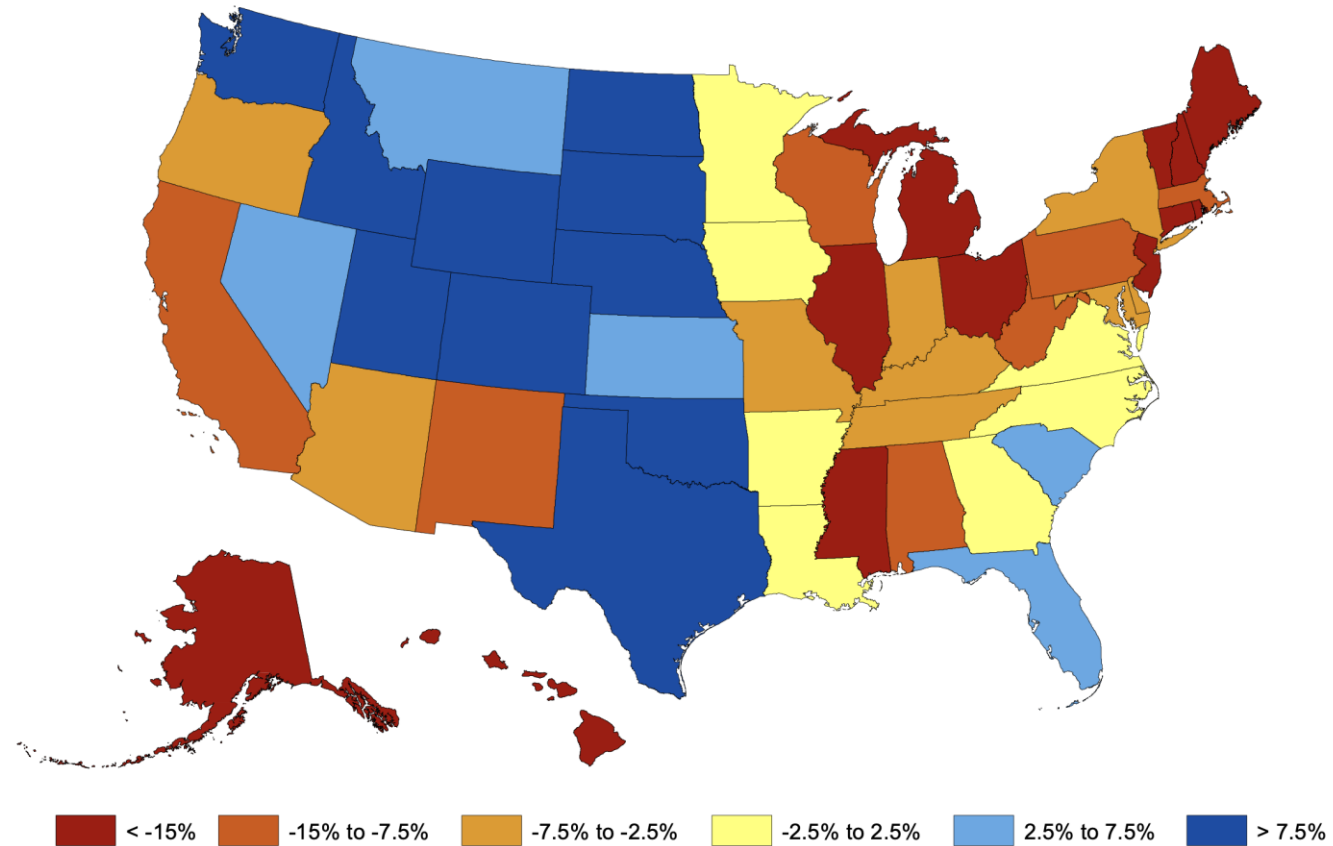


# ***The State of Undergraduate Education and the Impact on Graduate Enrollment***

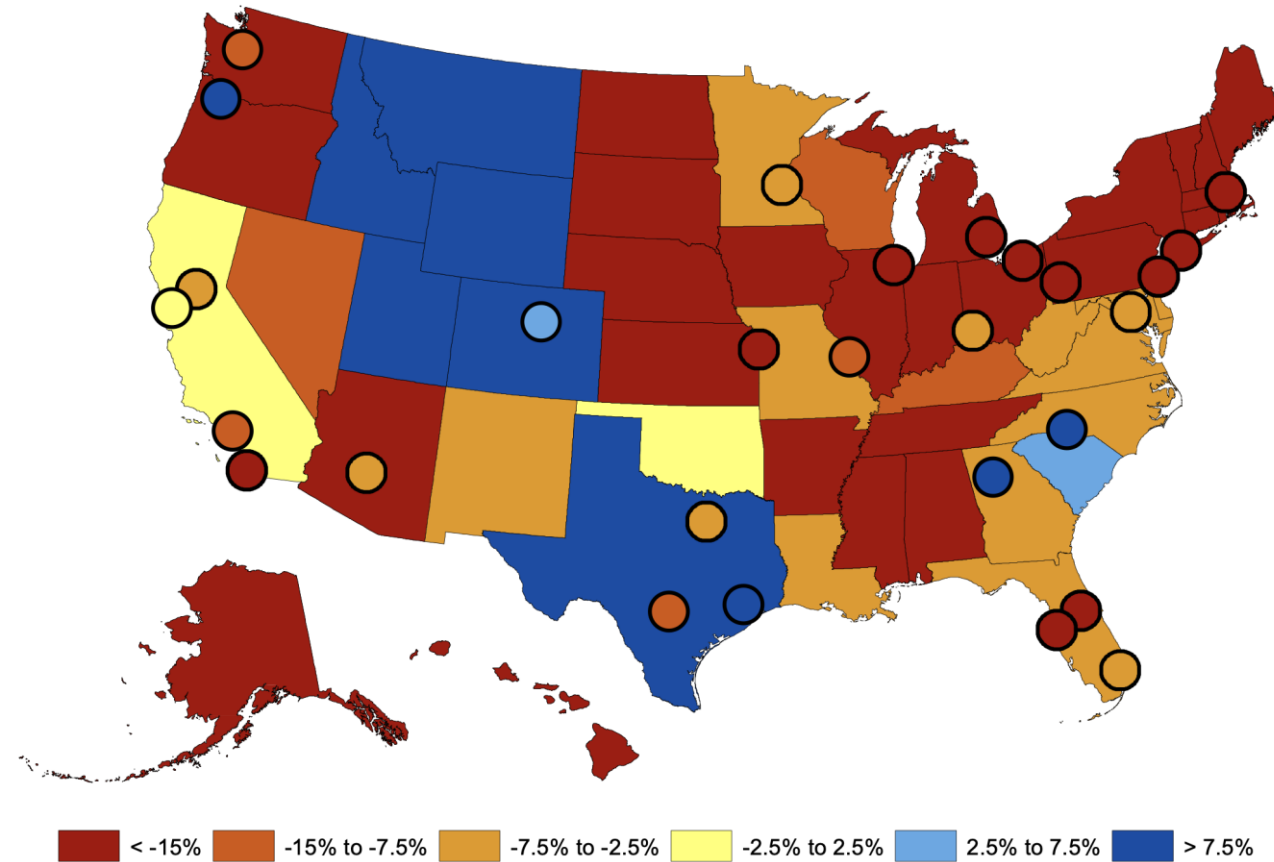
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Presented by Brenda Harms, PhD  
Special Assistant to the Provost  
Texas A&M – Corpus Christi  
For the Association of Texas Graduate Schools

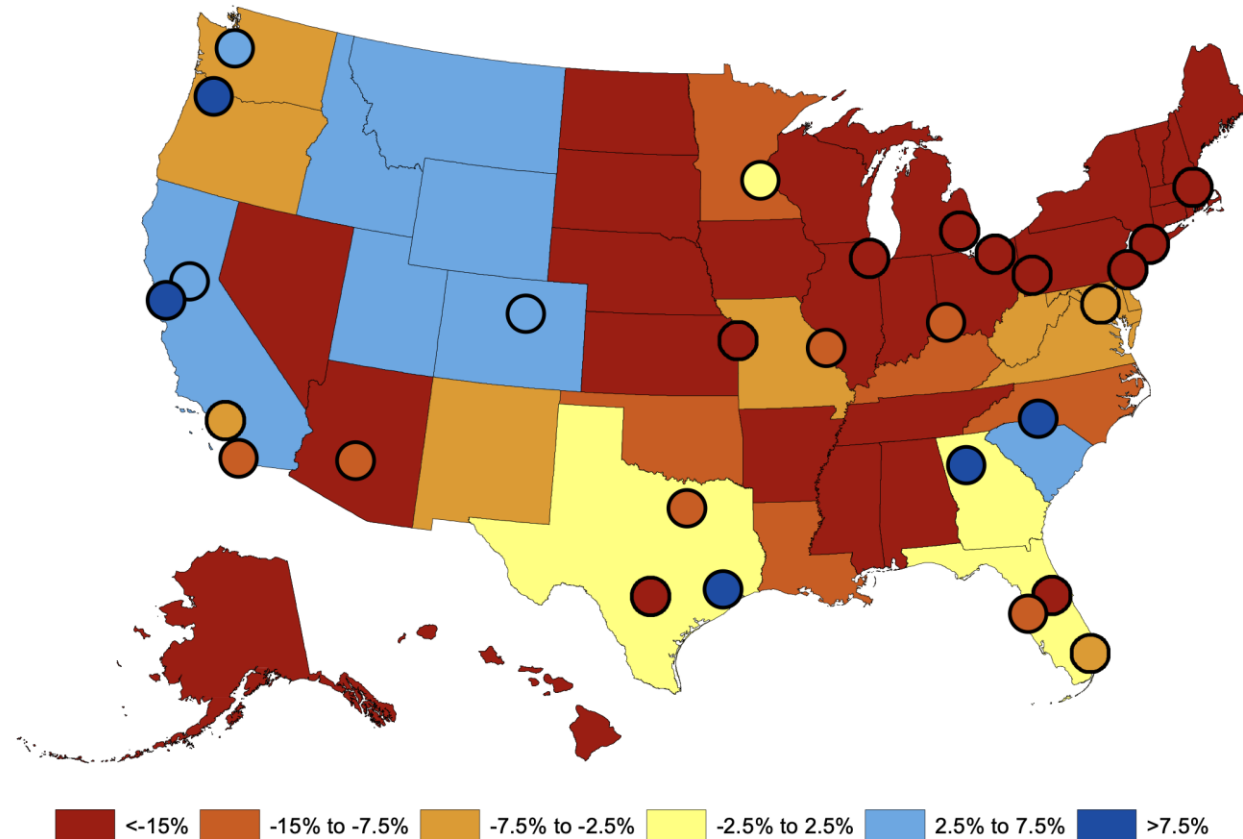
# Forecasted Growth in High School Graduates 2012-2032



