

State of Transfer in Alabama: 2026 Data Deep Dive

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EDUCATION

A looming 'demographic cliff': Fewer college students and ultimately fewer graduates

JANUARY 8, 2025 - 5:00 AM ET

By Jon Marcus

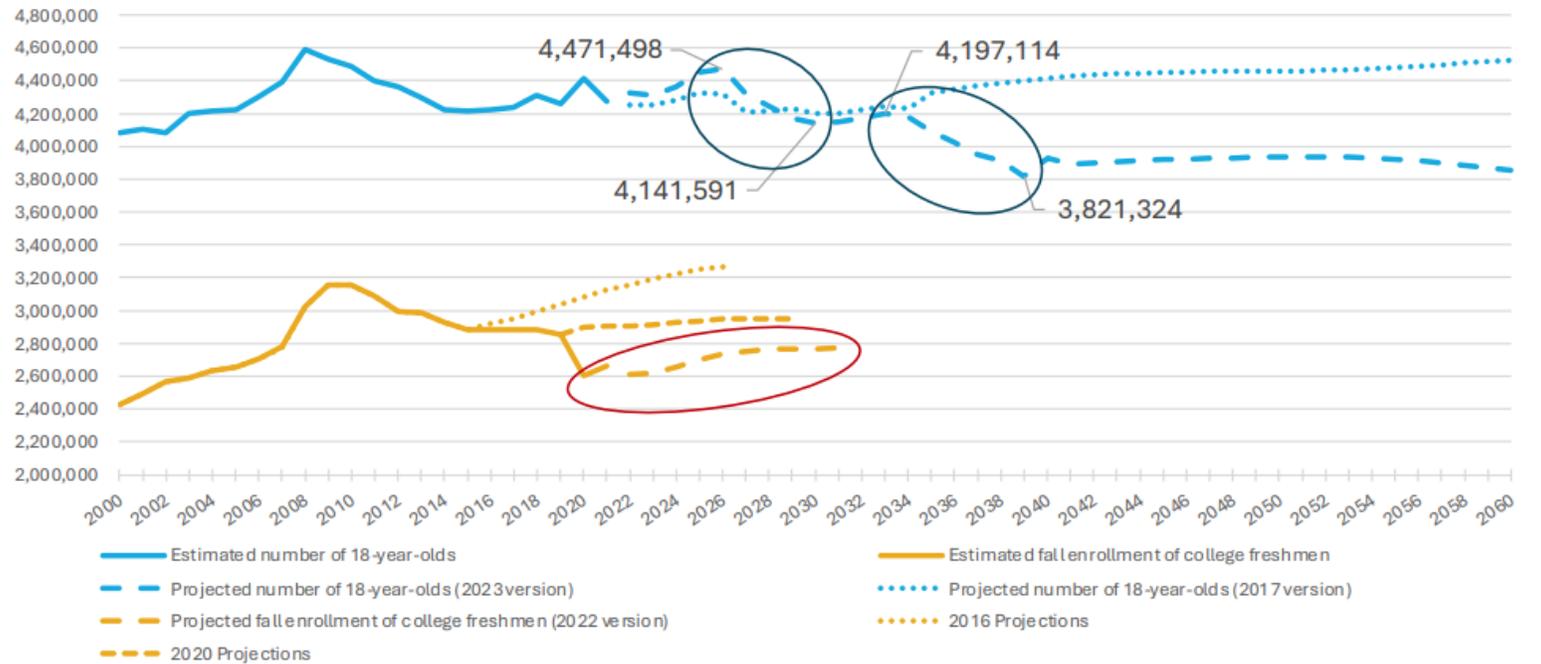


Two Demographic Cliffs? How to Diversify Student Audiences and Prepare for the Future

How many times have we all read about the demographic cliff? With so much attention, we may have become desensitized to its implications, but just as we approach 2025, the first year of contraction, new data indicate that

