

# HLC By the Numbers

## Analysis of 2025 Institutional Update Data

HLC membership constitutes a diversity of institutions that are varied by mission and purpose, academic focus, funding resources, enrollment size, geographic locations, award levels, the student populations, the communities that they serve, and more.

The following analysis provides a broad overview of HLC's membership through the latest Institutional Update (2025) data on student enrollment, program completion, institutional workforce, and financial resources.

The Institutional Update process takes place each spring to closely align with the IPEDS Surveys' data collection schedule. Through this process, HLC uses the data to assess institutional health and identify trends.

## Student Enrollment Headcount

Student enrollment continues to rebound post-pandemic across HLC member colleges and universities. In fall 2024, HLC institutions collectively enrolled 4.89 million students, up 3 percent from 4.75 million students enrolled in fall 2023 and over 4 percent from 4.70 million students enrolled in fall 2022.

Closer examination of enrollment by institutional type (Figure 1) demonstrates gains across the entire postsecondary spectrum. Gains are most significant among for-profit institutions, which collectively enrolled 427,219 students in fall 2024, up 8.0 percent since fall 2023 (N= 395,585) and 15.6 percent since fall 2022 (N= 369,676). Enrollment at tribal colleges has also rebounded – up 4.85 percent since fall 2023 (N=12,417) and 3.80 percent since fall 2022 (N=12,542). Public colleges and universities also gained ground, increasing enrollment by 2.76 percent from fall 2023 to fall 2024

(3.35+ to 3.45+ million); while private institutions increased by 1.80 percent (<1 million to >1 million) over the same period. In a promising sign for higher education, the modest enrollment declines reported across various institution types since 2022 have disappeared for 2024, yielding an overall change of 3.0 percent, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

**Postsecondary Enrollment by Institutional Control: Fall 2022 to Fall 2024**

	2022		2023		2024	
	N	% Change	N	% Change	N	% Change
Public	3,338,159	-1.74%	3,354,569	0.49%	3,447,174	2.76%
Private Nonprofit	975,295	-1.76%	986,176	1.12%	1,003,895	1.80%
Private For-profit	369,676	0.30%	395,585	7.01%	427,219	8.00%
Tribal	12,542	2.76%	12,417	-1.00%	13,019	4.85%
<b>All Institutions</b>	<b>4,695,672</b>	<b>-1.57%</b>	<b>4,748,747</b>	<b>1.13%</b>	<b>4,891,307</b>	<b>3.00%</b>

The 3.0 percent gain seen in Figure 1 also holds when disaggregating by award type (see Figure 2). HLC member institutions collectively enrolled 3.88 million undergraduate students and 1.01 million graduate students in fall 2024. Undergraduate enrollment increased 3.27 percent from fall 2023 to fall 2024, while graduate enrollment rose 2.00 percent over this period. Previously, fall 2023 enrollment had risen just 0.78 percent for undergraduate students and 2.48 percent for graduate students from fall 2022 to fall 2023 – thus, the most recent gains help to mitigate pandemic-related losses reported in fall 2022 and earlier years.

Enrollment increases were also bolstered by a dramatic increase in part-time enrollment, which increased an impressive 4.29 percent at undergraduate institutions and 2.36 percent at graduate institutions between fall 2023 and fall 2024. Somewhat more modest – yet still sizeable – gains arose among full-time enrollees as well – at 2.79 percent for undergraduate students and 1.68 percent for graduate students. While full-time enrollment remains higher than part-time enrollment nationally, gaps are beginning to narrow, especially in graduate programs. In fall 2024, nearly half (46 percent) of students in graduate programs enrolled part-time (versus 54 percent full-time); whereas in undergraduate programs, part-time enrollment stood at 32 percent (versus 68 percent full-time).

Figure 2

**Postsecondary Enrollment by Level and Attendance Status: Fall 2022 to Fall 2024**

	2022		2023		2024	
	N	% Change	N	% Change	N	% Change
<b>Undergraduate Total</b>	<b>3,725,042</b>	<b>-1.88%</b>	<b>3,754,014</b>	<b>0.78%</b>	<b>3,876,737</b>	<b>3.27%</b>
Full-time Undergraduate	2,513,442	-1.09%	2,551,109	1.50%	2,622,289	2.79%
Part-time Undergraduate	1,211,600	-3.47%	1,202,905	-0.72%	1,254,448	4.29%
<b>Graduate Total</b>	<b>970,630</b>	<b>-0.38%</b>	<b>994,733</b>	<b>2.48%</b>	<b>1,014,570</b>	<b>2.00%</b>
Full-time Graduate	515,520	1.39%	533,958	3.58%	542,941	1.68%
Part time Graduate	455,110	-2.32%	460,775	1.25%	471,629	2.36%
<b>All Institutions</b>	<b>4,695,672</b>	<b>-1.57%</b>	<b>4,748,747</b>	<b>1.13%</b>	<b>4,891,307</b>	<b>3.00%</b>

Continuing a trend reported in earlier HLC reports, the number of high school students taking college courses continues to increase among HLC colleges and universities – from 691,790 in fall 2022 to 922,862 in fall 2024 (a gain of 33.40 percent). Increases are found across all institution types, with public institutions displaying the majority of this enrollment (N=849,264, or 92% of all dual enrollment). However, from fall 2023 to fall 2024, tribal and private institutions made inroads as well: tribal colleges grew dual enrollment at 32.84 percent (N=2,823 to 3,750) and private institutions at 29.45 percent (N=53,832 to 69,687). Meanwhile, for-profit institutions, making up the smallest category of dual enrollment, grew high school enrollment by 15.83 percent (N=139 to 161).

