONS

The fall-to-fall retention and persistence rates of full-time beginning cohorts in the Northeast showed the same general pattern as seen in general enrollments (see Figure 22A). Students in the Northeast also demonstrated higher levels of retention and persistence than shown in the national averages. These results likely reflect the large numbers of selective private four-year institutions in this region.

Figure 22A. Fall-to-Fall Retention and Persistence, Full-Time Beginning Cohort, Northeast Region*

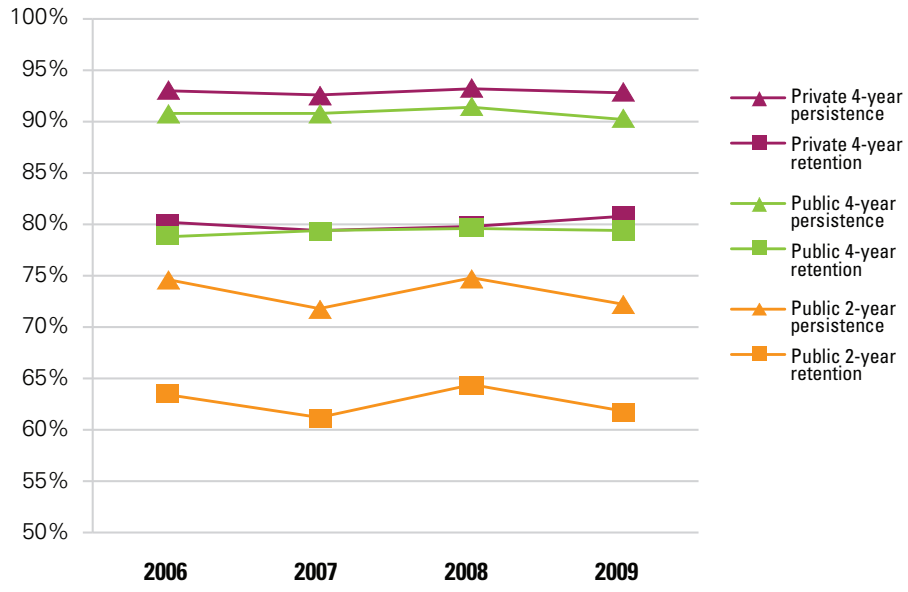


**This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 29.*

RETENTION AND PERSISTENCE BY SECTOR AND CONTROL: THE REGIONS

In the Midwest (Figure 22B), full-time students beginning at private four-year institutions, compared to their public four-year counterparts, had similar retention rates but higher persistence rates. This finding in particular has implications for policy on accountability of community colleges in the region. The results also suggest higher transfer rates among students starting at private four-year institutions. The public two-year sector saw more fluctuation in the retention and persistence of full-time students across cohorts, compared to the Midwest's public and private four-year institutions. A similar pattern was seen in general two-year enrollment figures in the Midwest as well.

Figure 22B. Fall-to-Fall Retention and Persistence, Full-Time Beginning Cohort, Midwest Region*

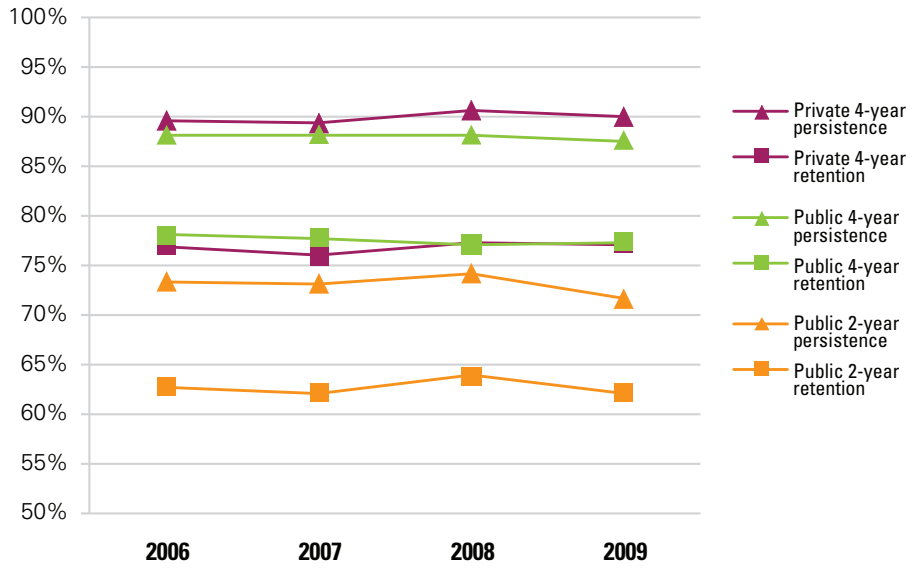


This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 30.

RETENTION AND PERSISTENCE BY SECTOR AND CONTROL: THE REGIONS

The South (Figure 22C) showed retention and persistence rates that were generally lower than the national averages. As in the Midwest, full-time beginning cohorts at public and private four-year institutions showed similar rates of both retention and persistence. In addition, these rates remained relatively constant across the four beginning cohorts. In the public two-year sector, the 2008 full-time beginning cohort had higher retention and persistence rates than all other cohorts; retention and persistence rates for the full-time beginning cohort of 2009 — i.e., the year with the largest enrollment surge in this sector and region — were slightly lower than for all previous cohorts in this analysis.

Figure 22C. Fall-to-Fall Retention and Persistence, Full-Time Beginning Cohort, South Region*

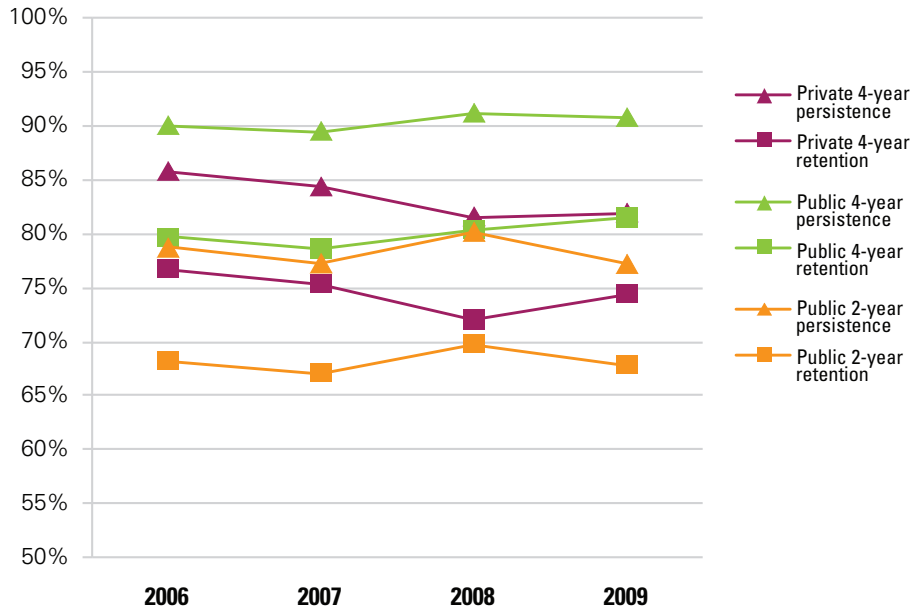


This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 31.

RETENTION AND PERSISTENCE BY SECTOR AND CONTROL: THE REGIONS

The West (Figure 22D) presents a distinct picture of full-time beginning cohort retention and persistence. Particularly, the public four-year sector outperformed all other sectors in terms of retention and persistence rates for full-time students across all cohorts. The private four-year sector saw a decrease in full-time student retention and persistence in 2008, while full-time students at public two-year colleges showed increased persistence and enrollment the same year. Although an increase in retention was seen for the 2009 private four-year sector cohort, the recovery did not rise back to previous levels. This pattern suggests that with the 2008 and 2009 beginning cohorts, greater numbers of full-time students at private institutions failed to reenroll for their second year. In addition, the gap between retention and persistence widened slightly with the 2008 beginning cohort, indicating that some full-time students who started at western private four-year institutions in 2008 continued their studies at a different institution in 2009, and that a greater proportion of those students followed that pathway than did those in other cohorts.