Two Demographic Cliffs

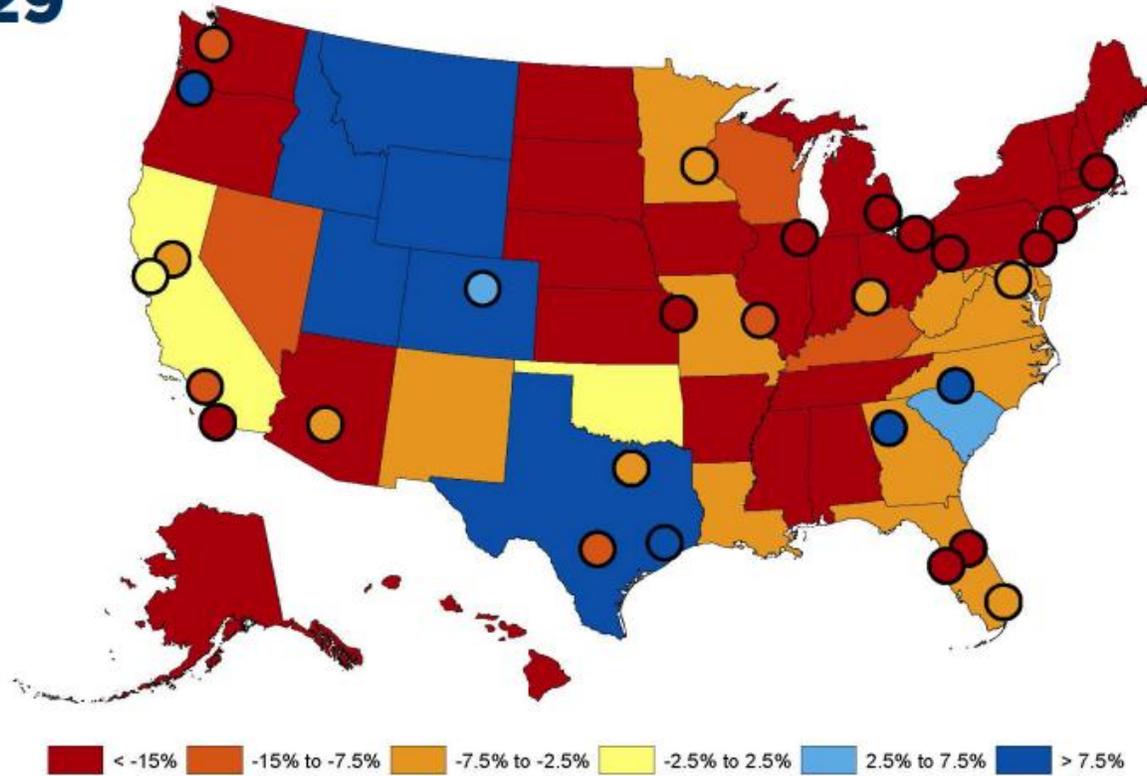
18-Year-Olds and First-Year Enrollment 2000-2060



Demographic data and higher ed projections originally published: Colleges Were Already Bracing for an 'Enrollment Cliff.' Now There Might Be a Second One. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2/7/2024

Two Demographic Cliffs? How to Diversify Student Audiences and Prepare for the Future

Forecasted Growth in College-Going Students, 2012-2029



Source: Nathan Grawe, Carleton College. As published in *Demographics and the Demand for Higher Education*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018.

may have become
new data indicate that

continue to focus primarily
graduate programs, online
undergraduate
(resources) is essential.

to be based on the 2020
another will begin and
with the old projection
Department of Education
the data indicate that each



KNOCKING AT THE COLLEGE DOOR

Table 5. High school graduates by state in the South

State Name	2023	2025	2030	2035	2041	2023 to 2041 % Difference
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Table 5. High school graduates by state in the South

State Name	2023	2025	2030	2035	2041	2023 to 2041 % Difference
Alabama	52,954	55,021 ▲	52,926 ▼	55,235 ▲	54,262 ▲	2%

Maryland	70,362	74,018 ▲	68,766 ▼	68,981 ▼	62,752 ▼	-11%
Mississippi	32,152	33,606 ▲	29,644 ▼	29,445 ▼	27,003 ▼	-16%
North Carolina	115,527	121,741 ▲	118,193 ▲	123,253 ▲	122,719 ▲	6%
Oklahoma	46,211	50,332 ▲	49,595 ▲	48,457 ▲	46,250 ▲	0%
South Carolina	53,941	57,865 ▲	57,870 ▲	60,992 ▲	61,735 ▲	14%
Tennessee	70,783	75,761 ▲	74,906 ▲	79,662 ▲	81,459 ▲	15%
Texas	393,596	408,251 ▲	399,411 ▲	410,286 ▲	414,861 ▲	5%
Virginia	100,051	104,008 ▲	100,188 ▲	102,267 ▲	93,984 ▼	-6%
West Virginia	18,003	18,113 ▲	16,084 ▼	15,092 ▼	13,388 ▼	-26%
South	1,443,229	1,522,182 ▲	1,469,633 ▲	1,519,031 ▲	1,479,933 ▲	3%

Note: Green indicates growth relative to 2023; red indicates declines.

