



HLC Membership by the Numbers

2024 Institutional Update

Introduction

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 (2024) data on student enrollment, program completion, institutional workforce, and financial resources.

Institutional Update Background

The Institutional Update process takes place each spring to closely align with the IPEDS Surveys' data collection schedule. Through this process, HLC member institutions provide information about student enrollment, completion, academic offerings, staffing, finances, off-campus activities, and other topics. HLC uses the data to assess institutional health and identify trends.

Membership Update

Membership Growth

American Islamic College (IL), a private nonprofit special focus four-year college, became the newest HLC-accredited institution in February 2024.

Resignation and Withdrawal

In academic year 2023-24, seven private nonprofit institutions voluntarily resigned their HLC accreditation. They included Presentation College (SD), Alderson Broaddus University (WV), Oak Point University (IL), Lincoln Christian University (IL), Union Institute & University (OH), Notre Dame College (OH), and Cardinal Stritch University (WI). In July 2024, HLC withdrew accreditation from Bacone College (OK), a private nonprofit institution.

Student Enrollment Headcount

In fall 2023, HLC member institutions enrolled 4.78 million undergraduate and graduate students, down 0.3 percent from fall 2022 and 2.0 percent from the fall 2021 level. The slight decrease from the previous fall suggested strengthening post-pandemic enrollment numbers among the membership even amid the impact of recent closures.

Nationally, postsecondary enrollment showed promising signs of recovery from the declines during the pandemic. The total enrollment headcount, including non-credential program enrollments, was 18.35 million, gaining 1.1 percent from fall 2022 and 0.8 percent from fall 2021, according to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (Current Term Enrollment Estimates, Fall 2023).

HLC data on student enrollment by institutional control (see Table 1) shows enrollment gains at both private nonprofit and for-profit institutions (+0.8% and +7% over the previous fall, respectively). However, enrollment at HLC public institutions declined another 1.4 percent in fall 2023, compared to the previous year, while tribal colleges reported a small decrease in enrollment (-0.5% compared to fall 2022), following two consecutive years of enrollment growth.

Table 1
Postsecondary Enrollment by Institutional Control: Fall 2021 to Fall 2023

Fall Term	2021		2022		2023	
	N	% Change	N	% Change	N	% Change
Public	3,498,301	-1.59%	3,426,029	-2.07%	3,377,939	-1.40%
Private Nonprofit	999,657	-1.85%	983,145	-1.65%	991,494	0.85%
Private For-profit	369,049	-4.10%	370,190	0.31%	396,049	6.99%
Tribal	12,220	8.49%	12,559	2.77%	12,492	-0.53%
All Institutions	4,879,227	-1.81%	4,791,923	-1.79%	4,777,974	-0.29%

Source: HLC, Data as of 8/23/2024

Enrollment breakdowns by award level among HLC member institutions (see Table 2 below) shows that undergraduate student enrollment in fall 2023 was down by 0.7 percent, while graduate student enrollment grew 1.3 percent in comparison to the prior year level.

At the undergraduate level, HLC's full-time enrollment was essentially flat (+0.09% over fall 2022), but part-time enrollment continued to decline (-2.3%). In contrast, both full-time and part-time undergraduate enrollments at the national level increased over the previous year (+1.4% and 0.7%, respectively), contributing to an overall growth of 1.2 percent, per the National Student Clearinghouse's enrollment estimates (Current Term Enrollment Estimates, Fall 2023).

HLC's overall graduate enrollment growth in fall 2023 (+1.3% over fall 2022) was mainly contributed by the healthy gains in full-time graduate enrollment (+2.3%) and by a small increase in part-time graduate enrollment (+0.2%). In fact, graduate enrollment growth in fall 2023 at HLC was more robust than the national level (+0.6%), according to the data reported by the National Student Clearinghouse (Current Term Enrollment Estimates, Fall 2023).