Figure 22D. Fall-to-Fall Retention and Persistence, Full-Time Beginning Cohort, West Region*



*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix D, Table 32.

In the context of an economic recession, it is likely that many traditional-age students are reevaluating their options when determining where to go for college — and are choosing institutions with smaller price tags (Hesel, 2011; McHooley, 2010). This report's findings detail the enrollments of 17-to-20-year-olds whose decisions about whether, where, and how to enroll in postsecondary education before, during, and after the economic recession were made in the context of several changing realities, including the financial strain experienced by many American families, adaptations of recruitment and financial aid practices at many institutions, and an expansion in the federal Pell grant program.

The findings presented in this report help clarify how traditional-age students' postsecondary pathways have varied in recent years when students, families, institutions, and states met with widespread —and continuing — economic hardship. The patterns revealed in this report can help highlight critical differences between the theories and predictions of economists and the actual enrollment behaviors of students within this economic reality. For instance, although economists determined that the recession had ended by June 2009, in the fall of 2010 up to 40% of Americans described themselves as still struggling a great deal (Bittle, Rochkind, & Ott, 2011). Yet the recession and its aftermath have not been experienced in the same way by all Americans. Those in the least financially favorable situations typically must struggle harder during hard economic times, while those from higher-income backgrounds are relatively buffered. Further complicating any simple conception of cause and effect in this scenario, institutions have also adapted and reacted to the broader circumstances of the economy, becoming active contributors to the changing landscape as well. Many private four-year institutions targeted admissions, expanded recruitment efforts, and increased institutional aid (McHooley, 2010; Pals, 2009; Travis, 2009; Wilson, 2010), for example. Additionally, many public institutions experienced strains on capacity simultaneously with budget cuts, and some expanded out-of-state recruiting, capped enrollments, or moved to more selective admissions (Ashburn, 2011; Brint, 2010). Other public four-year institutions extended recruiting efforts targeting community college students (Wilson, 2010). Within this complex landscape, institutions and policy makers need more information about emerging enrollment patterns of traditional-age students in the years surrounding the recent recession. Developing further understanding of these patterns will help institutions navigate the changes ahead as the economy recovers over time. This will also help policy makers attune their strategies to current college pathways and to the complex, changing demands placed on higher education institutions. Moreover, it will support efforts at all levels toward the national college completion goals for the next decade.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE INCREASES AND OVERALL ENROLLMENT TRENDS

So what drove traditional-age students to knock on the doors of colleges and universities in record numbers and in unprecedented patterns, even while the population of new high school graduates decreased (Hussar & Bailey, 2011)? No simple answer is possible, of course, since the recession did not occur in a vacuum. For instance, institutions have taken active steps to adapt and stabilize enrollments in the context of the recession, and students' enrollments were likely affected by these and other factors as well as by the economy itself. However, and with these caveats in mind, previous theory and research indicate that within the context of the economic recession, the opportunity costs of attending college likely decrease in the face of high unemployment rates, perhaps encouraging some students who might otherwise have gone directly into the workforce to consider postsecondary education instead. U.S. survey respondents, particularly those struggling the most financially, reported that they viewed higher education as a primary vehicle for ensuring financial security (Bittle et al., 2011). The continued evidence of this belief in national survey results, along with higher unemployment, may in part explain some of the increases in higher education participation and the burgeoning enrollments within the two-year public sector seen during this time. Increases in

community college enrollment from 2006 to 2010, as presented here, reflected both increased participation in higher education as well as shifts in *where* college-going students enrolled. Various strategies employed by community colleges during this time have been credited with boosting enrollments at these institutions as well, including enhancements of physical capacity at institutions and targeted marketing campaigns aimed at improving the public perception of community colleges and increasing awareness of institutional offerings (Mullin & Philippe, 2009). These campaigns actively pursued high school relationships and outreach to underrepresented populations, thus suggesting increased exposure to higher education options for students typically underserved by higher education. Further, increased federal investment in the Pell grant program, which serves students with the highest level of financial need, has also been linked to increases in headcount and enrollment intensity at community colleges within the past few years (Hagedorn et al., 2011). This expanded investment in federal need-based aid may also have helped encourage traditional-age students with financial need to enroll in college – particularly those who otherwise may not have considered postsecondary education.

Although general increases in community college enrollments during an economic downturn are not unexpected, the trends shown in this report are not driven solely by typical recession pull factors, such as unemployment, displaced workers, and adults returning for job skills or retraining (Kantrowitz, 2010). The results of these analyses show notable shifts in attendance patterns among recent high school graduates, a population increasingly comprising a greater proportion of community college enrollments. The shift in traditional-age student enrollments toward the public two-year sector during the recession suggests, furthermore, that some students may have enrolled in community colleges as a means of saving money. In addition to seeing general increases in their enrollments, community colleges saw increases in their full-time enrollments — suggesting the possibility that students who might otherwise have attended four-year institutions full time were instead enrolling in greater numbers at community colleges and pursuing full-time studies at these institutions. These findings underscore the importance of enhancing vertical transfer pathways for students who increasingly use the community college as a first step toward a bachelor's degree, especially in states with less-developed transfer pathways (Ignash & Townsend, 2002).

Further, capacity-breaking enrollments also point to the need for enhanced structural development within the two-year public sector. With open admissions and a serve-all approach, many institutions lack the structural capacity to meet these large increases in enrollments. Community colleges from California to Florida threatened to and in some cases actually did limit admissions in 2009 amid peak surges in enrollment. The small enrollment decline within this sector in 2010 — returning to levels similar to those seen in 2008 — may in part reflect some of these drastic measures. Nonetheless, even where implementing selective admissions was not discussed, courses reached capacity enrollments, and many students matriculated at institutions whose classes were too full to accept them (Ashburn, 2011). These trends may have had implications for students' continued enrollment from year to year and may in part be reflected in the drop in community college student retention and persistence for the 2009 cohort. Further, possible longer-term consequences of these conditions may include a lack of academic progress for students in academic sequences requiring specific courses. Such signs of stress in the community college sector — whose core mission is to serve as an access point to postsecondary education for all members of American society — should be a warning to states to strive harder to support these institutions that are so essential to their states' and the nation's economic health and future competitiveness.

PUBLIC FOUR-YEARS IN THE MIDDLE

As the recession deepened through 2008 and into 2009, general trends also showed a somewhat split enrollment pattern — with enrollment increases leaning not solely toward the two-year public sector but to a lesser degree toward the four-year private sector as well — leaving public four-year colleges and universities squeezed in between. This pattern may suggest a marginalization of enrollment, in which the most financially secure families could continue to support students' enrollment in the most costly institutions while more middle-income families included the lower-cost option of community colleges in their college choices. Other factors potentially contributing to these trends include changes in recruitment efforts by private four-year colleges and universities, which targeted students more likely to enroll in their institutions (McHooley, 2010; Pals, 2009; Travis, 2009), and a reaction to negative publicity regarding states' budget cuts to public universities, potentially prompting concerns about how these cuts could affect educational quality at these institutions. Further, as public university enrollments in many states reached capacity, students may have turned in greater numbers to community colleges and private institutions as alternative postsecondary education options.

In the context of these developments and the broader economic crisis, some students who might have typically opted for public four-year colleges and universities may have chosen to pursue a more affordable and local option offered by two-year institutions. At the same time, private four-year colleges and universities saw relative gains as well. Given these national data trends, state policy makers are encouraged to evaluate how these patterns may be reflected within their own states while making budget considerations in a recovering economy. Consideration should be given, further, to the implications this stratification could have on the educational outcomes of their state's students, as well as the overall impact these trends potentially have on states' roles in the national college completion agenda. As state funding decreases and community colleges and other public institutions increasingly rely on tuition dollars to fund their operations, the long-term ramifications of short-term budget solutions should not be overlooked.