Patrick Lane Colleen Falkenstern Peace Bransberger



with support from



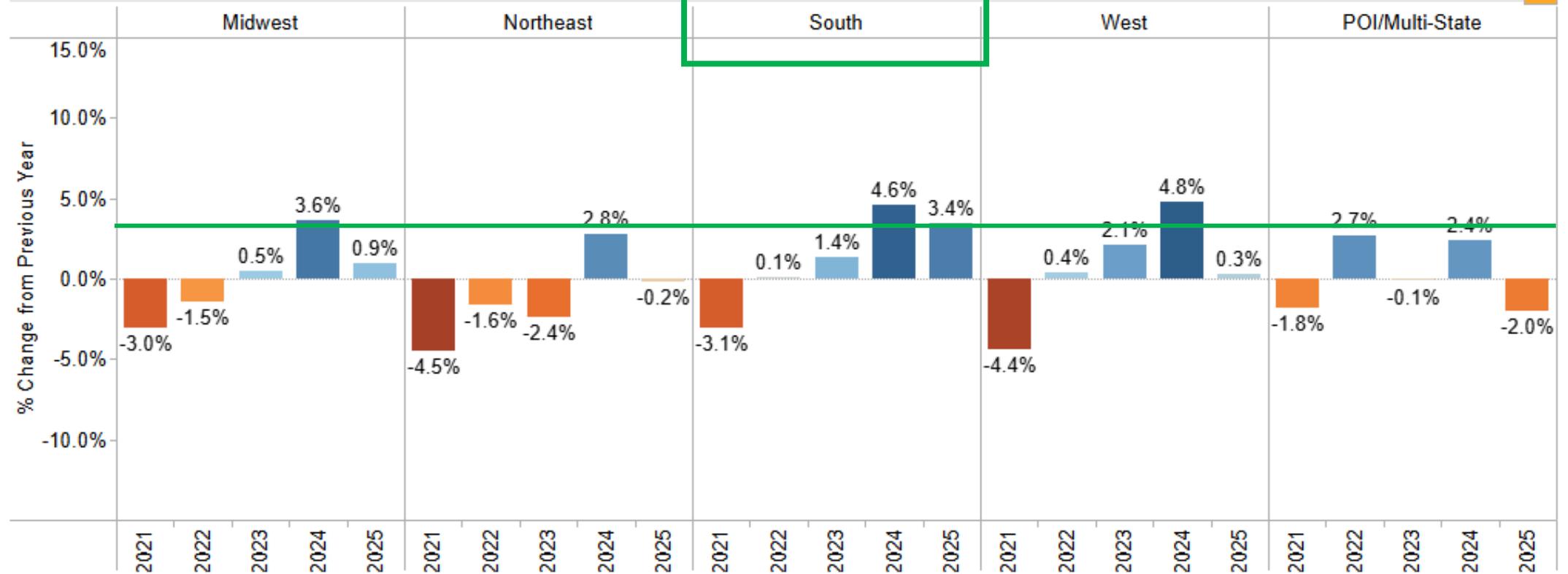
January 15, 2026

Clearinghouse Enrollment Insights
Series:

Final Fall Enrollment Trends



Figure 5.4 Undergraduate Enrollment by Region



January 15, 2026

Clearinghouse Enrollment Insights
Series:

