

RESEARCH REPORT

NOVEMBER 2019 | REPORT NO. 19-5

ANNUAL ENROLLMENT SUMMARY 2018-19

Enrollment continues to decline but students are taking more credits

Colleges enrolled a total of 362,862 students, or 169,652 full-time equivalent student enrollments (FTEs), including all fund sources, in academic year 2018-19. As illustrated in Chart 1 below, headcount is down 23 percent over the last 10 years, having declined every year since 2008-09. Although there are fewer students in the system, those who are enrolled are taking more credits. In 2008-09, 57 percent of students took fewer than 15 credits, while in 2018-19 that figure dropped to 47 percent. Those enrolled in fewer than 15 credits throughout the academic year primarily enrolled in just one or two courses for job skills or personal enrichment. The average credit load in 2018-19 was 21 credits, compared with 18 credits in 2008-09. This explains why FTEs experienced a more gradual decline of 8 percent over the last 10 years compared with the 23 percent drop in headcount. Modest increases in transfer course FTEs in recent years also may be a contributing factor to higher credit loads.

Chart 1. Total headcount and FTEs from 2008-09 to 2018-19

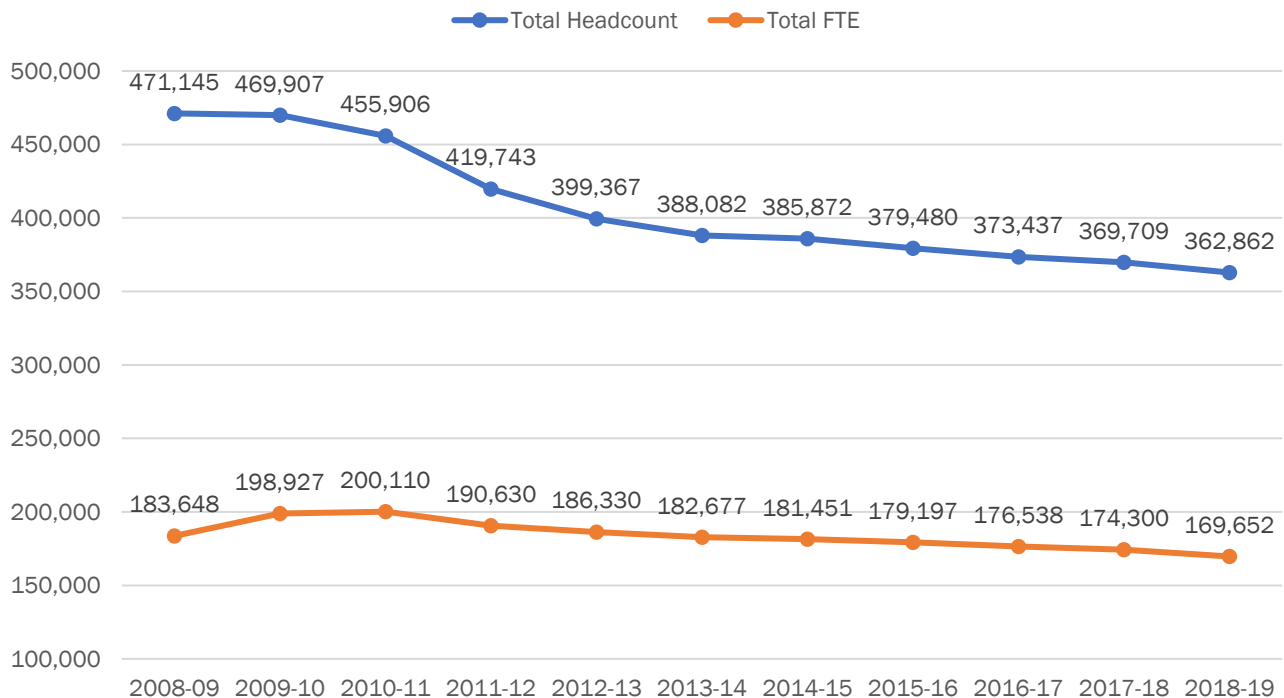
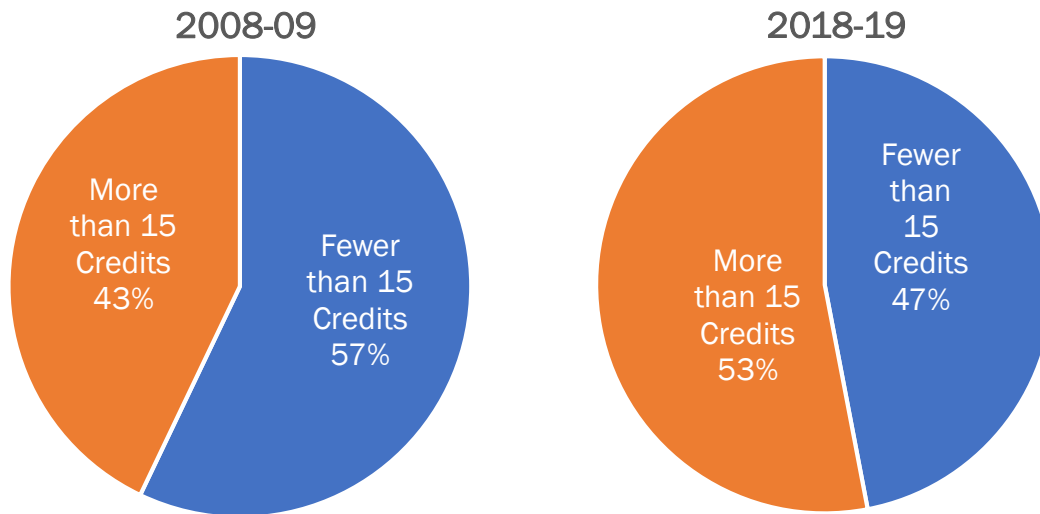
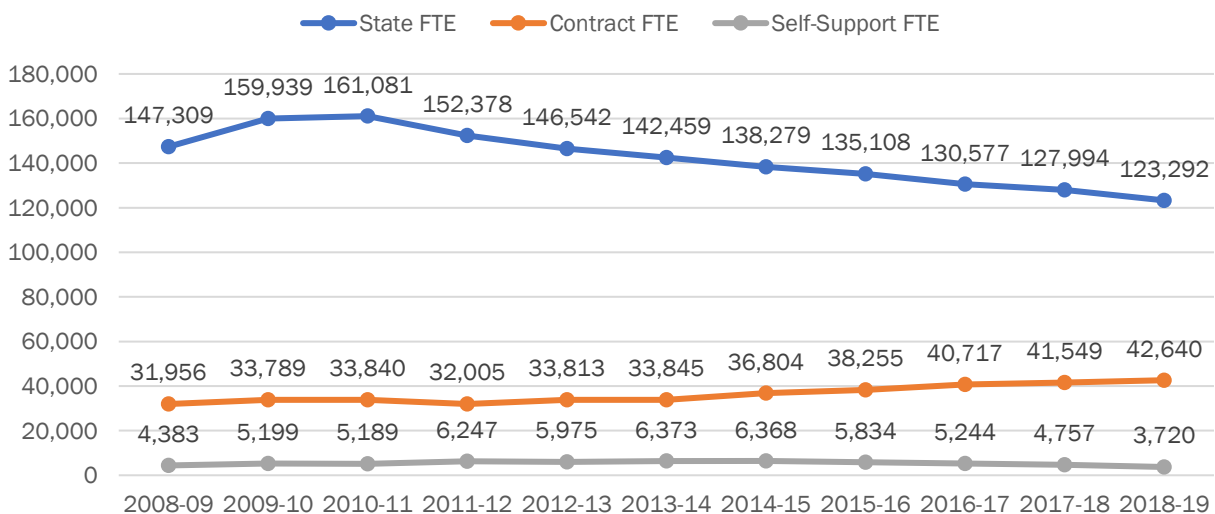


Chart 2. Share of students taking fewer than 15 credits in 2008-09 versus 2018-19