REGIONAL DIFFERENCES

Differences in higher education systems and types of educational offerings provided within different regions influence the options students have for postsecondary enrollment, pointing to a possible explanation for some of the enrollment differences by region highlighted in this report. For example, the high concentration of selective private four-year institutions in the Northeast helps to explain the greater proportions of students enrolling in those institutions as opposed to students in other regions. Similarly, large community college systems across states in the West and South, along with a broad range of public postsecondary options, help contextualize student enrollment patterns in those regions as well.

Additionally, the regional differences shown in enrollment and persistence by sector in particular may partially reflect the fluctuation of economic conditions within particular geographic areas of the U.S. For instance, as states in the West (e.g., California) experienced economic hardship before states in other regions, students in western states may also have felt the impact earlier — and perhaps to a greater degree. Moreover, this could point to varying shifts in specific populations and consequent demands for postsecondary education. As many southern states see great increases in the size of their Latino high school graduate populations (WICHE, 2008), for example, the relative concentration of Latino college students in public two-year institutions may be reflected in the overall enrollment patterns of the region. Although data limitations prevent disaggregation by race and ethnicity, supplementing the national trend data provided here with analyses from statewide student unit record databases (SURs), for instance, might point to the potential implications for higher education policy of these and similar economic and demographic shifts.

RETENTION, PERSISTENCE, AND CONSIDERING STUDENT SUCCESS MEASURES

As discussed previously, a typical measure of student success in higher education research is the retention rate: the rate at which the students who begin at an institution reenroll at that same institution from year to year. The persistence rate, in contrast, as a broader measure of students' continued enrollment within higher education, is used much less widely (Hagedorn, 2005; Reason, 2009), a discrepancy likely due to the natural limitations of most national, state, and institutional data sets.

As necessary prerequisites for degree attainment, retention and persistence warrant the generous amount of attention they receive by researchers and policy makers alike. It has almost become a given, in fact, that retention and persistence in students' first years of higher education are tied to subsequent long-term student success outcomes, including completion (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The findings here, although limited in scope, may therefore help inform institutions and state and federal policy makers as they work toward national completion goals in the coming decade. The data highlighted here may also provide necessary empirical grounding for institutional and state policy strategies for *how* to achieve completion goals within the context of hard economic times.

In this report, both retention and persistence measures are captured for students' first-year to second-year enrollment across cohorts, with national persistence rates across institutions and institution types presented in juxtaposition with corresponding retention rates. The findings for these two measures fluctuate very little across cohorts. Despite what some may have feared, the recession appears to have had little effect on students' ability to stay enrolled beyond the first year.

The difference between persistence and retention rates — from 10% to 18% — suggest the current extent of mobility among traditional-age college students as they enroll in multiple institutions, a phenomenon most noted among nontraditional students but nevertheless clearly important among recent high school graduates as well. Findings suggest further that NSC data can address some important public policy issues and help provide a more robust understanding of student enrollment patterns in the areas of access, progression, and degree completion.

Although student retention within the same institution has long been found to contribute to student success (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; 2005), as nontraditional student pathways increasingly become the norm (Adelman, 2006; Ewell, Schild, & Paulson, 2003) and multi-institutional attendance patterns become an increasingly common feature of students' baccalaureate pathways, retention-based measures alone are insufficient representations of student success. The findings presented here suggest that, particularly when used alone, retention-based measures misrepresent the enrollment decisions of many thousands of students each year. Consequently, the implications of this report point also to a need for additional instruments for evaluating institutional effectiveness.

These considerations are particularly relevant to America's community colleges, institutions most harshly reproved for their retention rates. The data presented here show the largest differences between rates of retention and persistence occurring within this sector, and provide additional support for calls for additional measures to be used in evaluating student success and institutional performance.

Moreover, the latest enrollment surges at community colleges in particular have resulted in students matriculating into institutions in which classes are filled to capacity (Moltz, 2011), and many students may have been crowded out of institutions without being able to enroll in the courses they needed. States and institutions should consider the regional and national enrollment trends presented in this report within the context of the structural capacity issues faced by other states and institutions when making their own enrollment management and financing decisions, which may in turn act as push factors on students' enrollments.

SUMMING UP: INSIGHTS OFFERED BY THIS VIEW

The results of these analyses show that the college enrollment surges accompanying the recent recession have — thus far, and among traditional-age students — not been as pronounced as many previously feared (Brint, 2010; Hass, 2009; Hesel, 2011). The changes that were seen among traditional-age students were largely the result of increases in community college enrollment, particularly in the western and southern states. Results disaggregated by sector showed a characteristic "cresting wave" pattern among two-year colleges, rising through 2009 and then declining slightly in 2010. Four-year institutions, however, showed a less dramatic but steady climb through 2010. Student enrollment intensity also changed as part-time enrollments increased, likely reflecting prevalent increases in enrollments in community colleges — which tend to enroll higher proportions of part-time students — and also possibly reflecting the strains on many institutions from their enrollments reaching, or even exceeding, capacity and seats in courses becoming increasingly limited. Across sectors, data for 2009 showed that enrollment increased for both community colleges and four-year private institutions and declined slightly from 2008 levels for public four-year institutions. These findings did not remain consistent across regions. Increases in community college enrollment — and the characteristic cresting wave — were seen most distinctly in the South. While increases occurred earlier in the West, they were concentrated mainly in 2009 in the Northeast, and the enrollment surge was less dramatic in the Midwest.

New student enrollments at four-year private and public colleges and universities had only modest declines overall; indeed, these enrollments actually rose in some years. These results suggest that some combination of increases in the number of high school graduates, student demand for places in the more costly institutions, and possibly the enrollment management strategies that institutions have pursued resulted in relatively stable new student enrollments during the Great Recession.

Although descriptive and subject to identified data limitations, this report can serve as a foundation for much-needed further research examining the impact of the national economic recession on students' college decisions. Data on the trends in financial aid offered to students as well as in student borrowing and employment during this period will help extend our understanding of the shared financial and educational decisions facing our nation's high school graduates. As data become available, extending this analysis with studies using data from the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS) could help inform institutions further on how best to balance their own financial challenges with the needs of the U.S.

This view offers implications for institutional, state, and federal policy makers as well. The results outlined here emphasize the importance for continued state support of community colleges, for example, so that they are better equipped to respond to increasing enrollment and, in support of national goals for increased college attainment, to support student progress to completion. Moreover, because growing community college enrollments likely reflect both increasing higher education participation and also shifting college choice patterns, the data here underscore the importance of vertical transfer pathways and bring further urgency to institution- and state-level policies that support baccalaureate attainment among students who begin college at two-year institutions.

The findings in this report also show how student mobility contributes to the understanding of institutional and student success. NSC data have the capacity to capture student persistence across institutions and states. The findings in this report show student persistence rates at substantially higher levels than might be assumed, given that national student retention rates are limited only to continued enrollment within the same institution. These observations have implications for accountability debates concerning higher education and for community colleges in particular — lending further support to efforts to include persistence and transfer data among the multiple student outcomes used in evaluating institutional performance.

As can be seen in the national and regional enrollment patterns presented here, higher education leaders and policy makers must bear in mind how discrete state and institutional choices might collectively affect the college-going decisions of hundreds of thousands of students and, consequently, the nation's economic vitality. This report can help them situate their institution- and state-level decisions within a national context that is attuned to the economic crisis.

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Appendix A

NOTES ON THE DATA

This report describes the enrollment patterns of five fall cohorts of traditional-age (under age 21) first-time college students from years just before the 2007–2009 recession to the present. The data reported here follow cohorts enrolled in the fall semesters of 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010 in order to explore college enrollment patterns before, during, and after the Great Recession, and to identify trends in these college-going behaviors.