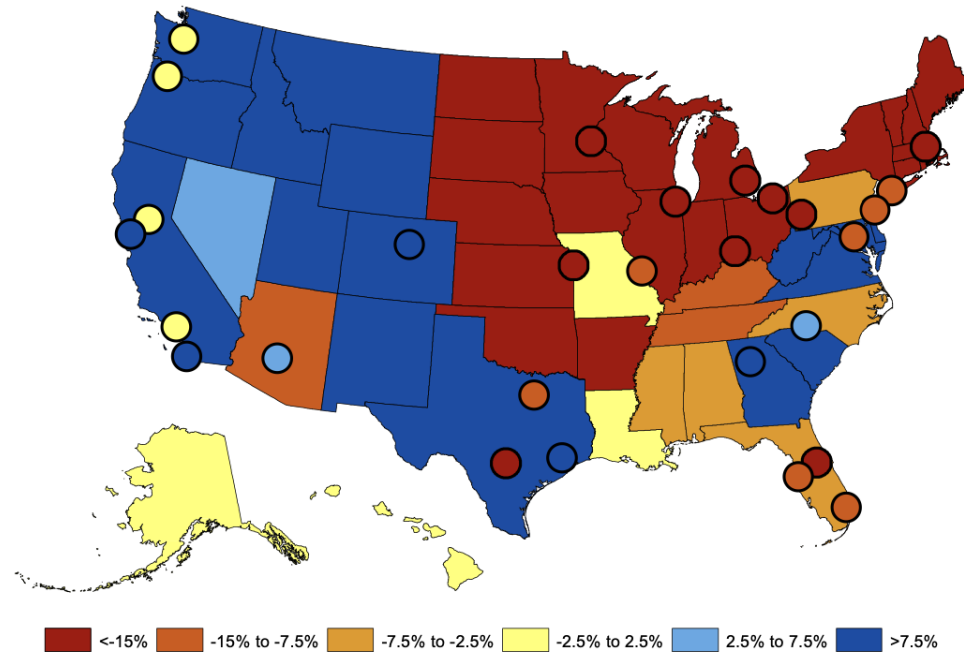
# Forecasted Growth in College Going Students 2012 - 2029



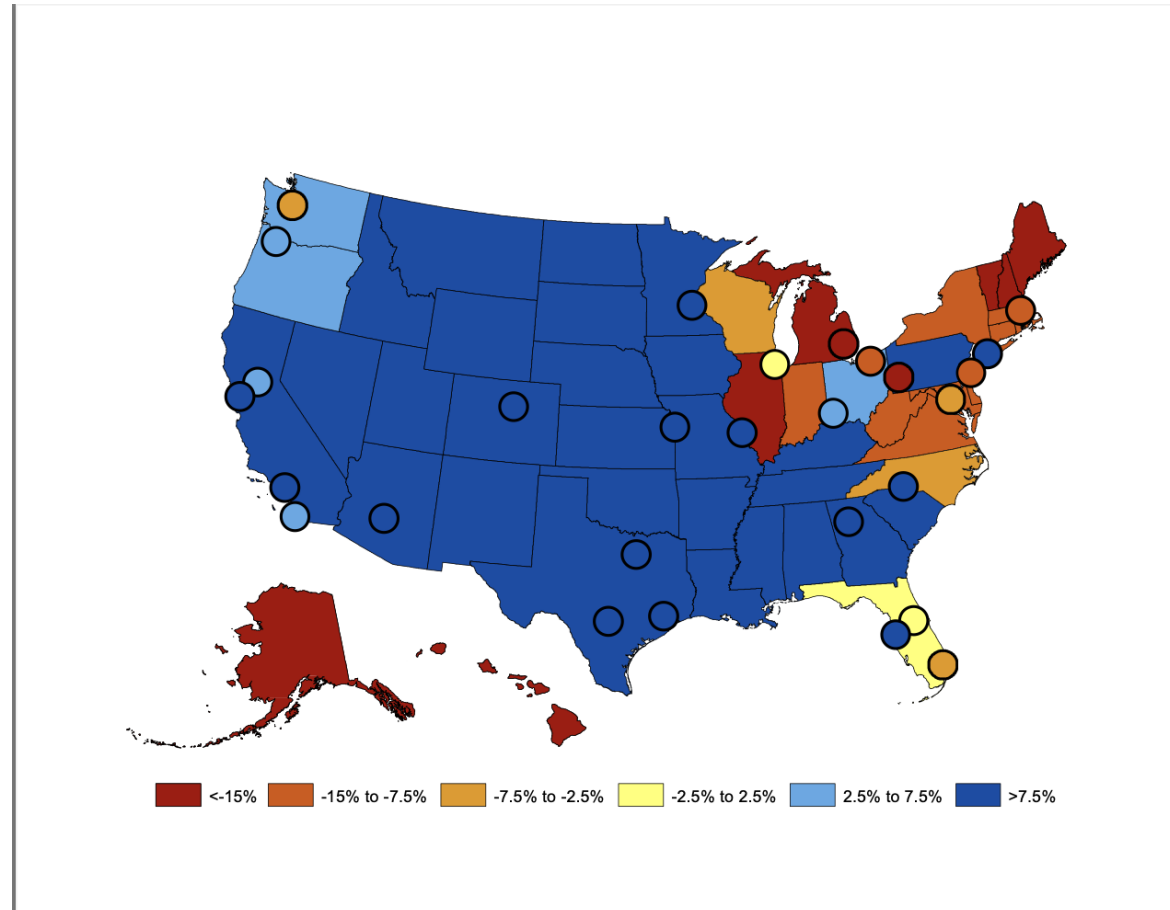
# Forecasted Growth in Students Who Attend Regional Public University 2012-2029



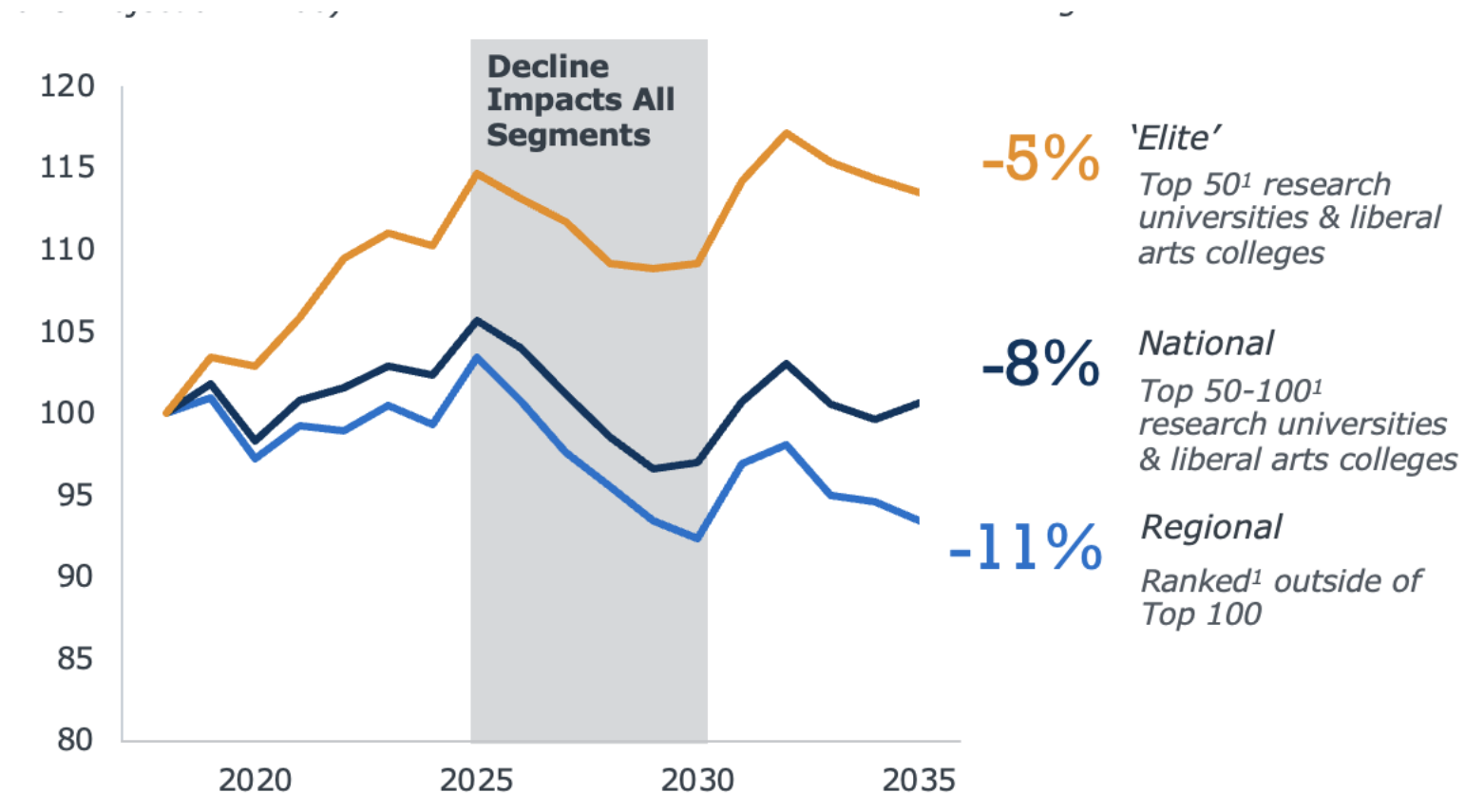
# Forecasted Growth in Students Who Attend a National 4-Year University 2012-2029