Figure 3

**Dual Enrollment by Institutional Control: Fall 2022 to Fall 2024**

	2022		2023		2024	
	N	% Change	N	% Change	N	% Change
Public	638,460	9.86%	690,582	8.16%	849,264	22.98%
Private Nonprofit	50,502	12.61%	53,832	6.59%	69,687	29.45%
Private For-profit	226	-28.93%	139	-38.50%	161	15.83%
Tribal	2,602	-5.66%	2,823	8.49%	3,750	32.84%
<b>All Institutions</b>	<b>691,790</b>	<b>9.97%</b>	<b>747,376</b>	<b>8.04%</b>	<b>922,862</b>	<b>23.48%</b>

# Program Completion

In contrast to impressive results on access and enrollment, results on success and completion appear more mixed (see Figure 4). Whereas the number of conferred degrees notched upwards (+0.76 percent) from fall 2023 to fall 2024, this change is very slight and comes after consecutive years of losses in 2022 (-1.37 percent, down from fall 2021) and 2023 (-1.10 percent, down from fall 2022).

Types of conferred awards strongly favor degrees over certificates (1.15 million degrees vs. 322,960 certificates for fall 2024) even as the rate of change favors certificates, which increased 11.10 percent from fall 2023 to fall 2024. Both undergraduate and graduate certificates gained ground in 2024 – with undergraduate certificates rising 10.8 percent (255,965 to 283,603) and graduate certificates 13.29 percent (34,741 to 39,357). These results underscore recent reports on the rise of career-focused certificates tied to job advancement (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. (2025). *Preliminary Fall Enrollment Trends: Fall 2025*. National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. <https://nscresearchcenter.org/enrollment-insights/>).

Baccalaureate degree production continues the downward trend we reported in prior years, albeit the one-year loss from fall 2023 to fall 2024 (-0.86 percent) is minimal compared to prior years (-2.28 percent in fall 2023 and -3.57 percent in fall 2022). Bachelor's degrees are, in fact, the only type of degree with a loss in 2024. Figure 5 shows this loss attributable primarily to public and private institutions, which are the largest by enrollment among HLC institutions – with public institutions producing 2.40 percent fewer bachelor's degrees in 2024 (from 379,652 in fall 2023 to 370,522) and private institutions producing 1.10 percent fewer (from 146,830 in fall 2023 to 145,212). Meanwhile, for-profit and tribal colleges increased conferred bachelor's degrees by 12.06 percent (N= 47,804 to 53,571) and 6.65 percent (N= 331 to 353), respectively, over the same period.

Other types of degrees gained between one and four percent between 2023 to 2024. Specialist degrees, in particular, increased 15.95 percent (N=3,133 to 3,635), approaching the fall 2022 high of 3,829 degrees. Again, a rise in specialist degrees reinforces renewed national interest in credentials tied to career advancement.

Figure 4

## Conferred Degrees and Certificates by Award Type: Fiscal Years 2022 to 2024

	2022		2023		2024	
	N	% Change	N	% Change	N	% Change
Associate's Degree	239,505	1.36%	230,726	-3.67%	238,110	3.20%
Bachelor's Degree	588,044	-3.57%	574,617	-2.28%	569,658	-0.86%
Master's Degree	264,453	-0.13%	275,421	4.15%	279,100	1.34%
Specialist Degree	3,829	11.11%	3,135	-18.12%	3,635	15.95%
Doctoral Degree	59,985	4.15%	59,218	-1.28%	61,316	3.54%
<b>Total Degree Awards</b>	<b>1,155,816</b>	<b>-1.37%</b>	<b>1,143,117</b>	<b>-1.10%</b>	<b>1,151,819</b>	<b>0.76%</b>
Undergraduate Certificate	238,452	16.08%	255,965	7.34%	283,603	10.80%
Graduate Certificate	34,750	-6.07%	34,741	-0.03%	39,357	13.29%
<b>Total Certificate Awards</b>	<b>273,202</b>	<b>12.70%</b>	<b>290,706</b>	<b>6.41%</b>	<b>322,960</b>	<b>11.10%</b>

Figure 5

**Bachelor’s Degrees Conferred by Institutional Control: Fiscal Years 2022 to 2024**

	2022		2023		2024	
	N	% Change	N	% Change	N	% Change
Public	386,781	-3.85%	379,652	-1.84%	370,522	-2.4%
Private Nonprofit	152,667	-2.06%	146,830	-3.82%	145,212	-1.10%
Private For-profit	48,257	-5.88%	47,804	-0.94%	53,571	12.06%
Tribal	339	-8.38%	331	-2.36%	353	6.65%
<b>All Institutions</b>	<b>588,044</b>	<b>-3.57%</b>	<b>574,617</b>	<b>-2.28%</b>	<b>569,658</b>	<b>-0.86%</b>