COHORT IDENTIFICATION, DATA CUT, AND DEFINITIONS

Because a decision to begin college studies is qualitatively different from a decision to remain enrolled in a degree program, this report is designed to approximate first-time first-year status in the sample used. Fall enrollment is defined here as enrollment in any term that started between August 15 and October 31. However, since the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) StudentTracker database includes no variables corresponding to first-time enrollment in college, we selected records fulfilling two further conditions to establish first-time student status. Records included in the sample corresponded to the enrollments of students who (1) were age 20 or younger at the time of enrollment and (2) showed no previous college enrollment in the StudentTracker database in the preceding two years. For example, the 2006 cohort included students who were 20 years old or younger between August and October 2006 and who had not enrolled in any higher education institution in the U.S. at any previous time (going back as far as July 2004).

This approach to identifying the sample, thus, is limited to traditional-age first-time students. While some first-time first-year students are 21 years old or older, we believed that it was useful to focus on the experience of cohorts coming of age just before, during, and after the recession. This approach is in contrast to many studies of recession-time enrollment patterns that focus on the enrollment surges resulting from adult, displaced workers — a population whose proportion of enrollments decreases during better economic times. The focus on traditional-age students in this report, thus, complements and extends previous research and allows us, further, to consider the enrollment decisions of a coherent age cohort — i.e., the population coming of age during the most recent economic crisis and its aftermath.

Students enrolled at U.S. two- and four-year public and private (for-profit and nonprofit) institutions were included in this sample. The designation "two-year institution" is used broadly to identify institutions offering both associate's degrees and less than two-year degrees and certificates. Students initially enrolled in U.S. territories (e.g., Guam, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands) were not included in the study population.

CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT

The enrollment data captured in this report provide unduplicated headcounts for five student cohorts. Because NSC data offer national tracking of enrollment, they are not limited by institutional and state boundaries. Moreover, the StudentTracker database is comprised of student–level data, a feature that allows us to link concurrent as well as sequential enrollment of individual students at multiple institutions. This ability distinguishes NSC data from national data sets built on institution-level data. For instance, in the National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) — one of the most widely used national data sets in postsecondary education research — concurrent enrollments remain unlinked and, therefore, are counted as representing separate individuals.

In this way, NSC data provide a unique headcount of U.S. college enrollments each term. In this report, we selected a primary enrollment record for each student with concurrent enrollments in the fall terms of 2006–2010. When the same student was enrolled in more than one institution during the same fall semester, the following set of decision rules were applied, in sequence, to select the student's primary enrollment record:

1. **Enrollment intensity:** Full-time enrollment records were chosen over concurrent records with part-time enrollment status.
2. **Sector:** For cases where duplicate enrollment records still existed after Rule 1 (above) was applied, a record showing enrollment in a four-year institution was selected over a concurrent enrollment in a two-year institution.
3. **Random selection:** If duplicates still existed after applying the first and second decision rules (above), a primary enrollment record was determined through random selection.

RETENTION AND PERSISTENCE

Student retention is defined here as continued enrollment or degree completion within the *same* higher education institution for the fall semesters of a student's first and second years. In contrast, persistence is defined as continued enrollment at *any* U.S. higher education institution for the fall semesters of a student's first and second years. According to these definitions, persisters are students who continued their enrollment in higher education from their first to second year at any institution — including one different from the institution where they were initially enrolled. Thus, nonpersisters were considered to be those students who stopped out of higher education altogether following their first year of enrollment in higher education. Students who graduated during their first year of enrollment but were not enrolled in the fall of the following year were also included and were defined as retained students if they graduated from the same institution and as persisters if they graduated from a different institution. Table 1 (below) shows for each cohort the proportion of students who were classified as persisters via different components of the definition. We note here that students classified as persisters because of completion rather than continued enrollment were few, comprising 0.2% of each cohort or less.

The retention rate results explored in this report differ from those reported by other national measures of student retention, particularly those of the NCES Graduation Rate Survey (GRS) — an annual component of IPEDS. Several differences in sample definitions help to explain these discrepancies:

- First, the cohorts studied in this report are restricted to first-time college students who were 20 years old or younger. Therefore, this report considers cohorts of traditional-age students, whereas IPEDS examines first-time students of any age.
- In addition, IPEDS uses self-reported institutional data to determine students' first-time status, while NSC data classify students as first-time college entrants based on national tracking of enrollments.

Table 1. Persistence and Completion

	2007	2008	2009	2010
Persistence without completion	77.67%	77.05%	78.37%	76.37%
Completion without further enrollment	0.19%	0.20%	0.18%	0.18%
Completion with continued enrollment	0.10%	0.14%	0.12%	0.14%
Cohort Total	**1,997,990**	**2,041,844**	**2,076,287**	**2,165,950**

A student is designated as first-time if he or she shows no previous enrollment in any U.S. higher education institution within the previous 24 months.

- Further, the retention rates reported by IPEDS rely on institution-level self-reports regarding degree-seeking status. NSC makes no distinction for degree-seeking status and, therefore, includes students who are classified as non-degree-seeking students in IPEDS.
- Finally, retention rate calculations in IPEDS are based on cohorts of full-time students only. In contrast, NSC data for this report include both part-time and full-time students.

These differences in data definitions and cohort selection criteria have implications for the results on retention rates and other enrollment trend calculations throughout the report. Thus, NSC results will differ from IPEDS particularly for the trends seen at community colleges, where many students attend part time and where many may also be excluded from IPEDS data due to non-degree-seeking student status. In contrast, these students are included in NSC results for enrollment, retention, and persistence.

NATIONAL COVERAGE OF THE DATA

The National Student Clearinghouse is a unique and trusted source for higher education enrollment and degree verification. Since its creation in 1993, participation in NSC data programs has steadily increased. NSC data currently include more than 3,400 colleges and 93% of U.S. college students. NSC is most trusted for verification services, with a nearly 20-year track record of providing automated student enrollment and degree verifications. Due to its unique, student-level record approach to data collection, the NSC StudentTracker database provides opportunities for distinct analyses not afforded by more commonly used institution-level national databases.

Because NSC participation grew over the period covered by this report and because coverage of institutions (i.e., percentage of all institutions participating in NSC) is not 100% for any individual year, weights were applied by institution type and region to better approximate enrollment figures for all institutions nationally. Using all IPEDS Title IV institutions as the base study population, weights for each institution type were calculated using the inverse of the enrollment-rated rate of coverage for that sector in the relevant year. Given the unavailability of 2010 IPEDS data at the time of writing this report, 2009 data were used as the basis for calculating the 2010 NSC coverage rate. Since coverage was not uniform across regions, coverage weights for institution types within each region were calculated separately. A full list of coverage rates used to calculate weighted results is included in Appendix B.

DATA LIMITATIONS

The data limitations in this report center mainly on changes in data coverage over time and the methods of cohort identification used, as outlined above. Representation of private, for-profit institutions in the NSC StudentTracker database is lower than of other institution types, with the proportion of coverage ranging from 36% to 50% across the five years of this study. This source of coverage error is minimized, however, by the population selection of traditional-age students, who generally enroll in for-profit institutions at much lower rates than do adult students.

Our cohort identification method also gives rise to data limitations, particularly in light of the goal of approximating first-time first-year student cohorts in this report. Two important features of our method are important to note:

1. The cohorts considered here consist only of students who are under 21 and who have no previous enrollment record within two years. Thus, first-time first-year students who were older than age 21 at the time of entering are not included in the analyses.

2. NSC data do not include designations for class year. Given our selection criteria, the sample for this report may include students with more than 30 Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), or dual-enrollment credits and who, despite first-time status, would not be considered first-year students.

Given the increasing number of students earning college credits via AP, IB, or dual-enrollment programs in high schools, this limitation has led us to use the alternative term "first-time-in-college" to describe the students in this report.

Finally, NSC data do not currently include demographic information. Consequently, the results summarized in this report are not able to break out enrollments by race, ethnicity, or gender.