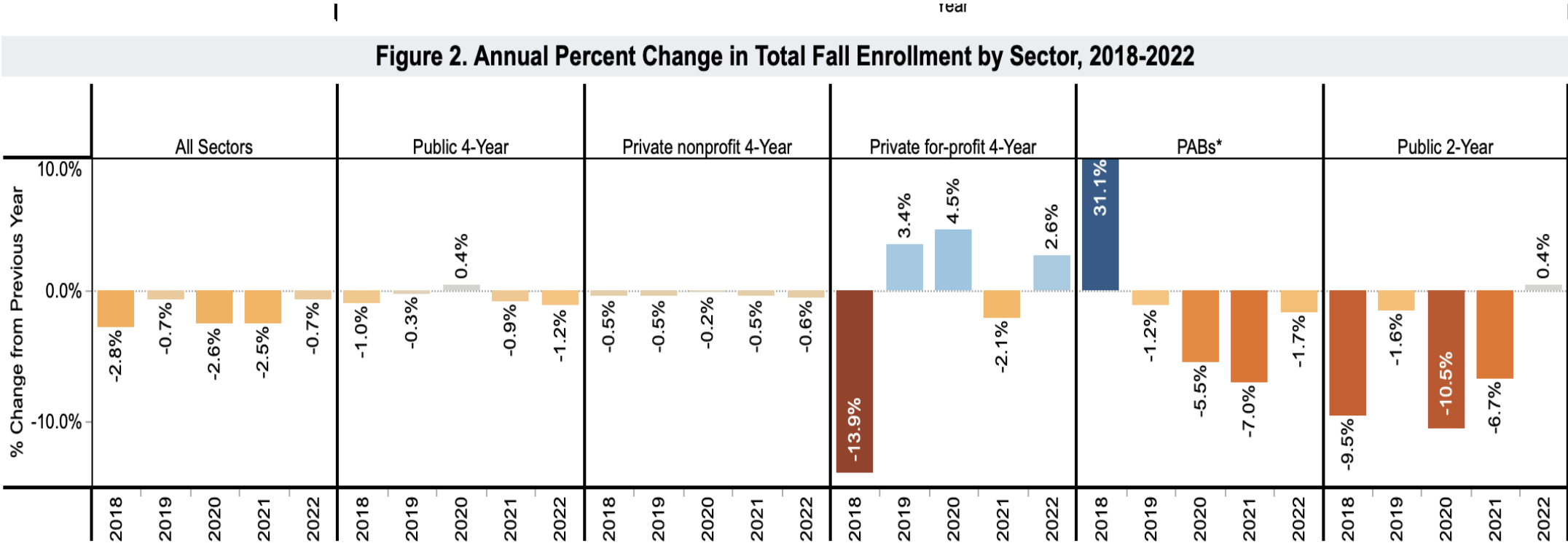
# Forecasted Growth in Students Who Attend an Elite National University 2012-2029