State FTEs continue to decline, dropping 2 percent year over year to 123,292 in 2018-19. State FTEs are down 16 percent compared with 2008-09. An increase in contract-funded enrollment has replaced part of the drop in state-funded enrollment, with 42,640 contract FTEs in 2018-19, up 3 percent from last year and 33 percent from 10 years ago. The growth in contract-funded FTEs is primarily driven by growth in Running Start enrollment, which has grown by 98 percent since 2008-09 and represents more than half of contract-funded FTEs in 2018-19 (23,447 Running Start FTEs out of the 42,640 contract-funded FTEs). This means that some of the traditional state-supported enrollment for adult students is being replaced by dual credit high school student enrollment supported by the state through the Running Start program. Total state-supported enrollment including Running Start totaled 146,739 in 2018-19, down 2 percent year over year. 2018-19 was the first year since the recession that state FTEs including Running Start dipped below pre-recession levels (147,389 FTEs in 2008-09).

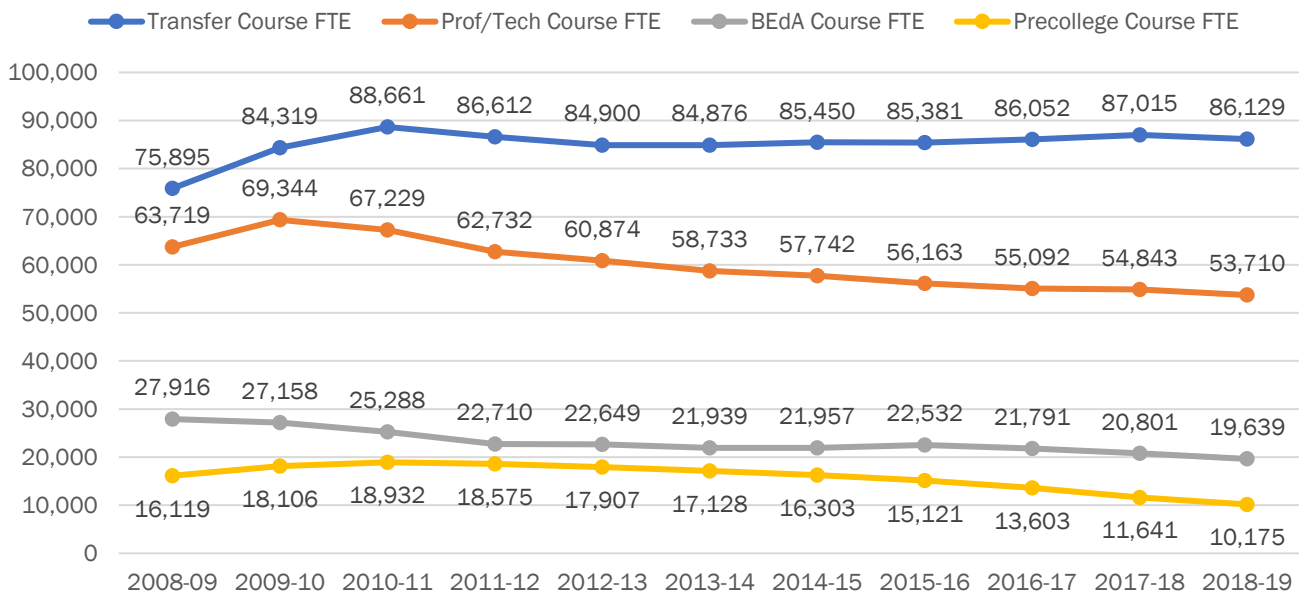
Chart 3. Total FTEs by fund source from 2008-09 to 2018-19



Enrollment trends vary by course type

Year-over-year FTE enrollment is down across all course types, but the trend over the last several years in transfer courses is up slightly. Transfer course enrollment is up by 13 percent compared with 2008-09 (75,895 in 2008-09 and 86,129 in 2018-19). The steadily increasing transfer course FTE enrollment over the last decade is a likely contributor to the higher credit load per student discussed earlier. Professional/technical course enrollment continues to decline gradually (53,710 FTEs in 2018-19, down 2 percent year over year and 13 percent from 10 years ago). Basic Education for Adult (BEaA) course FTEs dipped below 20,000 for the first time in a decade to 19,639 in 2018-19, and pre-college FTE experienced the sharpest decline (down 13 percent year over year to 10,175 FTEs in 2018-19 and down 37 percent since 2008-09).