Appendix B

COVERAGE TABLES*

Note: Percentage values in these tables are rounded to the first decimal place.

Table 1. Overall Coverage

Fall Coverage	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010*
IPEDS Enrollments of Active Participants in NSC Core Service	15,785,549	16,473,059	17,427,383	18,705,551	18,913,247
Total National IPEDS Enrollment	17,758,870	18,248,128	19,102,814	20,427,711	20,427,711
Percentage Covered by NSC (enrollments)	**88.9%**	**90.3%**	**91.2%**	**91.6%**	**92.6%**

**Based on 2009 IPEDS enrollment figures for institutions active in NSC Core Service in 2010.*

Table 2. Public Institutions

Fall Coverage	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010*
IPEDS Enrollments of Active Participants in NSC Core Service	12,178,336	12,636,972	13,297,857	14,233,546	14,434,436
Total National IPEDS Enrollment	13,180,133	13,491,479	13,972,153	14,810,642	14,810,642
Percentage Covered by NSC (enrollments)	**92.4%**	**93.7%**	**95.2%**	**96.1%**	**97.5%**

**Based on 2009 IPEDS enrollment figures for institutions active in NSC Core Service in 2010.*

Table 3. Private Institutions

Fall Coverage	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010*
IPEDS Enrollments of Active Participants in NSC Core Service	3,607,213	3,836,087	4,129,526	4,472,005	4,478,811
Total National IPEDS Enrollment	4,578,737	4,756,649	5,130,661	5,617,069	5,617,069
Percentage Covered by NSC (enrollments)	**78.8%**	**80.6%**	**80.5%**	**79.6%**	**79.7%**

**Based on 2009 IPEDS enrollment figures for institutions active in NSC Core Service in 2010.*

Table 4. Four-Year Institutions

Fall Coverage	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010*
IPEDS Enrollments of Active Participants in NSC Core Service	10,344,697	10,770,630	11,261,461	11,919,153	11,957,936
Total National IPEDS Enrollment	11,451,170	11,757,395	12,234,782	12,881,201	12,881,201
Percentage Covered by NSC (enrollments)	**90.3%**	**91.6%**	**92.0%**	**92.5%**	**92.8%**

**Based on 2009 IPEDS enrollment figures for institutions active in NSC Core Service in 2010.*

**Additional regional coverage data tables are available at http://www.studentclearinghouse.org/signature/.*

Table 5. Two-Year Institutions

Fall Coverage	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010*
IPEDS Enrollments of Active Participants in NSC Core Service	5,440,852	5,702,429	6,165,922	6,786,398	6,955,311
Total National IPEDS Enrollment	6,307,700	6,490,733	6,868,032	7,546,510	7,546,510
Percentage Covered by NSC (enrollments)	**86.3%**	**87.9%**	**89.8%**	**89.9%**	**92.2%**

**Based on 2009 IPEDS enrollment figures for institutions active in NSC Core Service in 2010.*

Table 6. Private Two-Year Institutions

Fall Coverage	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010*
IPEDS Enrollments of Active Participants in NSC Core Service	59,003	65,552	81,739	99,568	99,568
Total National IPEDS Enrollment	299,531	305,212	351,005	450,364	450,364
Percentage Covered by NSC (enrollments)	**19.7%**	**21.5%**	**23.3%**	**22.1%**	**22.1%**

**Based on 2009 IPEDS enrollment figures for institutions active in NSC Core Service in 2010.*

Table 7. Private Four-Year Institutions

Fall Coverage	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010*
IPEDS Enrollments of Active Participants in NSC Core Service	3,548,210	3,770,535	4,047,787	4,372,437	4,379,243
Total National IPEDS Enrollment	4,279,206	4,451,437	4,779,656	5,166,705	5,166,705
Percentage Covered by NSC (enrollments)	**82.9%**	**84.7%**	**84.7%**	**84.6%**	**84.8%**

**Based on 2009 IPEDS enrollment figures for institutions active in NSC Core Service in 2010.*

Table 8. Public Two-Year Institutions

Fall Coverage	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010*
IPEDS Enrollments of Active Participants in NSC Core Service	5,381,849	5,636,877	6,084,183	6,686,830	6,855,743
Total National IPEDS Enrollment	6,008,169	6,185,521	6,517,027	7,096,146	7,096,146
Percentage Covered by NSC (enrollments)	**89.6%**	**91.1%**	**93.4%**	**94.2%**	**96.6%**

**Based on 2009 IPEDS enrollment figures for institutions active in NSC Core Service in 2010.*

Table 9. Public Four-Year Institutions

Fall Coverage	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010*
IPEDS Enrollments of Active Participants in NSC Core Service	6,796,487	7,000,095	7,213,674	7,546,716	7,578,693
Total National IPEDS Enrollment	7,171,964	7,305,958	7,455,126	7,714,496	7,714,496
Percentage Covered by NSC (enrollments)	**94.8%**	**95.8%**	**96.8%**	**97.8%**	**98.2%**

**Based on 2009 IPEDS enrollment figures for institutions active in NSC Core Service in 2010.*

Appendix C
REGIONS

Regions and Divisions of the United States

Region	Division	States
NORTHEAST	New England	Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont
	Middle Atlantic	New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania
MIDWEST	East North Central	Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin
	West North Central	Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota
SOUTH	South Atlantic	Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia
	East South Central	Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee
	West South Central	Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas
WEST	Mountain	Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, New Mexico, Montana, Utah, Nevada, Wyoming
	Pacific	Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington

Source: *Census Regions and Divisions of the United States,* U.S. Census Bureau, 2007. Retrieved from http://www.census.gov/geo/www/us_regdiv.pdf

Appendix D
RESULTS TABLES

Table 1. Enrollment by Control

		2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Public	Weighted Count	1,569,916	1,609,770	1,635,443	1,703,753	1,674,051
	%	79.17%	79.47%	79.58%	79.68%	79.43%
Private	Weighted Count	413,024	415,905	419,529	434,572	433,468
	%	20.83%	20.53%	20.42%	20.32%	20.57%
Total Count		**1,982,941**	**2,025,674**	**2,054,972**	**2,138,325**	**2,107,519**

Table 2. Enrollment by Sector

		2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Two-Year	Weighted Count	833,997	870,944	884,543	965,319	916,713
	%	41.65%	42.56%	42.56%	44.50%	42.93%
Four-Year	Weighted Count	1,168,274	1,175,653	1,193,944	1,204,027	1,218,811
	%	58.35%	57.44%	57.44%	55.50%	57.07%
Total Count		**2,002,270**	**2,046,597**	**2,078,486**	**2,169,347**	**2,135,524**

Table 3. Rate of Change from Previous Fall, Beginning Cohort Enrollment

	2007	2008	2009	2010
% Change	2.19%	1.69%	4.32%	-1.41%

Table 4. Rate of Change from Previous Fall, Beginning Cohort Enrollment by Sector

	2007	2008	2009	2010
Two-Year	4.20%	1.06%	8.35%	-5.12%
Four-Year	0.63%	1.32%	0.71%	1.15%

Table 5. Rate of Change from Previous Fall, Beginning Cohort Enrollment by Control, Four-Year Sector

	2007	2008	2009	2010
Public Four-Year	0.45%	1.63%	-0.18%	1.75%
Private Four-Year	0.99%	0.70%	2.52%	-0.03%

Table 6. Rate of Change from Previous Fall, Beginning Cohort Enrollment by Sector, Public Institutions

	2007	2008	2009	2010
Two-Year	4.59%	1.33%	8.34%	-5.04%
Four-Year	0.45%	1.63%	-0.18%	1.75%