# National College Enrollment Projections Impact Across All Institutional Types

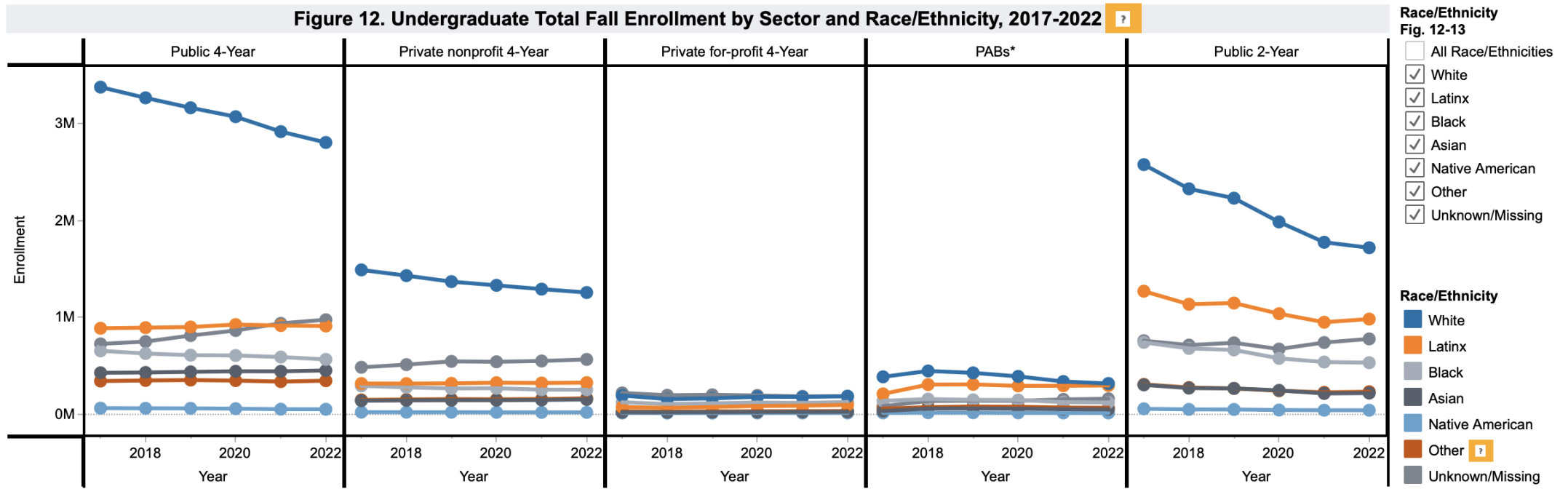


# National Enrollment by Sector

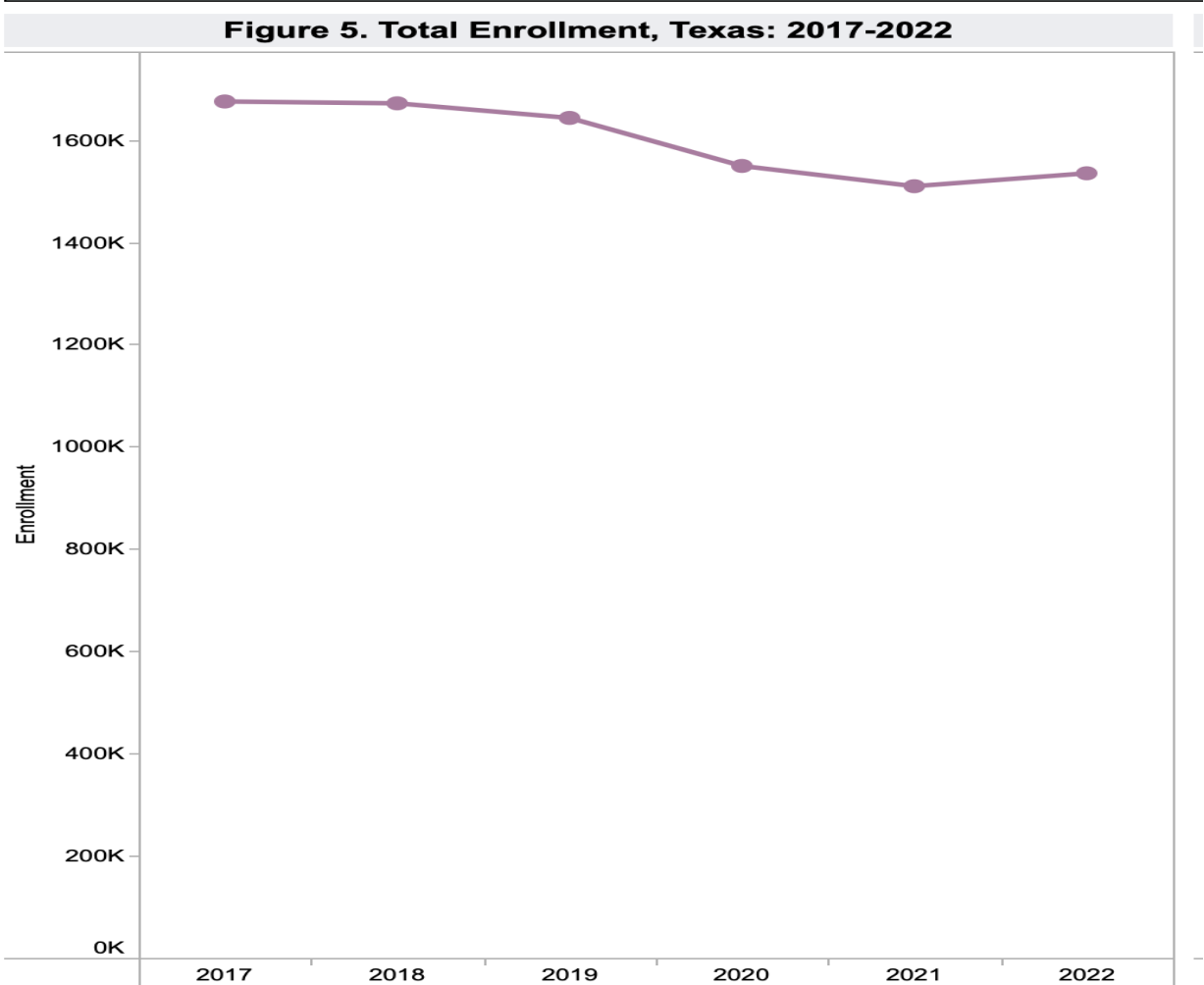




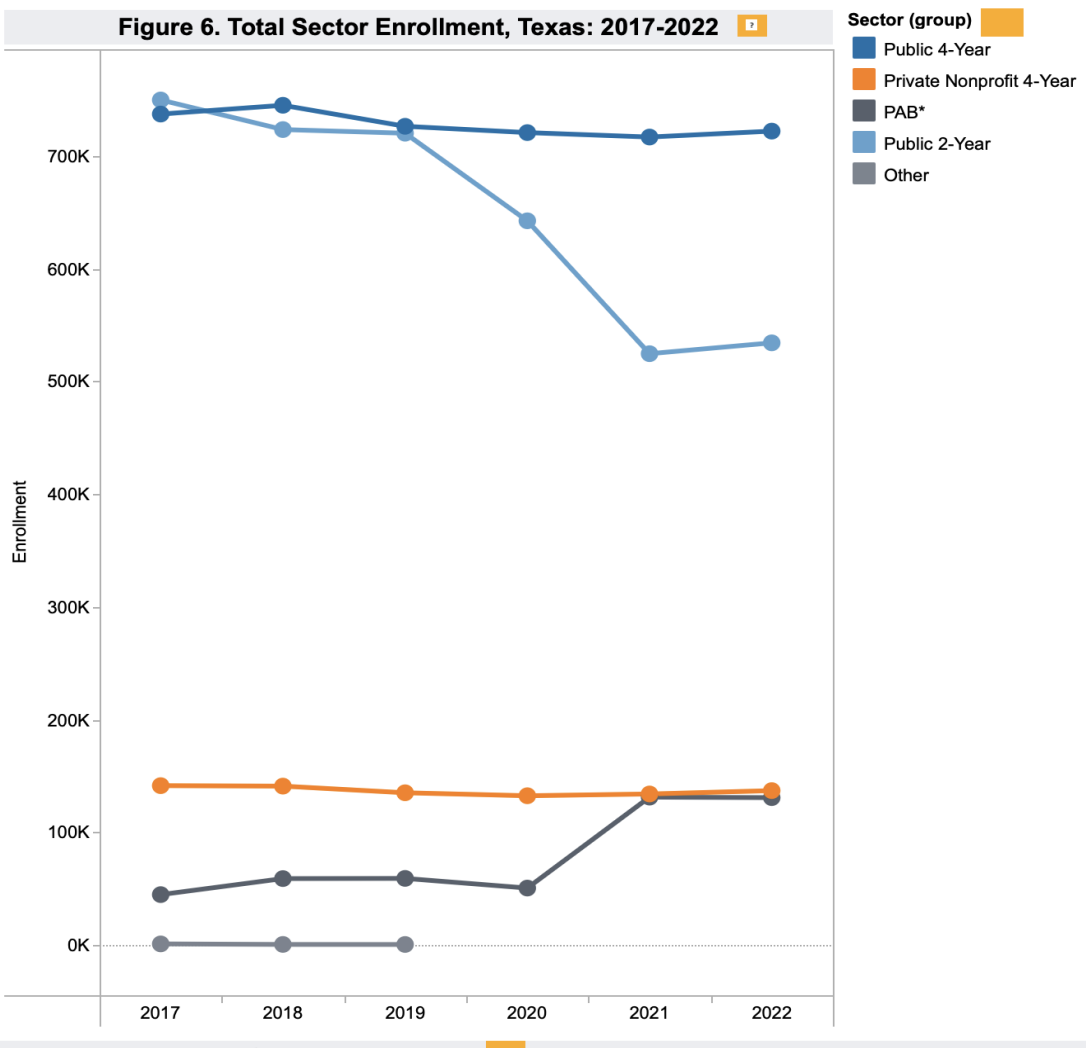
# National Enrollment by Sector Race/Ethnicity



# Texas Enrollment



# Texas Enrollment by Sector



# Texas College Graduation Statistics

296,250 college students graduate annually in Texas; 22.4% of them earn advanced degrees.

- 94,290 or 31.8% of all annual college graduates in Texas earn associate's degrees.
- 135,670 or 45.8% of Texas college graduates earn bachelor's degrees.
- 83.1% of Texas bachelor's degree recipients graduate from public institutions.
- The average Texas bachelor's or master's program graduate most likely has a degree in business.
- 55,030 or 18.6% of annual college graduates earn master's degrees.
- 11,260 or 3.8% of Texas graduates earn doctorate or professional degrees.

# Other Considerations Impacting Today's Landscape

- **Decrease in College Going Rate**

- 2009 – 70% of high school graduates enrolled in college
- 2021 – 61.8% of high school graduate enrolled in college

- **Non-Attenders**

- **8.3 Million (32%) of all 18-24 year-olds are non-attenders**

- **Pandemic Impact**

- 2.3 million more high school absences
- 17% of high school seniors abandoned college plans during the pandemic

# Other Considerations Impacting Today's Landscape

- **The value of the college degree has come into question**
  - National conversation about cost/benefit proposition of Higher Education
  - Increase in number of jobs who are moving away from “college degree” as a minimum requirement
- **Unpredictable Data – Fall 2023 applications for college are up nationwide (average - 25%)**
  - Bounce from Covid pause?
  - Students applying to more schools? (today's average is 6-7)
  - Intent vs reality?

# Enrollment Take-Aways

- We are in highly uncertain times and “predictions” about undergraduate enrollment at this point are simply “best guesses” based on our previous approach to projecting enrollment
- College going students are behaving in ways that are highly unpredictable – particularly true since Covid
- The way to gain students at the undergraduate level in the next 7-10 years is through gaining market share (taking the college going population from another school)

# The Undergraduate Outlook

- Colleges and Universities will begin dipping lower in the student pool to continue to hold their enrollment.
- Colleges already dipping at the bottom of the enrollment pool will have no where to go and will continue to see declines.
- Students coming into ALL Colleges and Universities will be less academically prepared than previous incoming classes.
- Colleges and Universities will need to place an increased focus on retention efforts.



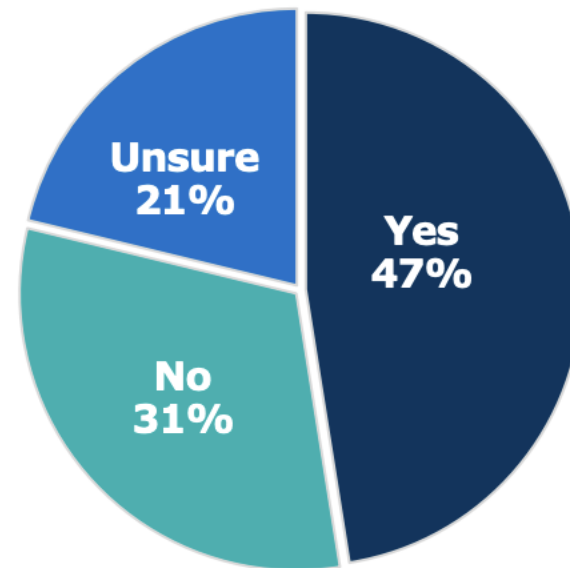
# Implications for Graduate Education

# Impact on Graduate Education

- Graduate Education will save the day!
- Competition for students in the Graduate market will continue to increase
- Graduate Education will need to be at the top of its game in meeting students needs/demands
- The “foundation” under students, for many, will have been supplemented by developmental coursework and those students may need extra support at the graduate level