Table 2**Postsecondary Enrollment by Level and Attendance Status: Fall 2021 to Fall 2023**

Fall Term	2021		2022		2023	
Student Level	N	% Change	N	% Change	N	% Change
Undergraduate Total	3,894,116	-2.38%	3,808,991	-2.19%	3,782,283	-0.70%
Full-time Undergraduate	2,592,667	-3.12%	2,558,078	-1.33%	2,560,492	0.09%
Part-time Undergraduate	1,301,449	-0.86%	1,250,913	-3.88%	1,221,791	-2.33%
Graduate Total	985,111	0.48%	982,932	-0.22%	995,691	1.30%
Full-time Graduate	514,534	2.57%	522,265	1.50%	534,147	2.28%
Part time Graduate	470,577	-1.71%	460,667	-2.11%	461,544	0.19%
Grand Total	4,879,227	-1.81%	4,791,923	-1.79%	4,777,974	-0.29%

The number of high school students taking college courses at HLC institutions continued a growth trajectory in the last five years, except for a dip in fall 2020 due to the pandemic. Dual enrollment in fall 2023 gained 7.6% over the fall 2022 level and 22% over the pre-pandemic level in fall 2019. The overall growth was attributable in most part to public institutions (+7.8%), which enrolled 92% of the total dual enrollment students. While enrollment at private nonprofit and at tribal institutions gained 5.1% and 8.5%, respectively, dual enrollment at private for-profit institutions continued a steep decline, down 38.5% from the previous fall's level.

Table 3**Dual Enrollment by Institutional Control: Fall 2021 to Fall 2023**

Fall Term	2021		2022		2023	
Control	N	% Change	N	% Change	N	% Change
Public	583,309	8.74%	640,036	9.73%	690,233	7.84%
Private Nonprofit	45,583	14.18%	51,029	11.95%	53,626	5.09%
Private For-profit	318	-22.82%	226	-28.93%	139	-38.50%
Tribal	2,758	19.03%	2,602	-5.66%	2,823	8.49%
All Institutions	631,968	9.13%	693,893	9.80%	746,821	7.63%

Program Completion

HLC member institutions conferred 1.15 million awards in degree program completion in fiscal year 2022–23, down 2.3% from the previous year’s level (see Table 4 below). On the plus side, the number of master’s degree awards increased 3.1% from the previous year, consistent with the graduate enrollment growth in recent years. Conversely, the number of awards at associate’s, bachelor’s, specialist, and doctoral degree levels were lower than the previous year (-4.3%, -3.7%, -18.7%, and -2.9%, respectively).

Undergraduate certificate awards continued to grow for a second consecutive year, up 7.5%, while graduate certificate awards decreased slightly (-0.9%) from the previous year.

Table 4
Conferred Degrees and Certificates by Award Type: Fiscal Years 2021 to 2023

Fiscal Year	2021		2022		2023	
	N	% Change	N	% Change	N	% Change
Associate’s Degree	240,618	-2.91%	246,849	2.59%	236,109	-4.35%
Bachelor’s Degree	619,829	0.59%	597,330	-3.63%	575,046	-3.73%
Master’s Degree	267,711	4.02%	267,431	-0.10%	275,692	3.09%
Specialist Degree	3,456	0.29%	3,854	11.52%	3,133	-18.71%
Doctoral Degree	58,653	2.15%	61,016	4.03%	59,230	-2.93%
Total Degree Awards	1,190,267	0.68%	1,176,480	-1.16%	1,149,210	-2.32%
Undergraduate Certificate	206,197	-10.54%	239,410	16.11%	257,426	7.53%
Graduate Certificate	37,232	36.89%	35,058	-5.84%	34,744	-0.90%
Total Certificate Awards	243,429	-5.53%	274,468	12.75%	292,170	6.45%

In fiscal year 2022-23 the number of bachelor's degree conferrals decreased for a second consecutive year, down 3.7% from the previous year. The decline in bachelor's degree awards was highest among private nonprofit (-4.5%), followed by public (-3.8%), tribal (-2.4%), and private for-profit institutions (-1%).

Table 5
Bachelor's Degrees Conferred by Institutional Control: Fiscal Years 2021 to 2023

Fiscal Year	2021		2022		2023	
Control	N	% Change	N	% Change	N	% Change
Public	410,041	-0.06%	394,480	-3.79%	379,652	-3.76%
Private Nonprofit	158,143	-0.06%	154,254	-2.46%	147,259	-4.53%
Private For-profit	51,275	8.14%	48,257	-5.89%	47,804	-0.94%
Tribal	370	38.58%	339	-8.38%	331	-2.36%
All Institutions	619,829	0.59%	597,330	-3.63%	575,046	-3.73%

Institutional Workforce

The level of employment at HLC member institutions slightly increased in fall 2023, gaining 0.6% from the previous year. Among administrative positions, the number of both full-time and part-time administrators increased from fall 2022 (+3.2% and +0.9%, respectively). While the number of part-time faculty was stable (-0.2%), full-time faculty decreased 1.6%. Lastly, while the number of full-time staff positions slightly increased (+0.3%), the part-time staff positions decreased 1.1%, compared with the prior year's levels.