Final Fall Enrollment Trends



Figure 5.2 Undergraduate Enrollment: Alabama

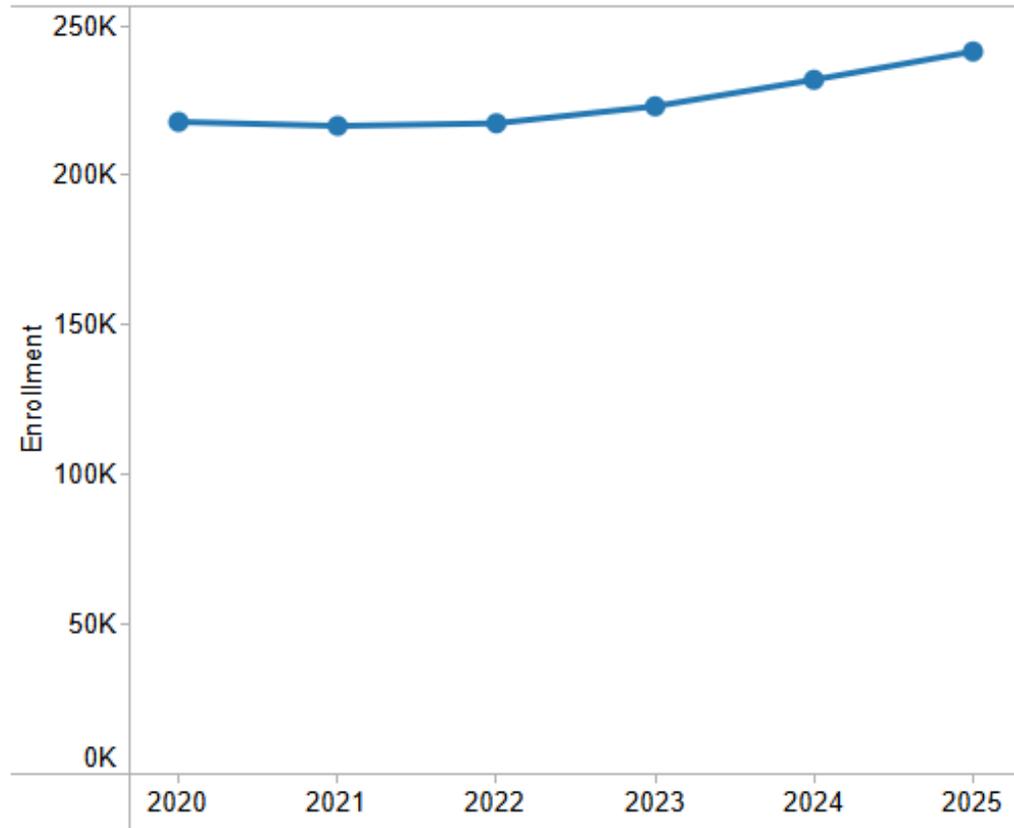
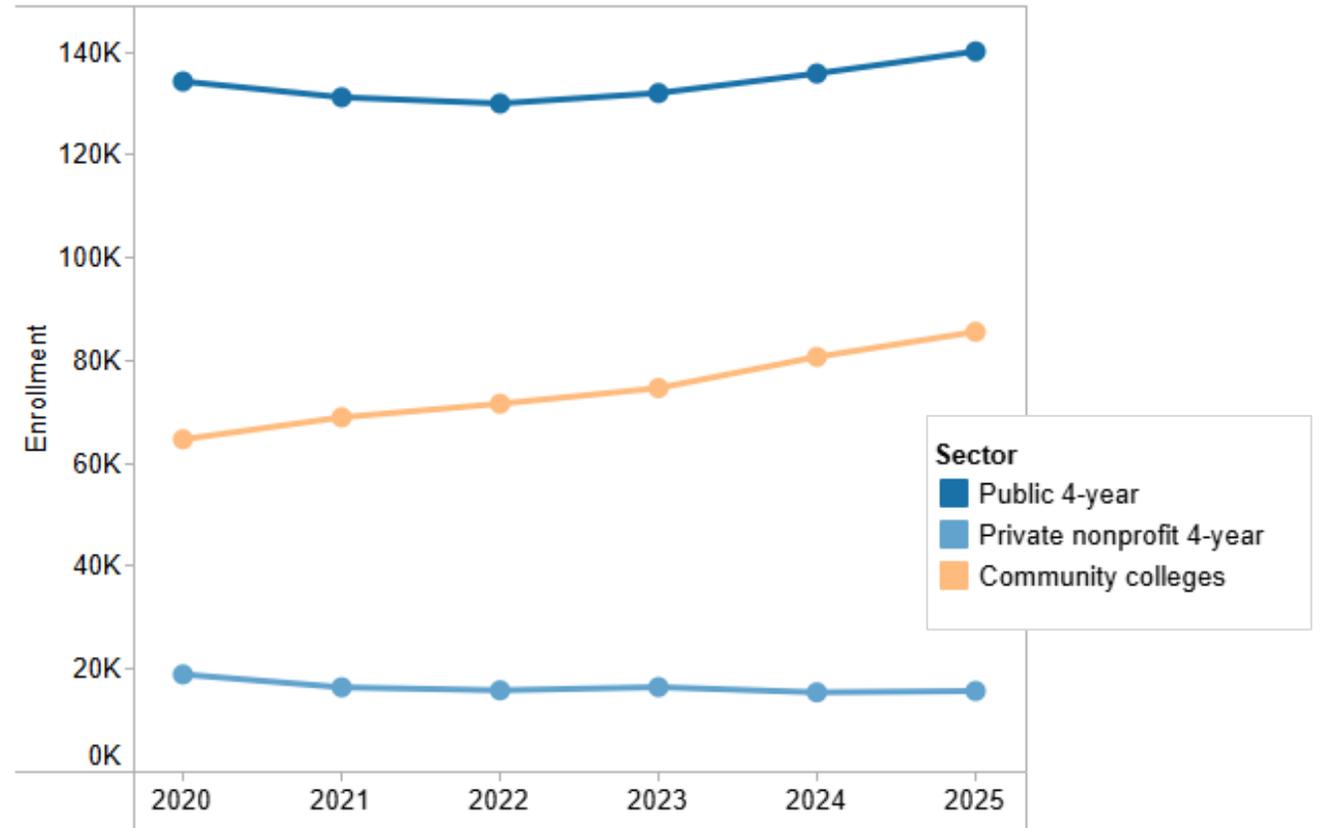


Figure 5.3 Undergraduate Enrollment by Sector: Alabama



What can our own data tell us about our students?

- Using Alabama Statewide Student Database, fall enrollment data submitted by public institutions (IHEs) to ACHE.
- Considering ALL undergraduate students enrolling in Fall of a given academic year (FA 2022, FA 2023, FA 2024, and FA 2025)
- Linking each student to the sector of IHE in which they are enrolled and looking at prior enrollments.