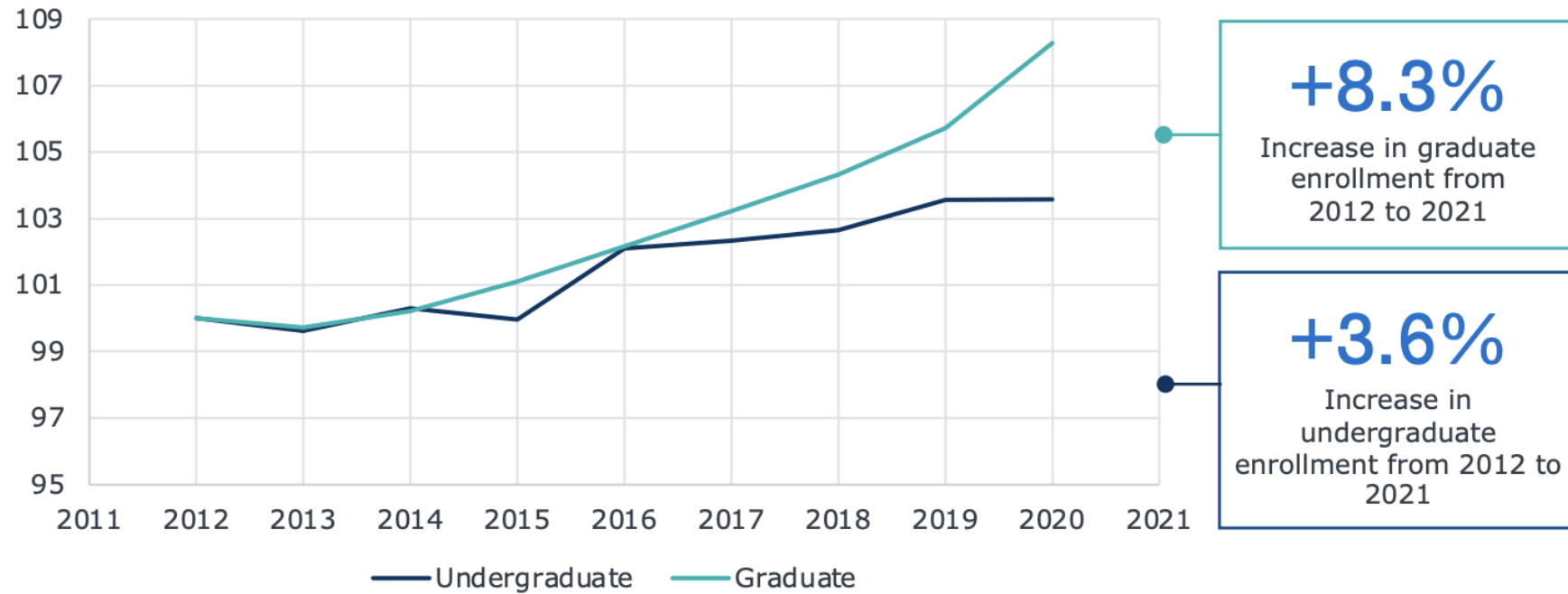
# University Dependence on Graduate Enrollment Continues to Grow

*Q: At your institution, has there been an enhanced reliance on graduate enrollment to make up for a shortfall in undergraduate enrollment?*

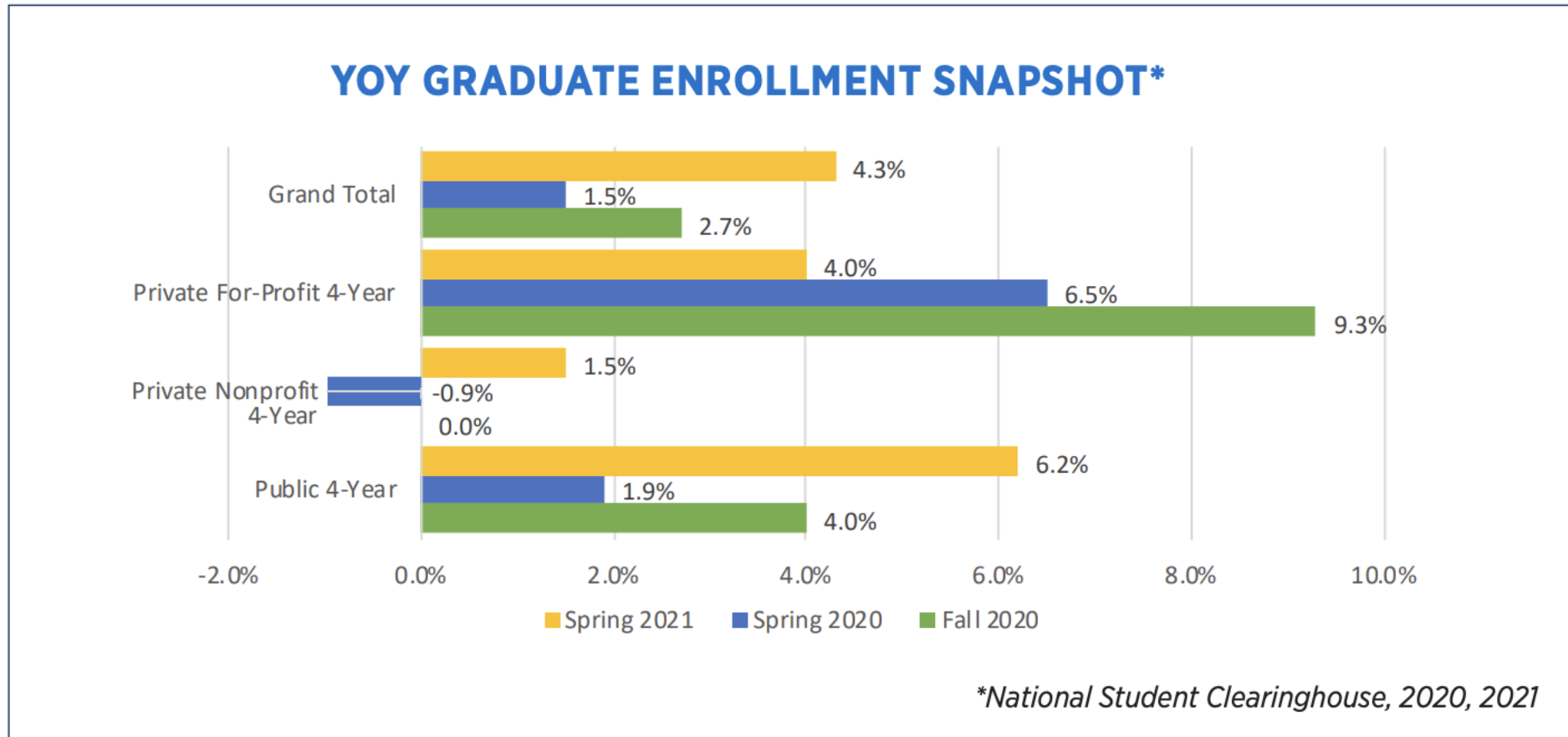


# Graduate Enrollment is Outpacing Undergraduate

**Figure 2: Relative Growth of Graduate and Undergraduate Enrollment**  
*Enrollment Growth at Four-Year Institutions, 2012–2021<sup>1</sup>*