Chart 4. Total FTEs by course type from 2008-09 to 2018-19



Enrollment continues to increase for several programs

Enrollment continues to increase for Applied Baccalaureate programs (3,759 FTEs, up 20 percent), Apprenticeships (4,419 FTEs, up 15 percent), eLearning (57,630 FTEs, up 5 percent), I-BEST (3,210 FTEs, up 6 percent), and Running Start (23,447 FTEs, up 7 percent). Programs with steadily declining enrollment include BEaA (16,751 FTEs, down 7 percent), Basic Food Employment and Training (5,278, down 5 percent), Corrections (3,411 FTEs, down 4 percent), International (11,385 FTEs, down 13 percent), International Contract (7,787 FTEs, down 5 percent), and WorkFirst (1,994 FTEs, down 10 percent). Worker Retraining demonstrates mixed results over the last several years. Although Worker Retraining FTEs are up by 3 percent in 2018-19 to 7,045, these FTE enrollments do not show the constant downward or upward trend seen in other programs.

Table 1. FTEs enrollment for selected program areas 2014-15 to 2018-19

Total FTE by Program	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	1 yr change
Applied Baccalaureate	1,036	1,627	2,307	3,138	3,759	20%
Apprenticeship	2,797	3,292	3,505	3,827	4,419	15%

Total FTE by Program	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	1 yr change
Basic Education for Adults	19,448	19,898	18,994	18,072	16,751	-7%
Basic Food Employment and Training	6,381	6,736	6,120	5,579	5,278	-5%
Corrections	3,811	3,545	3,636	3,558	3,411	-4%
eLearning FTES	44,990	47,443	50,068	54,690	57,630	5%
I-BEST	2,178	2,493	2,661	3,031	3,210	6%
International	15,380	14,922	14,154	13,056	11,385	-13%
International Contract	7,253	7,314	8,573	8,203	7,787	-5%
Running Start	16,371	18,335	20,207	21,992	23,447	7%
WorkFirst	3,370	2,823	2,453	2,223	1,994	-10%
Work Retraining	6,751	7,206	7,297	6,843	7,045	3%

Enrollment for select demographic groups

Demographic trends have been similar for the past few years, with little change in students age 25 and under (53 percent of all students), female students (55 percent), new students (28 percent), full-time students (44 percent), veteran or active duty students (4 percent), and students with a reported disability (5 percent). The percent of students receiving need-based aid has declined in recent years, but that may change moving forward as the Washington College Grant (WCG) replaces the State Need Grant. The WCG will reduce and eventually eliminate the grant waitlist and expand eligibility from 70 percent to 100 percent of median family income. Along with these changes, SBCTC and the Washington Student Achievement Council, among other stakeholders, are working to encourage more students to complete federal and state financial aid applications. These changes are likely to affect the percent of students receiving need-based aid in future years.

Students of color and historically underserved students of color continue to increase as a percentage of total student population, comprising 48 percent and 30 percent of students in the system, respectively. Hispanic or Latino students are the fastest growing population in the system, increasing year over year by 3 percent. The population of White students has declined the most of any population, dropping 3 percent year over year and 12 percent in the last five years. Finally, the share of students with children or other dependents is mixed year to year. This field relies on student-reported data, and a significant percentage of students do not report a family status. In 2018-19, of those who did report, 25 percent indicated they have children or dependents.

Table 2. Percent of total headcount for select demographic groups 2014-15 to 2018-19

Student Group	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Age 25 and over	54%	54%	54%	54%	53%
Female	54%	54%	54%	55%	55%
Students of color	44%	44%	46%	47%	48%
HU students of color	27%	28%	29%	29%	30%
With children or other dependents	27%	26%	25%	29%	25%
With reported Disability	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%

Student Group	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Veteran or active duty	4%	4%	4%	4%	3%
Received need based financial aid (percent of students in aid eligible programs)	41%	38%	37%	36%	37%
Enrolled full-time	46%	45%	45%	45%	44%
New students	28%	29%	28%	28%	28%



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