Table 7. Intensity of Enrollment Across Cohorts

		2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Part-Time	Weighted Count	544,728	564,663	573,920	616,829	598,747
	%	28.18%	28.58%	28.50%	29.37%	28.86%
Full-Time	Weighted Count	1,388,565	1,411,236	1,439,743	1,483,118	1,475,667
	%	71.82%	71.42%	71.50%	70.63%	71.14%
Total Count		**1,933,293**	**1,975,899**	**2,013,663**	**2,099,947**	**2,074,413**

Table 8. Intensity of Enrollment by Sector

			2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Two-Year	**Part-Time**	Weighted Count	411,692	431,192	430,068	472,708	449,496
		%	52.13%	52.30%	51.10%	51.46%	51.37%
	Full-Time	Weighted Count	378,054	393,265	411,580	445,897	425,524
		%	47.87%	47.70%	48.90%	48.54%	48.63%
	Total Count		**789,745**	**824,457**	**841,649**	**918,605**	**875,020**
Four-Year	**Part-Time**	Weighted Count	142,858	142,875	149,323	150,960	150,851
		%	12.45%	12.37%	12.72%	2.75%	12.58%
	Full-Time	Weighted Count	1,004,229	1,012,571	1,024,596	1,033,335	1,048,567
		%	87.55%	87.63%	87.28%	87.25%	87.42%
	Total Count		**1,147,087**	**1,155,446**	**1,173,920**	**1,184,294**	**1,199,419**

Table 9. Enrollment by Region

		2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Northeast	Weighted Count	400,848	403,511	405,728	430,002	436,204
	# Change	-- -	2,663	2,217	24,273	6,202
	% Change	-- -	0.66%	0.55%	5.98%	1.44%
Midwest	Weighted Count	491,379	490,571	489,342	504,385	506,984
	# Change	-- - -- -	-808	-1,229	15,043	2,599
	% Change	-- - -- -	-0.16%	-0.25%	3.07%	0.52%
South	Weighted Count	687,796	707,268	730,936	764,319	736,916
	# Change	- -- -	19,472	23,668	33,383	-27,403
	% Change	- -- -	2.83%	3.35%	4.57%	-3.59%
West	Weighted Count	417,449	440,378	451,223	467,425	454,557
	# Change	- -- - -- -	22,929	10,845	16,202	-12,868
	% Change	– -	5.49%	2.46%	3.59%	-2.75%

Table 10. Intensity of Enrollment by Region

			2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Northeast	**Part-Time**	Weighted Count	59,035	62,846	60,503	67,457	68,799
		%	15.08%	15.94%	15.23%	16.06%	16.12%
	Full-Time	Weighted Count	332,394	331,476	336,658	352,533	358,045
		%	84.92%	84.06%	84.77%	83.94%	83.88%
Midwest	**Part-Time**	Weighted Count	138,814	137,861	133,265	143,275	139,687
		%	29.16%	29.02%	28.09%	29.28%	28.33%
	Full-Time	Weighted Count	337,157	337,232	341,232	346,030	353,330
		%	70.84%	70.98%	71.91%	70.72%	71.67%
South	**Part-Time**	Weighted Count	209,367	218,262	229,752	246,755	237,369
		%	31.40%	31.79%	32.32%	33.21%	33.08%
	Full-Time	Weighted Count	457,409	468,342	481,093	496,212	480,242
		%	68.60%	68.21%	67.68%	66.79%	66.92%
West	**Part-Time**	Weighted Count	139,384	147,890	153,158	161,903	154,664
		%	34.97%	35.24%	35.45%	36.15%	35.46%
	Full-Time	Weighted Count	259,162	271,833	278,908	285,957	281,471
		%	65.03%	64.76%	64.55%	63.85%	64.54%

Table 11. Enrollment by Sector and Control, Northeast Region

			2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Public	**Two-Year**	Weighted Count	118,736	122,589	127,062	142,793	140,539
		% Sub*	49.39%	50.33%	50.96%	52.93%	50.42%
		% Total**	29.91%	30.67%	31.62%	33.63%	32.63%
	Four-Year	Weighted Count	121,683	120,982	122,255	126,997	138,214
		% Sub*	50.61%	49.67%	49.04%	47.07%	49.58%
		% Total**	30.66%	30.26%	30.42%	29.91%	32.09%
Private	**Two-Year**	Weighted Count	7,368	7,053	6,377	5,557	5,141
		% Sub*	4.71%	4.52%	4.18%	3.59%	3.38%
		% Total**	1.86%	1.76%	1.59%	1.31%	1.19%
	Four-Year	Weighted Count	149,146	149,141	146,133	149,229	146,836
		% Sub*	95.29%	95.48%	95.82%	96.41%	96.62%
		% Total**	37.57%	37.31%	36.37%	35.15%	34.09%

** Enrollment share within the sector (see Figure 11A)*
*** Enrollment share over total (see Figure 12A)*

Table 12. Enrollment by Sector and Control, Midwest Region

			2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Public	**Two-Year**	Weighted Count	186,188	191,359	183,424	201,688	198,453
		% Sub*	48.64%	50.08%	48.56%	51.95%	50.83%
		% Total**	38.59%	39.80%	13.53%	41.12%	40.28%
	Four-Year	Weighted Count	196,568	190,759	194,309	186,565	191,988
		% Sub*	51.36%	49.92%	51.44%	48.05%	49.17%
		% Total**	40.74%	39.68%	14.34%	38.03%	38.97%
Private	**Two-Year**	Weighted Count	4,023	3,567	2,894	3,066	2,485
		% Sub*	4.03%	3.62%	0.30%	3.00%	2.43%
		% Total**	0.83%	0.74%	0.21%	0.63%	0.50%
	Four-Year	Weighted Count	95,728	95,075	97,457	99,207	99,719
		% Sub*	95.97%	96.38%	97.12%	97.00%	97.57%
		% Total**	19.84%	19.78%	20.38%	20.22%	20.24%

** Enrollment share within the sector (see Figure 11B)*
*** Enrollment share over total (see Figure 12B)*

Table 13. Enrollment by Sector and Control, South Region

			2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Public	**Two-Year**	Weighted Count	279,213	291,946	303,955	332,756	302,592
		% Sub*	47.99%	48.73%	49.32%	51.77%	49.53%
		% Total**	40.53%	41.31%	41.90%	44.03%	41.77%
	Four-Year	Weighted Count	302,561	307,190	312,292	310,020	308,291
		% Sub*	52.01%	51.27%	50.68%	48.23%	50.47%
		% Total**	43.92%	43.47%	43.05%	41.02%	42.56%
Private	**Two-Year**	Weighted Count	9,296	7,895	7,373	9,067	7,103
		% Sub*	8.68%	7.34%	6.76%	8.03%	6.26%
		% Total**	1.35%	1.12%	1.02%	1.20%	0.98%
	Four-Year	Weighted Count	97,774	99,645	101,748	103,867	106,448
		% Sub*	91.32%	92.66%	93.24%	91.97%	93.74%
		% Total**	14.19%	14.10%	14.03%	13.74%	14.69%

** Enrollment share within the sector (see Figure 11C)*
*** Enrollment share over total (see Figure 12C)*

Table 14. Enrollment by Sector and Control, West Region

			2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Public	**Two-Year**	Weighted Count	209,756	225,841	230,684	238,130	226,520
		% Sub*	57.21%	58.26%	58.36%	58.57%	57.53%
		% Total**	50.89%	51.89%	52.05%	51.99%	50.77%
	Four-Year	Weighted Count	156,913	161,827	164,594	168,438	167,214
		% Sub*	42.79%	41.74%	41.64%	41.43%	42.47%
		% Total**	38.07%	37.18%	37.14%	36.77%	37.48%
Private	**Two-Year**	Weighted Count	5,399	5,724	4,949	6,400	7,641
		% Sub*	11.87%	12.04%	10.32%	12.43%	14.58%
		% Total**	1.31%	1.32%	1.12%	1.40%	1.71%
	Four-Year	Weighted Count	40,081	41,833	42,985	45,091	44,759
		% Sub*	88.13%	87.96%	89.68%	87.57%	85.42%
		% Total**	9.72%	9.61%	9.70%	9.84%	10.03%