From ACHE Statewide Student Database

Total Enrollment FA 2022-FA 2025 (most recent 4 years)

Student Level	ACCS			Flagship+			Regional Univ			Overall	
	#Students	%	Avg Age	#Students	%	Avg Age	#Students	%	Avg Age	#Students	Avg Age
Dual Enrollment	110,231		16.2	8,132		16.4	18,978		16.3	137,341	16.2
Female	60,263	54.7%	16.2	5,287	65.0%	16.4	12,040	63.4%	16.3	77,590	16.2
Male	49,698	45.1%	16.3	2,837	34.9%	16.4	6,850	36.1%	16.3	59,385	16.3
Unknown	270	0.2%	16.3	8	0.1%	13.6	88	0.5%	16.0	366	16.1
Lower Division	226,600		24.3	144,559		19.1	106,950		20.5	478,109	21.9
Female	142,982	63.1%	25.1	79,534	55.0%	19.0	63,026	58.9%	20.7	285,542	22.4
Male	83,108	36.7%	23.0	64,946	44.9%	19.2	43,717	40.9%	20.3	191,771	21.1
Unknown	510	0.2%	22.5	79	0.1%	17.8	207	0.2%	20.7	796	21.6
				128,808		21.8	133,345		24.9	262,153	23.4
				69,177	53.7%	21.7	82,324	61.7%	25.2	151,501	23.6
				59,630	46.3%	22.0	50,888	38.2%	24.4	110,518	23.1
				1	0.0%	35.0	133	0.1%	29.6	134	29.6
	97		23.3	1,709		31.5	6,925		32.2	15,531	28.2
	26	59.8%	23.4	991	58.0%	31.3	4,088	59.0%	33.2	9,205	28.6
	62	40.0%	23.2	718	42.0%	31.7	2,804	40.5%	30.9	6,284	27.6
	9	0.1%	21.6		0.0%		33	0.5%	34.3	42	31.6
Grand Total	343,728		21.7	283,208		20.3	266,198		22.7	893,134	21.6

Alabama Grade 9-12
2025 enrollment
breakdown
by gender

49.1% Female
50.9% Male

ACHE Data on Transfer

- Use term enrollment data to identify incoming transfer students and show which institution they transferred from.
- Focus on one term at a time and do not show student behavior over multiple terms.
- Difficult to aggregate across the system.
- Data do not consider transfer major.

ACHE DATA PORTAL



ALABAMA COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION
in accordance with Act 96-509
SOURCE OF NEW UNDERGRADUATE TRANSFERS FOR
SPRING 2022
From Alabama Public Four-Year Institutions

Institution Transferred From To	AAM	ASU	ATSU	AU	AUM	JSU	TROY	UA	UAB	UAH
BEV	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	4	4	0
BIS	1	2	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	0
CACC	2	2	0	5	6	2	5	5	1	1
CAL	6	0	1	3	3	5	4	10	6	27
CEN	0	2	0	1	5	2	3	1	2	0
CVC	0	2	0	4	2	0	3	0	0	0
DRA	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	3
ENT	1	1	0	1	1	0	4	1	0	0
GAD	0	1	0	2	0	24	0	2	2	0
ING	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
JSC	4	3	0	4	4	10	10	24	29	3
LAW	8	6	0	2	3	4	0	8	14	0
LBW	0	3	0	0	1	0	4	2	1	0
MMI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
NEC	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	1	0
NWS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	2
REI	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SHC	4	2	0	1	2	0	0	49	3	1
SND	0	0	1	8	2	2	0	4	2	0
SOU	0	2	0	18	9	5	6	5	1	1
TRE	2	13	0	0	11	0	17	1	3	1
WSD	0	2	0	1	2	0	8	2	2	0
WSH	0	1	1	4	3	7	2	5	11	2
WSS	0	4	0	0	3	1	1	1	0	0