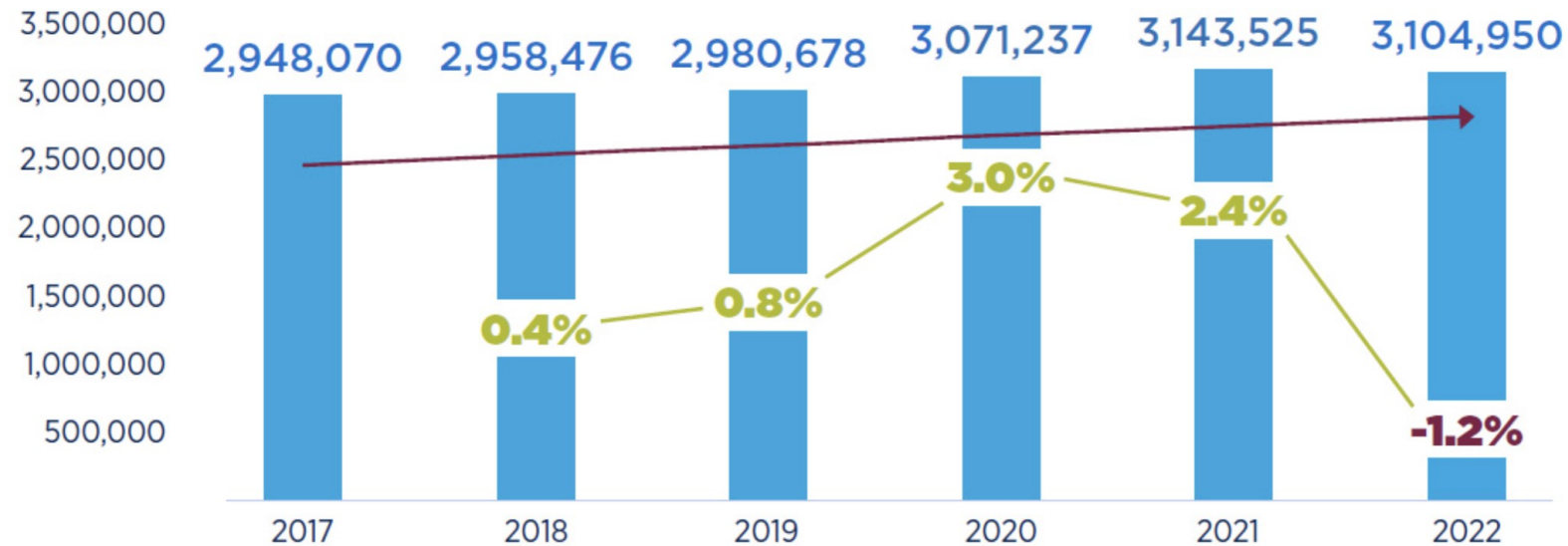


# While Slowing, Grad Enrollment Remains Strong



# While Slowing, Grad Enrollment Remains Strong

Graduate fall enrollment trends, 2017-2022

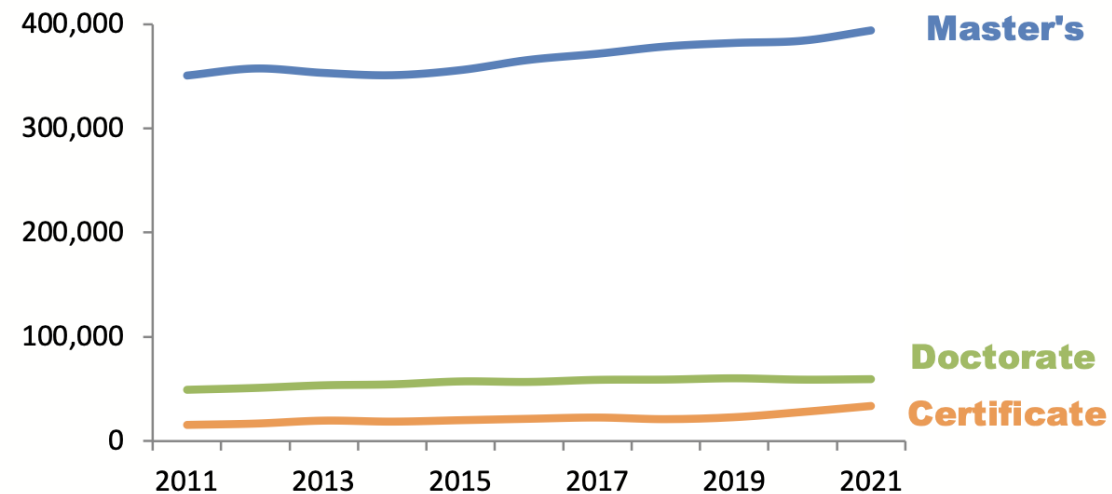


Source: National Student Clearinghouse, CTEE, Fall 2022



# Graduate Degrees Awarded 2011 - 2021

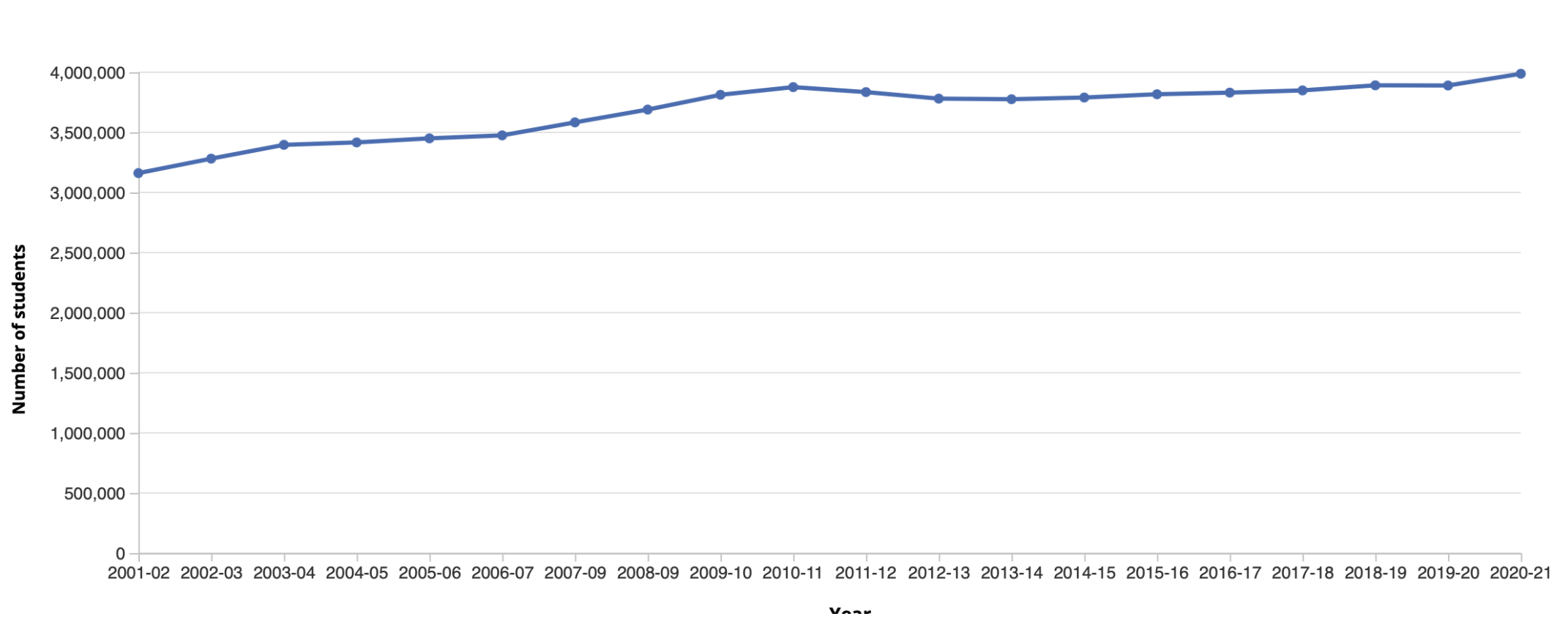
**Figure 9.** Trends in Graduate Degrees Awarded by Degree Level, 2011 to 2021



Note: Trends were developed based upon institutions that provided data for all years 2011 to 2021; therefore, the numbers of total degrees awarded do not match data in the tables.

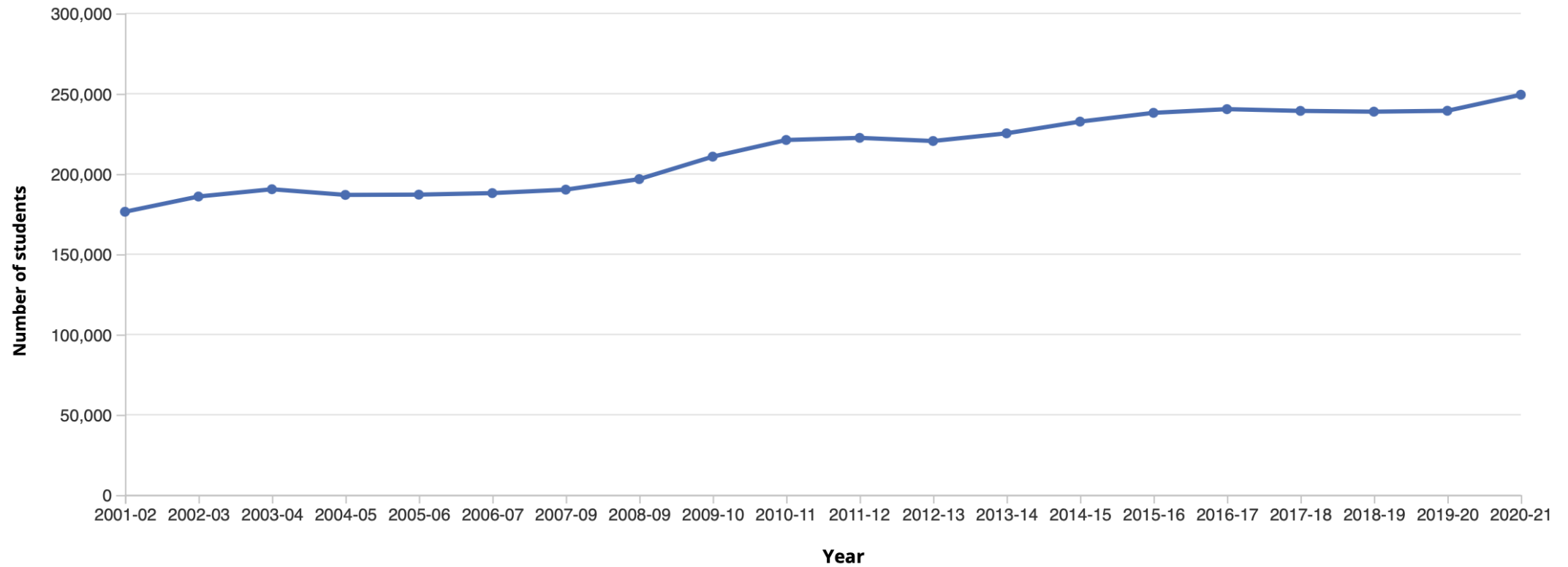
Source: CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees