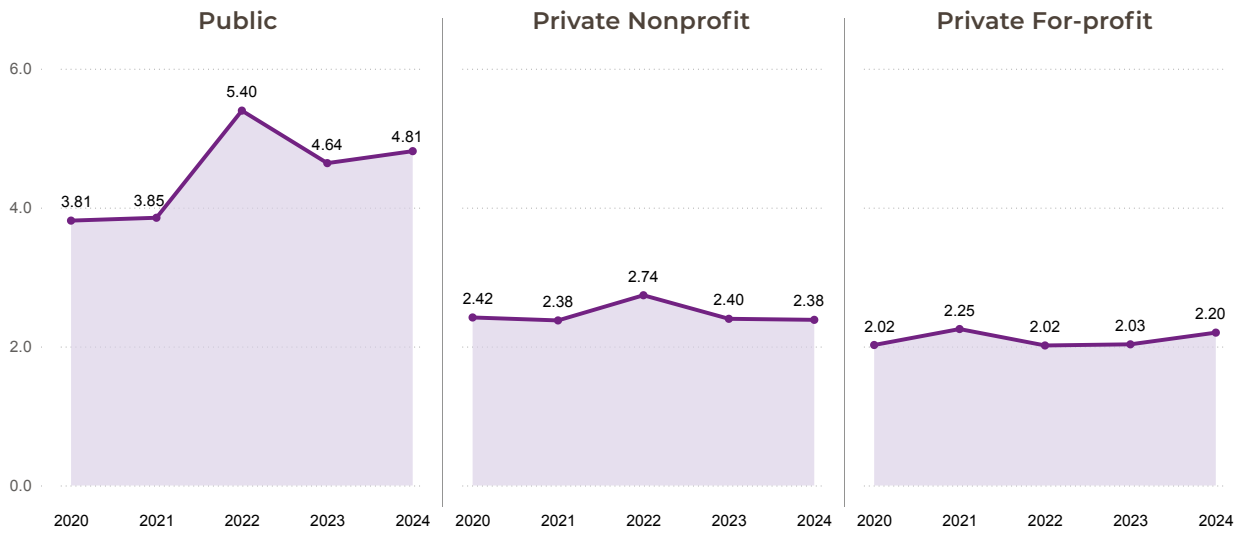
Table 6
Institutional Workforce Headcount: Fall 2021 to Fall 2023

Fall Term	2021		2022		2023	
Employee Type	N	% Change	N	% Change	N	% Change
FT Administrators	322,899	-0.24%	331,000	2.51%	341,623	3.21%
PT Administrators	39,748	-2.33%	39,411	-0.85%	39,755	0.87%
FT Faculty	288,047	1.55%	288,619	0.20%	284,035	-1.59%
PT Faculty	230,571	-0.23%	231,922	0.59%	231,441	-0.21%
FT Staff	170,108	-2.74%	167,765	-1.38%	168,342	0.34%
PT Staff	33,923	0.77%	33,689	-0.69%	33,303	-1.15%
All Employees	1,085,296	-0.22%	1,092,406	0.66%	1,098,499	0.56%

Composite Financial Index (CFI)

Member institutions provided HLC with financial data from their most recent audited financial statements and a Composite Financial Index score was calculated from the submitted data. Figure 1 shows the average CFI scores in the last five years by institutions' financial control type. Data from the 2024 Institutional Update showed that the average CFI among public and private for-profit institutions increased slightly compared to the previous year, while the average CFI score among private nonprofit institutions remained flat.

Figure 1
Average CFI by Financial Control: IU Years 2020–2024



The tables and chart in this document reflect HLC data as of 8/23/2024. Visit HLC's website for more information about the [Institutional Update](#) and [financial and non-financial indicators procedure](#).

Reference

National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. (n.d.). Current Term Enrollment Estimates (Fall 2023). Herndon, VA: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. Retrieved August 15, 2024, from <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/researchcenter/viz/CTEEFall2023dashboard/CTEEFall2023>