School Graduate Reports

Transfer Reports

Degrees Awarded

Force Completions Reports

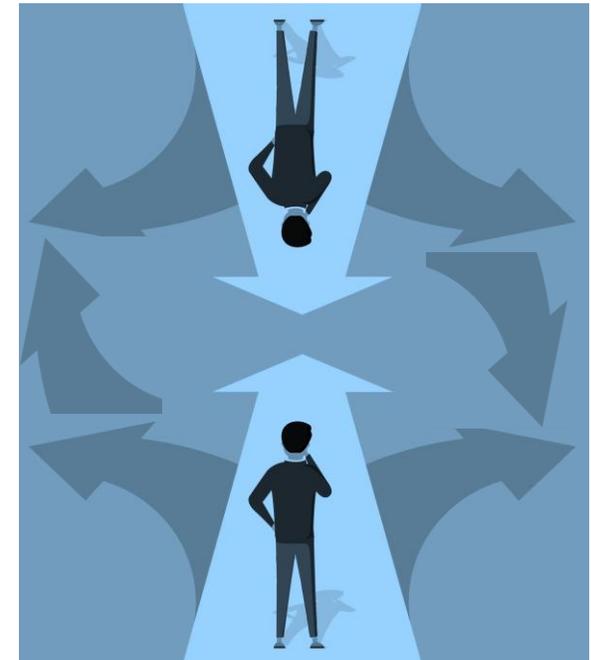
Institutional Student Profiles

Age Readiness & Outcomes

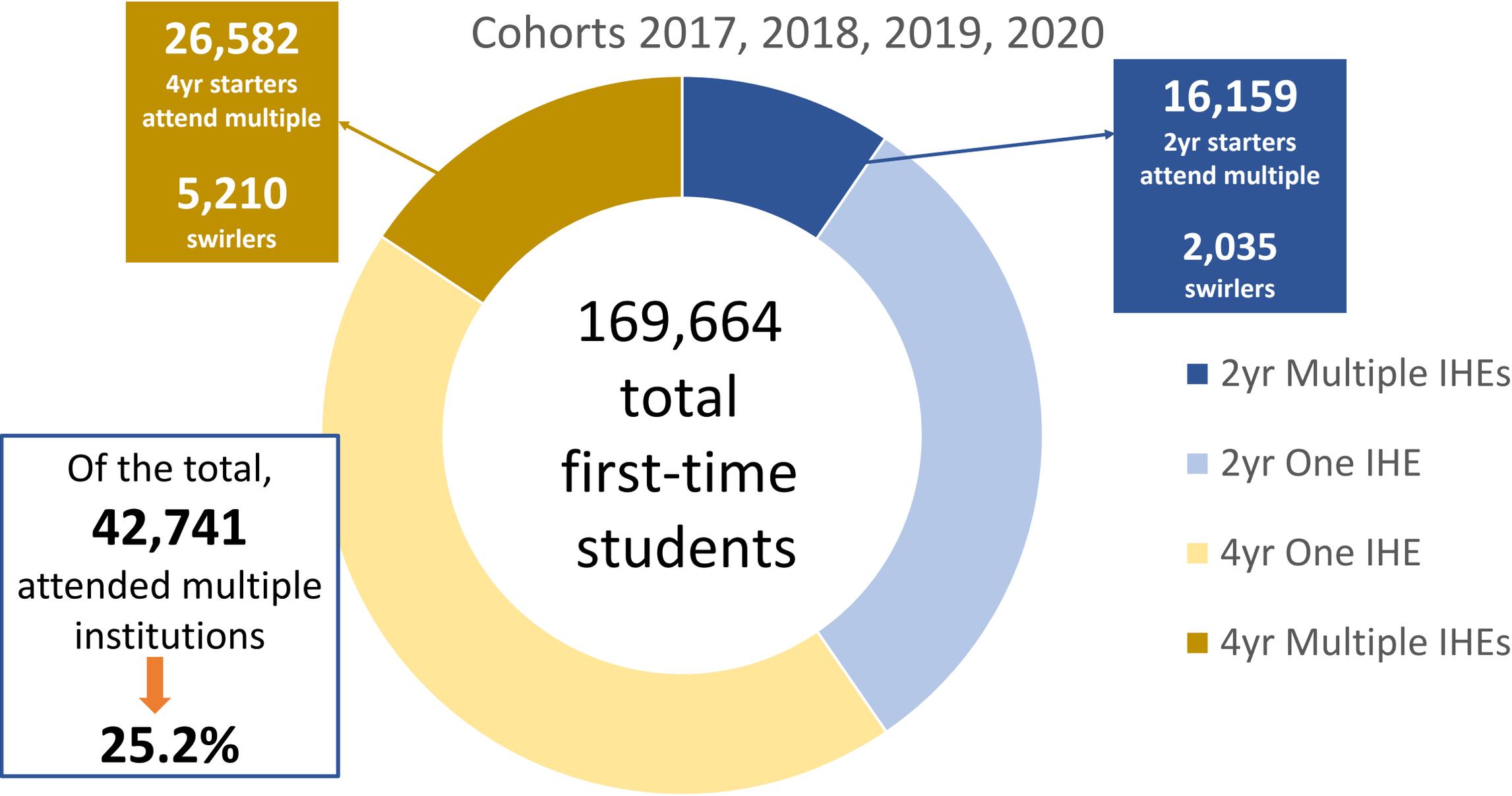
<https://data.ache.edu/>

Systemwide Transfer Data: Transfer Swirl (as presented at ACHIEVE in 2023)

- Used Alabama Statewide Student Database, annual enrollment and completion data submitted by public institutions (IHEs) to ACHE.
 - Considered first-time UG students (full-time and part-time) enrolling in Fall of a given academic year (FA 2017, FA 2018, FA 2019, and FA 2020)
 - Linked each student to the IHE they started at and tracked their enrollment and completion through Fall 2022.
- ➔ **What were the main transfer enrollment patterns across Alabama’s public institutions?**
- ➔ **What proportion of students were using the Alabama Transfers pathways versus “swirling” between multiple institutions?**



Undergraduate Degree-Seeking Students Cohorts 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020



Systemwide Transfer Data: 2YR → 4YR Pathways (as presented at ACHIEVE in 2025)

- Used Alabama Statewide Student Database, annual enrollment and completion data submitted by public institutions (IHEs) to ACHE.
- Considered first-time UG students (FT and PT) enrolling in Fall of a given academic year (FA 2019, FA 2020, FA 2021, FA 2022 and FA 2023)
- Linked each student to the **2YR IHE** they started at **AND to the 4YR IHE** they transferred to and tracked their enrollment and completion through SU 2024.
- Excluded swirlers, 4yr starters, non-first-time and non-degree-seeking students.