# Graduate Student Enrollment - National





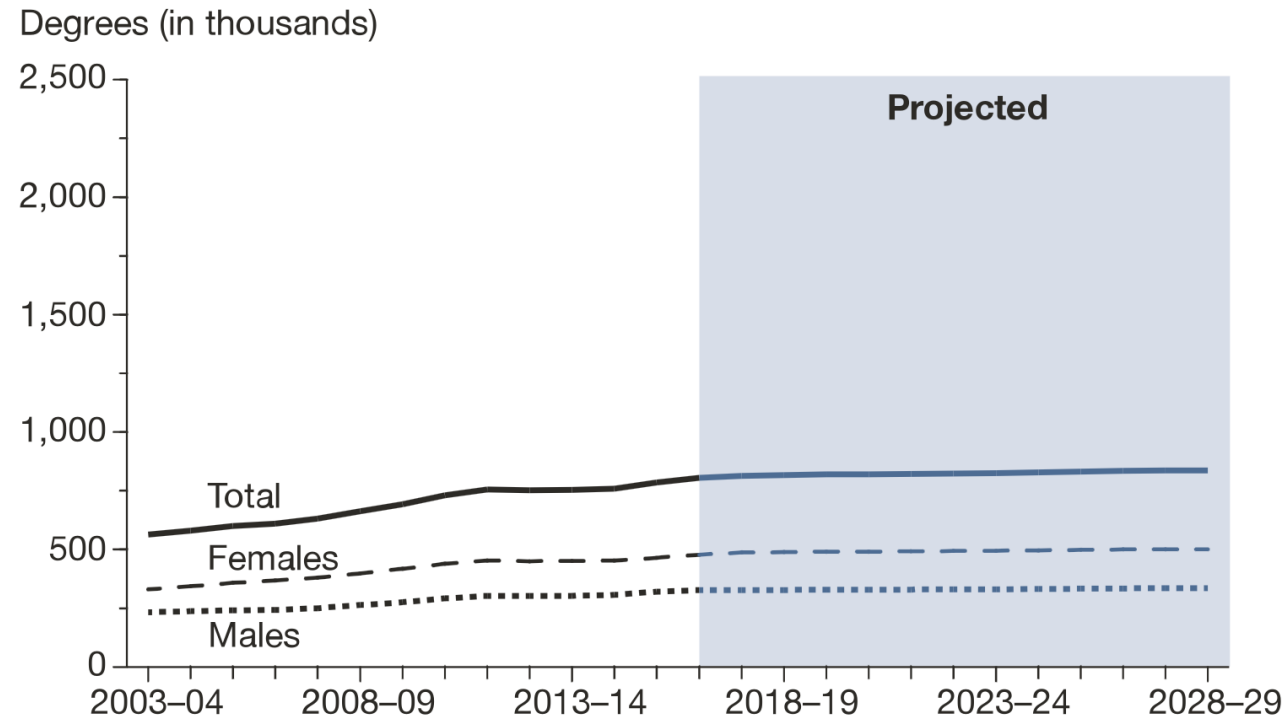
# Graduate Student Enrollment - Texas



# Projected Masters Degrees Conferred - National

## Degrees, by Level of Degree and Sex of Recipient: Master's Degrees

Figure 27. Actual and projected numbers for master's degrees conferred by degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by sex of recipient: Academic years 2003-04 through 2028-29



# How Prospective Graduate Students Think About Their Experience with Graduate School Admission

# Graduate Student Behavior Prior to Application

70% of prospective graduate students are reviewing University websites prior to beginning an application

# Graduate Student Behavior Prior to Application

More than 50% of graduate students will first reach out by emailing the school or filling out a “request information” form online, **before beginning an application**

Prospective students who submit a request for information form, or call, expect a response **within 1 day** of sending that request

# Graduate Student Applicant Decision Making

46% of students expect an admission decision  
**within 7 days** of  
completing their application

# Graduate Student Applicant Decision Making Choice

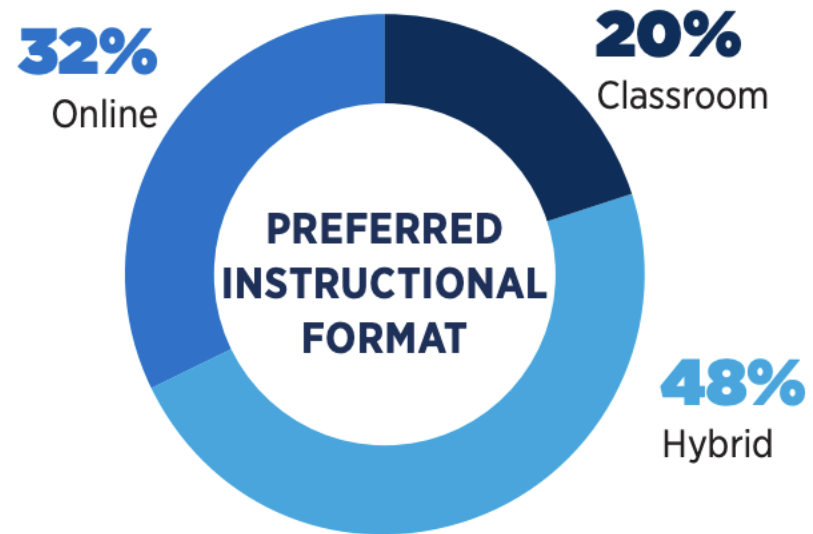
80% of graduate students attend the school **that first notifies them**  
that they were admitted

# University Behavior – Graduate Applications

40% of public institutions take longer than 2 weeks  
to make an admission decision



# Graduate Student Delivery Preferences

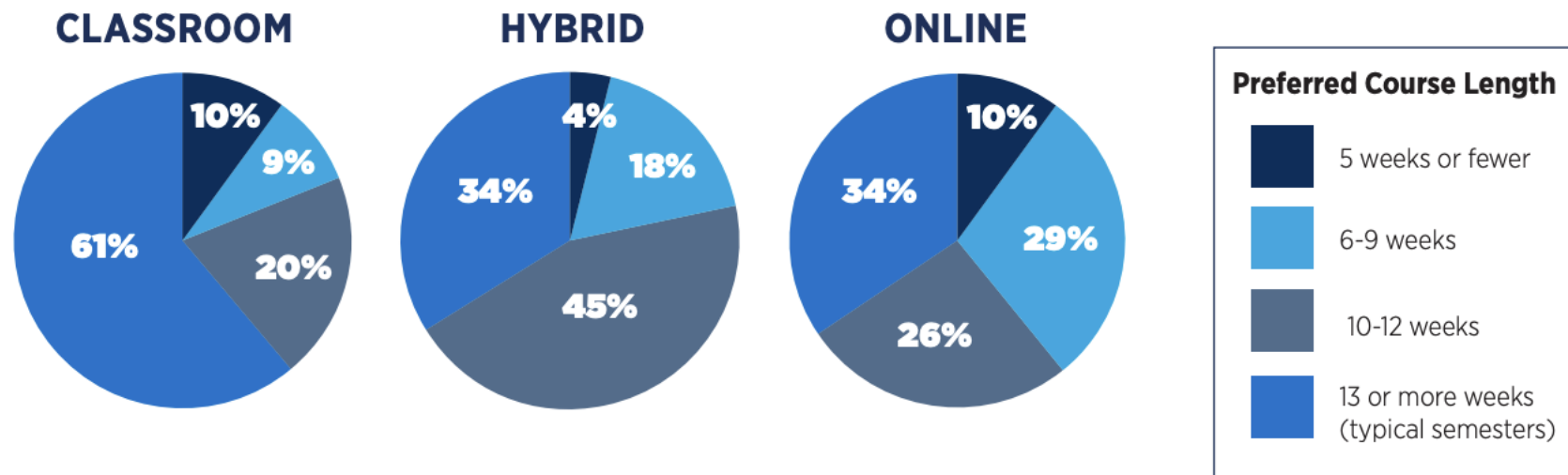


# Graduate Enrollment by Field of Study

| INTENDED AREA OF STUDY  | CLASSROOM | HYBRID | ONLINE | MASTER'S DEGREE % CHANGE (2014-19)* |
|---|-----------|--------|--------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Business</b>   | 12%       | 15%    | 20%    | 3%                                  |
| <b>Health Professions</b>                                       | 18%       | 15%    | 13%    | 34%                                 |
| <b>Computer/Information Science</b>                             | 8%        | 13%    | 13%    | 79%                                 |
| <b>Education</b>  | 7%        | 9%     | 12%    | -5%                                 |
| <b>Social Services, Public Administration, Criminal Justice</b> | 5%        | 6%     | 11%    | 13%                                 |
| <b>Counseling/Psychology</b>                                    | 9%        | 9%     | 10%    | 4%                                  |
| <b>Arts and Humanities</b>                                      | 11%       | 9%     | 6%     | -4%                                 |
| <b>Communications</b>   | 6%        | 4%     | 5%     | 11%                                 |
| <b>Social Sciences</b>  | 9%        | 8%     | 5%     | -2%                                 |
| <b>Natural Sciences: Biological/Physical/Earth Science</b>      | 7%        | 6%     | 3%     | 19%                                 |
| <b>Engineering</b>  | 8%        | 6%     | 3%     | 17%                                 |

\*National Center for Education Statistics, Fall Enrollment Data 2014-19, June 2021.