** Enrollment share within the sector (see Figure 11D)*
*** Enrollment share over total (see Figure 12D)*

Table 15. Rate of Change from Previous Fall, Beginning Cohort Enrollment by Region

		2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Northeast	Weighted Count	400,848	403,511	405,728	430,002	436,204
	% Change	-- -	0.66%	0.55%	5.98%	1.44%
Midwest	Weighted Count	491,379	490,571	489,342	504,385	506,984
	% Change	-- - -- -	-0.16%	-0.25%	3.07%	0.52%
South	Weighted Count	687,796	707,268	730,936	764,319	736,916
	% Change	- -- -	2.83%	3.35%	4.57%	-3.59%
West	Weighted Count	417,449	440,378	451,223	467,425	454,557
	% Change	– -	5.49%	2.46%	3.59%	-2.75%

Table 16. Rate of Change from Previous Fall, Part-Time Beginning Cohort Enrollment by Region

		2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Northeast	Weighted Count	59,035	62,846	60,503	67,457	68,799
	% Change	-- -	6.46%	-3.73%	11.49%	1.99%
Midwest	Weighted Count	138,814	137,861	133,265	143,275	139,687
	% Change	-- - -- -	–0.69%	-3.33%	7.51%	-2.50%
South	Weighted Count	209,367	218,262	229,752	246,755	237,369
	% Change	- -- -	4.25%	5.26%	7.40%	-3.80%
West	Weighted Count	139,384	147,890	153,158	161,903	154,664
	% Change	– -	6.10%	3.56%	5.71%	-4.47%

Table 17. Rate of Change from Previous Fall, Full-Time Beginning Cohort Enrollment by Region

		2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Northeast	Weighted Count	332,394	331,476	336,658	352,533	358,045
	% Change	-- -	–0.28%	1.56%	4.72%	1.56%
Midwest	Weighted Count	337,157	337,232	341,232	346,030	353,330
	% Change	-- - -- -	-0.02%	1.19%	1.41%	2.11%
South	Weighted Count	457,409	468,342	481,093	496,212	480,242
	% Change	- -- -	2.39%	2.72%	3.14%	-3.22%
West	Weighted Count	259,162	271,833	278,908	285,957	281,471
	% Change	– -	4.89%	2.60%	2.53%	-1.57%

Table 18. Rate of Change from Previous Fall, Beginning Cohort Enrollment, Public Two-Year Institutions by Region

	2007	2008	2009	2010
Northeast	3.20%	3.60%	12.40% -	-1.60%
Midwest	2.80%	-4.10%	10.00% -	-1.60%
South	4.60%	4.10%	9.50%	-9.10%
West	7.70%	2.10%	3.20%	-4.90%

Table 19. Rate of Change from Previous Fall, Beginning Cohort Enrollment by Sector and Control, Northeast Region

		2007	2008	2009	2010
Public	Two-Year	3.25%	3.65%	12.38%	-1.58%
	Four-Year	-0.58%	1.05%	3.88%	8.83%
Private	Two-Year	-4.27%	-9.59%	-12.85%	-7.50%
	Four-Year	0.00%	-2.02%	2.12%	-1.60%

Table 20. Rate of Change from Previous Fall, Beginning Cohort Enrollment by Sector and Control, Midwest Region

		2007	2008	2009	2010
Public	Two-Year	2.78%	-4.15%	9.96%	-1.60%
	Four-Year	-2.96%	1.86%	-3.99%	2.91%
Private	Two-Year	-11.36%	-18.87%	5.96%	-18.95%
	Four-Year	-0.68%	2.51%	1.80%	0.52%

Table 21. Rate of Change from Previous Fall, Beginning Cohort Enrollment by Sector and Control, South Region

		2007	2008	2009	2010
Public	Two-Year	4.56%	4.11%	9.48%	-9.07%
	Four-Year	1.53%	1.66%	-0.73%	-0.56%
Private	Two-Year	-15.08%	-6.60%	22.97%	-21.65%
	Four-Year	1.91%	2.11%	2.08%	2.49%

Table 22. Rate of Change from Previous Fall, Beginning Cohort Enrollment by Sector and Control, West Region

		2007	2008	2009	2010
Public	Two-Year	7.67%	2.14%	3.23%	-4.88%
	Four-Year	3.13%	1.71%	2.34%	-0.73%
Private	Two-Year	6.02%	-13.54%	29.31%	19.39%
	Four-Year	4.37%	2.75%	4.90%	-0.74%

Table 23. Retention and Persistence Rates by Sector and Control

				2006	2007	2008	2009
Public	**Four-Year**	**Retention**	Weighted Count	561,342	565,233	575,798	575,075
			%	72.24%	72.42%	72.58%	72.62%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	664,116	668,987	685,061	676,044
			%	85.47%	85.71%	86.36%	85.38%
	Two-Year	**Retention**	Weighted Count	398,207	409,962	438,548	459,491
			%	49.95%	49.17%	51.90%	50.19%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	520,314	536,500	563,648	587,233
			%	65.26%	64.34%	66.71%	64.15%
Private	**Four-Year**	**Retention**	Weighted Count	290,920	289,374	294,842	305,063
			%	75.61%	74.47%	75.35%	76.05%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	343,833	345,607	350,866	357,208
			%	89.37%	88.95%	89.67%	89.05%
	Two-Year	**Retention**	Weighted Count	13,600	11,957	11,281	12,362
			%	51.03%	48.43%	49.68%	50.15%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	16,742	15,025	14,253	15,311
			%	62.82%	60.85%	62.76%	62.11%

Table 24. Fall-to-Fall Retention and Persistence, Beginning Full-Time Students

				2006	2007	2008	2009
Public	**Four-Year**	**Retention**	Weighted Count	511,842	515,548	522,090	523,455
			%	79.18%	78.92%	79.24%	79.65%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	580,963	586,657	595,735	590,252
			%	89.87%	89.80%	90.42%	89.81%
	Two-Year	**Retention**	Weighted Count	231,776	238,474	258,896	270,560
			%	64.52%	63.68%	66.14%	64.25%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	268,519	276,626	297,411	309,944
			%	74.75%	73.86%	75.98%	73.60%
Private	**Four-Year**	**Retention**	Weighted Count	283,990	282,325	287,604	297,798
			%	79.94%	79.28%	79.72%	80.46%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	324,735	324,346	330,829	337,822
			%	91.41%	91.08%	91.70%	91.27%
	Two-Year	**Retention**	Weighted Count	12,859	11,142	10,233	10,797
			%	58.49%	56.89%	58.34%	57.32%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	15,336	13,433	12,290	13,022
			%	69.75%	68.59%	70.06%	69.14%

Table 25. Cohort Retention and Persistence Rates by Sector and Control, Northeast Region

				2006	2007	2008	2009
Public	**Four-Year**	**Retention**	Weighted Count	93,976	93,633	95,343	99,354
			%	77.23%	77.39%	77.99%	78.23%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	109,471	109,587	111,472	115,112
			%	89.96%	90.58%	91.18%	90.64%
	Two-Year	**Retention**	Weighted Count	62,873	66,052	71,408	77,504
			%	52.95%	53.88%	56.20%	54.28%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	78,398	81,589	86,723	95,444
			%	66.03%	66.56%	68.25%	66.84%
Private	**Four-Year**	**Retention**	Weighted Count	117,063	114,706	115,718	119,427
			%	78.49%	76.91%	79.19%	80.03%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	136,584	136,186	135,530	137,540
			%	91.58%	91.31%	92.74%	92.17%
	Two-Year	**Retention**	Weighted Count	3,768	3,607	2,924	2,843
			%	51.14%	51.14%	45.85%	51.15%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	4,523	4,356	3,829	3,495
			%	61.39%	61.76%	60.05%	62.88%

Table 26. Cohort Retention and Persistence Rates by Sector and Control, Midwest Region