➔ **Which Alabama Transfers pathways are the most common?**



2YR → 4YR Alabama Transfers Pathways 2019-2023 Student Sample Data

Terms included:
FA 2019, FA 2020,
FA 2021, FA 2022
and FA 2023

All enrolled in
for-credit progs
at 2YR IHEs

388,214 Total enrollment

First-time,
degree-seeking
cohort

80,456

First-time cohort

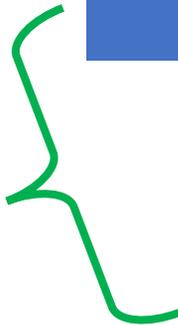
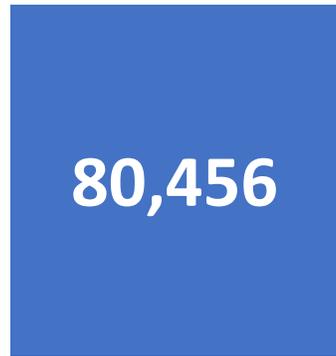
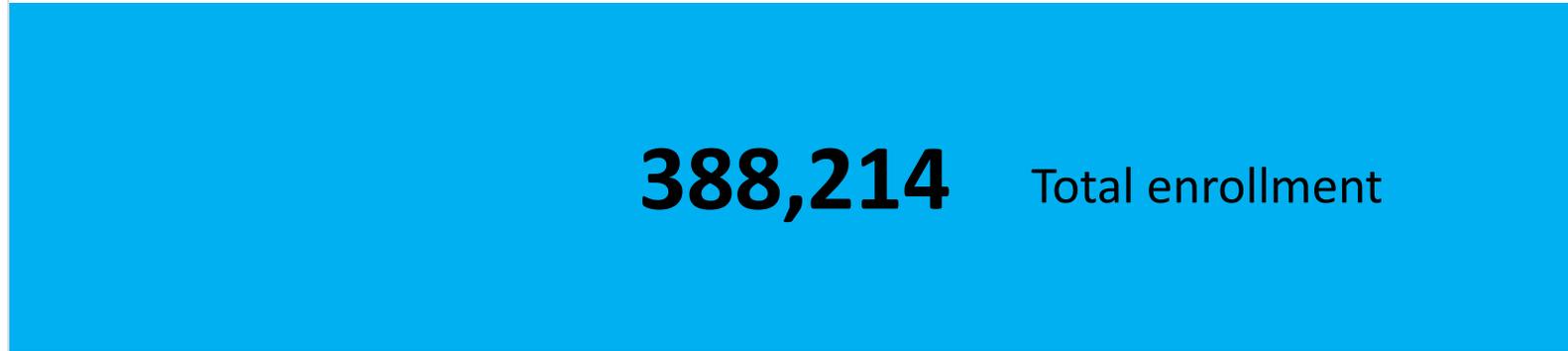
Cohorts included:
FA 2019, FA 2020,
FA 2021, FA 2022
and FA 2023