## Institutional Workforce

Once again, the size of the institutional workforce at HLC institutions continued to increase in fall 2024, up 1.96 percent (+21,482) from fall 2023 and 3.99 percent (+44,627) from fall 2022. Among administrative positions, the number of full-time (N=352,537) and part-time (N=40,071) employees notched upwards 3.24 percent and 0.84 percent, respectively, over the prior year. Among faculty positions, both full-time (N=233,805) and part-time faculty (N=286,569) increased evenly at 1.13 and 1.63 percent, respectively, which is slightly higher than the annual changes reported in prior years. Finally, among staff employees, the number of part-time employees increased by +1,416 from fall 2023 to fall 2024 (+4.25 percent), whereas the number of full-time employees increased more modestly by +1,445 (+0.86 percent) over the same period.

Figure 6

**Institutional Workforce Headcount: Fall 2022 to Fall 2024**

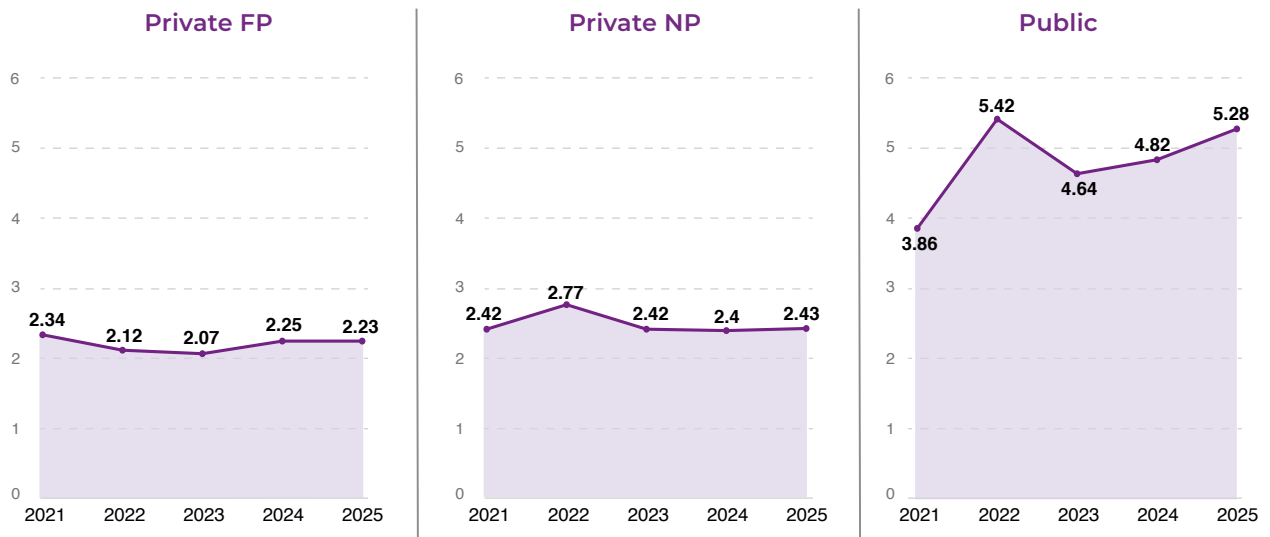
	2022		2023		2024	
	N	% Change	N	% Change	N	% Change
FT Administrators	324,104	2.46%	341,473	5.36%	352,537	3.24%
PT Administrators	38,396	-0.35%	39,739	3.50%	40,071	0.84%
FT Faculty	228,518	0.66%	231,183	1.17%	233,805	1.13%
PT Faculty	282,901	0.42%	281,966	-0.33%	286,569	1.63%
FT Staff	165,189	-1.27%	167,989	1.70%	169,434	0.86%
PT Staff	33,386	0.24%	33,289	-0.29%	34,705	4.25%
<b>All Employees</b>	<b>1,072,494</b>	<b>0.78%</b>	<b>1,095,639</b>	<b>2.16%</b>	<b>1,117,121</b>	<b>1.96%</b>

# Composite Financial Index (CFI)

HLC institutions provide financial data as part of the Institutional Update each spring. Figure 7 shows the most recent Composite Financial Index (CFI) scores from submitted data. CFI scores for public colleges and universities range from 3.86 in 2021 to 5.28 in 2025, having rebounded following a post-pandemic drop after 2022. CFI scores at for-profit and private nonprofit institutions have remained essentially flat over the same period, ranging from 2.34 to 2.23 at for-profit institutions and from 2.42 to 2.43 at private nonprofit institutions.

Figure 7

## Average CFI by Financial Control: IU Years 2021-2025



The tables and chart in this document reflect HLC data as of 12/31/2025. Visit HLC's website for more information about the Institutional Update and risk indicators procedure.

\*HLC would like to thank Dr. Philip Garber, Vice President of Planning, Institutional Effectiveness, and Technology at Elgin Community College for providing the written narrative for this report.