				2006	2007	2008	2009
Public	**Four-Year**	**Retention**	Weighted Count	139,821	137,729	140,677	133,800
			%	71.13%	72.20%	72.40%	71.72%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	171,339	166,403	171,076	161,008
			%	87.17%	87.23%	88.04%	86.30%
	Two-Year	**Retention**	Weighted Count	89,965	86,653	90,938	95,313
			%	48.32%	45.28%	49.58%	47.26%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	120,499	117,334	119,838	126,290
			%	64.72%	61.32%	65.33%	62.62%
Private	**Four-Year**	**Retention**	Weighted Count	70,682	69,724	71,833	73,766
			%	73.84%	73.34%	73.71%	74.36%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	86,178	85,144	88,000	88,810
			%	90.02%	89.56%	90.30%	89.52%
	Two-Year	**Retention**	Weighted Count	1,922	1,412	1,442	1,408
			%	47.78%	39.58%	49.84%	45.92%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	2,343	1,795	1,801	1,805
			%	58.22%	50.33%	62.23%	58.86%

Table 27. Cohort Retention and Persistence Rates by Sector and Control, South Region

				2006	2007	2008	2009
Public	**Four-Year**	**Retention**	Weighted Count	215,927	219,331	220,932	218,363
			%	71.37%	71.40%	70.75%	70.44%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	251,969	257,185	261,985	256,654
			%	83.28%	83.72%	83.89%	82.79%
	Two-Year	**Retention**	Weighted Count	134,565	140,835	150,591	160,472
			%	48.19%	48.24%	49.54%	48.23%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	182,513	192,250	202,896	212,579
			%	65.37%	65.85%	66.75%	63.88%
Private	**Four-Year**	**Retention**	Weighted Count	71,789	72,257	74,714	75,978
			%	73.42%	72.51%	73.43%	73.15%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	85,692	87,159	90,228	91,210
			%	87.64%	87.47%	88.68%	87.81%
	Two-Year	**Retention**	Weighted Count	4,586	3,752	3,827	4,371
			%	49.33%	47.52%	51.90%	48.21%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	5,839	4,889	4,758	5,645
			%	62.81%	61.92%	64.53%	62.26%

Table 28. Cohort Retention and Persistence Rates by Sector and Control, West Region

				2006	2007	2008	2009
Public	**Four-Year**	**Retention**	Weighted Count	112,029	114,754	118,982	123,761
			%	71.40%	70.91%	72.29%	73.48%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	131,934	135,943	140,646	143,428
			%	84.08%	84.00%	85.45%	85.15%
	Two-Year	**Retention**	Weighted Count	108,816	115,276	125,104	125,697
			%	51.88%	51.04%	54.23%	52.78%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	136,719	144,412	154,303	152,724
			%	65.18%	63.94%	66.89%	64.13%
Private	**Four-Year**	**Retention**	Weighted Count	29,434	30,106	29,520	32,045
			%	73.43%	71.97%	68.68%	71.07%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	33,313	34,233	33,961	35,773
			%	83.11%	81.83%	79.01%	79.33%
	Two-Year	**Retention**	Weighted Count	3,108	2,973	2,722	3,460
			%	57.56%	51.95%	55.00%	54.07%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	3,805	3,772	3,299	3,998
			%	70.48%	65.90%	66.67%	62.47%

Table 29. Fall-to-Fall Retention and Persistence, Full-Time Beginning Cohort, Northeast Region

				2006	2007	2008	2009
Public	**Four-Year**	**Retention**	Weighted Count	91,010	90,668	92,182	96,454
			%	81.37%	81.19%	82.02%	82.59%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	103,192	103,259	104,678	108,430
			%	92.26%	92.47%	93.14%	92.84%
	Two-Year	**Retention**	Weighted Count	47,375	49,174	53,996	58,369
			%	64.28%	64.93%	67.08%	66.20%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	53,624	55,658	60,462	65,283
			%	72.76%	73.49%	75.12%	74.04%
Private	**Four-Year**	**Retention**	Weighted Count	115,016	112,678	113,779	117,421
			%	82.40%	82.20%	83.09%	83.80%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	129,793	127,616	128,995	131,342
			%	92.98%	93.10%	94.20%	93.74%
	Two-Year	**Retention**	Weighted Count	3,557	3,278	2,557	2,631
			%	60.16%	61.40%	56.66%	59.13%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	4,144	3,764	3,101	3,146
			%	70.09%	70.50%	68.72%	70.70%

Table 30. Fall-to-Fall Retention and Persistence, Full-Time Beginning Cohort, Midwest Region

				2006	2007	2008	2009
Public	**Four-Year**	**Retention**	Weighted Count	129,458	127,408	128,983	123,582
			%	78.85%	79.31%	79.66%	79.39%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	148,868	145,659	147,994	140,457
			%	90.67%	90.67%	91.40%	90.23%
	Two-Year	**Retention**	Weighted Count	52,883	52,562	55,348	57,847
			%	63.49%	61.15%	64.34%	61.72%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	62,169	61,643	64,294	67,668
			%	74.64%	71.71%	74.74%	72.20%
Private	**Four-Year**	**Retention**	Weighted Count	68,297	67,273	69,261	71,389
			%	80.09%	79.27%	79.83%	80.79%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	79,278	78,450	80,833	81,998
			%	92.97%	92.44%	93.17%	92.80%
	Two-Year	**Retention**	Weighted Count	1,754	1,295	1,320	1,309
			%	57.19%	47.68%	57.28%	51.49%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	2,017	1,594	1,583	1,625
			%	65.75%	58.69%	68.70%	63.94%

Table 31. Fall-to-Fall Retention and Persistence, Full-Time Beginning Cohort, South Region

				2006	2007	2008	2009
Public	**Four-Year**	**Retention**	Weighted Count	189,399	192,675	193,503	191,623
			%	78.08%	77.77%	77.07%	77.39%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	213,768	218,474	221,290	216,871
			%	88.13%	88.18%	88.14%	87.59%
	Two-Year	**Retention**	Weighted Count	72,186	74,109	80,955	87,627
			%	62.79%	62.12%	63.90%	62.15%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	84,361	87,306	93,997	101,066
			%	73.39%	73.18%	74.19%	71.68%
Private	**Four-Year**	**Retention**	Weighted Count	69,822	70,258	72,422	73,568
			%	76.96%	76.07%	77.27%	77.14%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	81,344	82,572	84,966	85,847
			%	89.66%	89.41%	90.65%	90.02%
	Two-Year	**Retention**	Weighted Count	4,487	3,615	3,667	4,221
			%	55.32%	54.68%	59.17%	55.08%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	5,558	4,520	4,384	5,205
			%	68.53%	68.36%	70.74%	67.93%

Table 32. Fall-to-Fall Retention and Persistence, Full-Time Beginning Cohort, West Region

				2006	2007	2008	2009
Public	**Four-Year**	**Retention**	Weighted Count	102,224	104,818	107,518	111,989
			%	79.68%	78.63%	80.41%	81.48%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	115,465	119,261	121,896	124,715
			%	90.00%	89.46%	91.16%	90.74%
	Two-Year	**Retention**	Weighted Count	56,449	60,164	66,900	65,227
			%	68.24%	67.10%	69.79%	67.83%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	65,120	69,323	76,844	74,293
			%	78.73%	77.32%	80.16%	77.26%
Private	**Four-Year**	**Retention**	Weighted Count	28,867	29,487	28,979	31,476
			%	76.76%	75.42%	72.04%	74.41%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	32,261	32,984	32,814	34,652
			%	85.79%	84.36%	81.57%	81.92%
	Two-Year	**Retention**	Weighted Count	2,836	2,777	2,386	2,179
			%	63.17%	59.72%	61.27%	63.82%
		Persistence	Weighted Count	3,380	3,406	2,834	2,493
			%	75.30%	73.24%	72.77%	73.03%

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