2YR starters
who transferred
to 4YR IHE

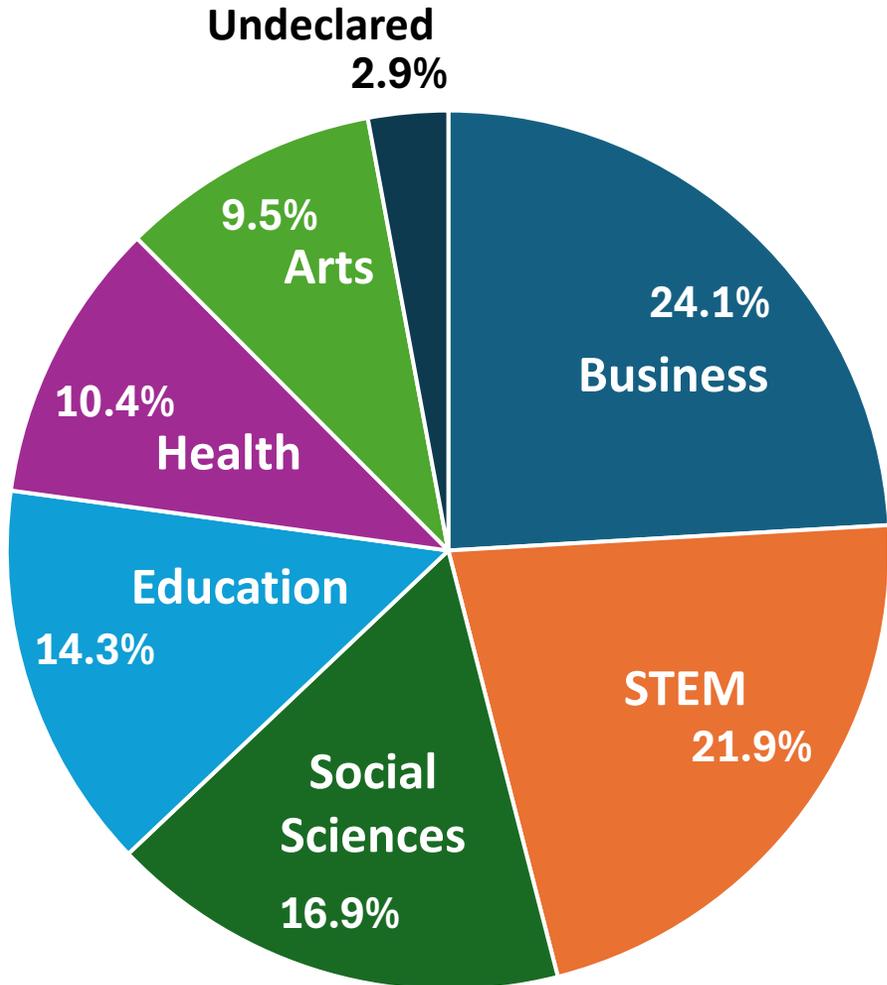
15.5%

12,493
Transfer cohort

Cohort students
who transferred
through SU 2024



Which AL Transfers pathways are most common?



AVG per yr	5YR TOTAL	TOP 10 Transfer Pathways by 2-digit CIP
522.6	2,613	Business, Management, Marketing, and Related
259.2	1,296	Health Professions And Related Programs
200.8	1,004	Education, Teaching Numeracy
180.8	904	Engineering
156	780	Education, All Other
150.8	754	Biological And Biomedical Sciences
129.4	647	Psychology
100.2	501	Computer and Information Sciences
84.6	423	Visual And Performing Arts
72.8	364	Undeclared

Systemwide Transfer Data: All Degree-Seeking

- Using Alabama Statewide Student Database, fall enrollment data submitted by public institutions (IHEs) to ACHE.
- Considering ALL undergraduate students enrolling in Fall of a given academic year (FA 2022, FA 2023, FA 2024, and FA 2025)
- Linking each student to the sector of IHE in which they are enrolled and looking at degree-level.

Student Level	ACCS			Flagship+			Regional Univ			Overall	
	#Students	%	Avg Age	#Students	%	Avg Age	#Students	%	Avg Age	#Students	Avg Age
Dual Enrollment	110,231		16.2	8,132		16.4	18,978		16.3	137,341	16.2
Lower Division	226,600		24.3	144,559		19.1	106,950		20.5	478,109	21.9
Upper Division				128,808		21.8	133,345		24.9	262,153	23.4
Other non-deg UG	6,897		23.3	1,709		31.5	6,925		32.2	15,531	28.2
Grand Total	343,728		21.7	283,208		20.3	266,198		22.7	893,134	21.6

From ACHE Statewide Student Database

Degree-Seeking FA 2022-FA 2025 (most recent 4 years)

	ACCS			Flagship+			Regional Univ			Overall	
	#Students	%	Avg Age	#Students	%	Avg Age	#Students	%	Avg Age	#Students	Avg Age
LOWER DIV											
Full-Time	112,867 21.9			138,831 18.9			95,038 19.7			346,736 20.1	
1	85,600	75.8%		101,402	73.0%		62,913	66.2%		249,915	
2	22,441	19.9%		31,562	22.7%		27,801	29.3%		81,804	
3+	4,826	4.3%		5,867	4.2%		4,324	4.5%		15,017	
Part-Time	113,733 26.7			5,728 23.3			11,912 26.7			131,373 26.6	
1	73,903	65.0%		3,161	55.2%		7,188	60.3%		84,252	
2	28,757	25.3%		1,822	31.8%		3,598	30.2%		34,177	
3+	11,073	9.7%		745	13.0%		1,126	9.5%		12,944	
UPPER DIV											
Full-Time				115,337 21.2			101,052 23.2			216,389 22.1	
1				65,150	56.5%		48,345	47.8%		113,495	
2				35,773	31.0%		39,534	39.1%		75,307	
3+				14,414	12.5%		13,173	13.0%		27,587	
Part-Time				13,471 27.3			32,293 30.1			45,764 29.3	
1				6,238	46.3%		11,867	36.7%		18,105	
2				4,489	33.3%		13,549	42.0%		18,038	
3+				2,744	20.4%		6,877	21.3%		9,621	
Grand Total	226,600 24.3			273,367 20.4			240,295 22.9			740,262 22.4	

Focus on Freshmen:

In Fall 2025, there are
61,308 students counted as
degree-seeking freshmen.

Of those, only

28,044

are first-time, full-time freshmen who have
never attended college before (at least at one of
Alabama's 38 public institutions).

The Takeaways

- ➔ Degree-seeking students are thinking about pathways, often shortest path to degree.
- ➔ The first-time, full-time freshman who has never attended college before is now in the minority.
- ➔ As administrators and advisors, we need to allow for greater flexibility and creativity in pathways to completion.
- ➔ We need to partner with faculty so that they better understand enrollment patterns.

How *else* should we adapt?

Questions

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