# Preferred Course Length



# Redefining Online

| PREFERRED TYPE OF PROGRAM  | ONLINE |
|--|--------|
| Online, with periodic scheduled virtual meetings with the instructor and classmates                    | 45%    |
| Online, where you work at your own pace and finish as fast or as slow as you can complete the material | 44%    |
| Online, with no scheduled virtual meetings with the instructor and classmates                          | 12%    |

# Recruiting Events

| <b>EVENTS THAT ARE EFFECTIVE IN HELPING MAKE AN ENROLLMENT DECISION</b> | <b>CLASSROOM</b> | <b>HYBRID</b> | <b>ONLINE</b> |
|---|------------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>Face-to-face information sessions, open houses, or campus tours</b>  | 87%              | 89%           | 57%           |
| <b>Virtual information sessions, open houses, or campus tours</b>       | 79%              | 88%           | 83%           |
| <b>Virtual one-on-one chat</b>  | 79%              | 87%           | 84%           |
| <b>Video call/interviews</b>  | 82%              | 88%           | 83%           |

# What Graduate Students Look at on Your Website

| <b>MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION ON INSTITUTIONAL WEBSITES*</b> | <b>CLASSROOM</b> | <b>HYBRID</b> | <b>ONLINE</b> |
|--|------------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>Cost/tuition information</b>                              | 47%              | 54%           | 63%           |
| <b>Specific academic program details</b>                     | 43%              | 42%           | 51%           |
| <b>Financial aid/scholarship options</b>                     | 47%              | 45%           | 46%           |
| <b>A list of graduate programs or degrees</b>                | 33%              | 34%           | 40%           |
| <b>Career information/statistics on job placement</b>        | 33%              | 39%           | 35%           |
| <b>How to apply for admission</b>                            | 27%              | 26%           | 32%           |
| <b>Virtual tours</b>   | 8%               | 10%           | 15%           |
| <b>Contact information for admissions</b>                    | 10%              | 17%           | 13%           |
| <b>Videos featuring faculty</b>                              | 11%              | 8%            | 11%           |
| <b>to get them to send more information</b>                  | 8%               | 9%            | 11%           |
| <b>Their plans for dealing with the pandemic</b>             | 14%              | 18%           | 10%           |
| <b>General overview of the school</b>                        | 13%              | 20%           | 8%            |
| <b>Open house/admissions event information</b>               | 13%              | 12%           | 7%            |
| <b>Videos featuring current students</b>                     | 8%               | 8%            | 7%            |
| <b>Campus visit information</b>                              | 11%              | 11%           | 5%            |
| <b>Directions to campus</b>                                  | 12%              | 8%            | 4%            |

*\*Respondents chose their four most important informational items.*

# Graduate Student Initial Point of Contact

| <b>METHOD OF FIRST CONTACT</b>  | <b>CLASSROOM</b> | <b>HYBRID</b> | <b>ONLINE</b> |
|---|------------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>Filled out an information request form on the school's website</b> | 51%              | 64%           | 68%           |
| <b>Email the school</b>   | 53%              | 58%           | 48%           |
| <b>Attend a recruitment event at the school</b>                       | 31%              | 30%           | 31%           |
| <b>Call the school</b>  | 23%              | 26%           | 21%           |
| <b>Attend a virtual recruitment event at the school</b>               | 26%              | 28%           | 11%           |
| <b>Schedule a visit to the campus, virtual or in person</b>           | 16%              | 18%           | 8%            |

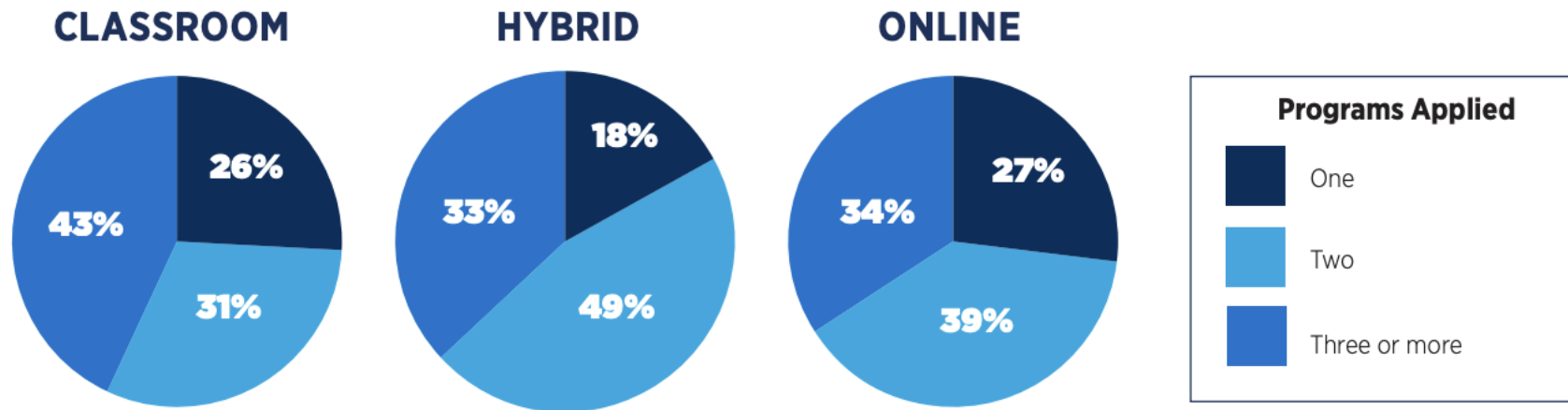
# Our Response to Their Inquiry

## Post-Inquiry Contact Expectations

| RESPONSE TYPE                 | WITHIN MINUTES | WITHIN AN HOUR | WITHIN A DAY | WITHIN 3 DAYS | MORE THAN 3 DAYS | ACCEPTABLE CONTACT RESPONSE |
|-------------------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Personalized email</b>     |                |                |              |               |                  |                             |
| Classroom                     | 21%            | 22%            | 27%          | 21%           | 7%               | 98%                         |
| Hybrid                        | 19%            | 27%            | 31%          | 15%           | 7%               | 98%                         |
| Online                        | 17%            | 21%            | 32%          | 19%           | 7%               | 98%                         |
| <b>Non-personalized email</b> |                |                |              |               |                  |                             |
| Classroom                     | 14%            | 22%            | 22%          | 14%           | 14%              | 76%                         |
| Hybrid                        | 17%            | 25%            | 29%          | 15%           | 7%               | 82%                         |
| Online                        | 18%            | 23%            | 19%          | 17%           | 10%              | 77%                         |
| <b>Text message</b>           |                |                |              |               |                  |                             |
| Classroom                     | 21%            | 29%            | 27%          | 9%            | 3%               | 88%                         |
| Hybrid                        | 27%            | 33%            | 19%          | 7%            | 3%               | 89%                         |
| Online                        | 28%            | 27%            | 19%          | 8%            | 3%               | 84%                         |
| <b>Phone call</b>             |                |                |              |               |                  |                             |
| Classroom                     | 22%            | 25%            | 22%          | 11%           | 5%               | 85%                         |
| Hybrid                        | 32%            | 20%            | 21%          | 10%           | 6%               | 90%                         |
| Online                        | 18%            | 21%            | 21%          | 13%           | 9%               | 81%                         |



# Number of Applications



# Expectation of Notification on Application

| <b>EXPECTED TIME TO BE NOTIFIED OF ADMISSION</b> | <b>CLASSROOM</b> | <b>HYBRID</b> | <b>ONLINE</b> |
|--|------------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>Within 24 hours</b>                           | 7%               | 7%            | 7%            |
| <b>1-3 days</b>                                  | 16%              | 20%           | 21%           |
| <b>4-7 days</b>                                  | 18%              | 23%           | 23%           |
| <b>7-14 days</b>                                 | 15%              | 21%           | 21%           |
| <b>14-21 days</b>                                | 13%              | 17%           | 14%           |
| <b>Longer than 21 days</b>                       | 31%              | 12%           | 13%           |

# Application Decision – All About Speed

STUDENTS WHO SAID THEY DEFINITELY OR VERY LIKELY WILL ENROLL AT THE FIRST PROGRAM TO ADMIT THEM

**82%**  
Classroom

**89%**  
Hybrid

**83%**  
Online

# Factors Influencing Decision

| MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS IN ENROLLMENT DECISION* (SELECT THREE) | CLASSROOM | HYBRID | ONLINE |
|---|-----------|--------|--------|
| Program content I want  | 51%       | 45%    | 53%    |
| Online/hybrid courses available                               | 8%        | 28%    | 47%    |
| The lowest tuition (among programs I am considering)          | 33%       | 35%    | 42%    |
| Positive career opportunity and job placement information     | 46%       | 39%    | 32%    |
| University's reputation                                       | 41%       | 35%    | 29%    |
| Being able to enroll in courses year-round                    | 17%       | 16%    | 23%    |
| Having accelerated (shorter) terms                            | 13%       | 14%    | 19%    |
| Having specific faculty with whom you want to study           | 29%       | 19%    | 11%    |
| Their plans for dealing with the pandemic                     | 14%       | 14%    | 8%     |

*\*Respondents chose their three most important factors.*

# Implications for Graduate Programs

- Graduate education will increase in importance for the University as undergraduate education continues to stagnate or decline
- Continued growth in graduate education is possible
- Highly selective graduate programs will continue to succeed with little change to their approach

# Implications for Graduate Programs

- For most institutions how we market to graduate students must evolve
- What we highlight in our marketing about our programs must align with what prospective students are most interested in (cost/program details/financial aid)
- Delivery mode for Graduate programs should be online or hybrid in most cases (if enrollment is important)

# Implications for Graduate Programs

- Recruitment processes at the majority of Public and Private Universities are not currently meeting the expectations of prospective graduate students
- An application packet should be something that can be reviewed quickly to accelerate decision times
- Continued enrollment growth will be dependent on a Universities ability to invest in the right people and processes

# Implications for Graduate Programs

- Depending on your organizational structure, most Graduate Schools will need to continue to be excellent at collaboration with the Marketing and Recruitment arms of the University
- Influencing other departments processes around enrollment will be a critical component of success
- Influencing College Deans/Chairs around the urgency for admission decisions will be key for enrollment success
- It is possible that not all Graduate programs will have the same process or procedure for dealing with applications (reality check about just how selective you can afford to be)



# In Closing

Graduate level education is taking center stage due to the challenges undergraduate enrollment is having nationwide

Be prepared to step into the moment

# Helpful Resources

- EAB (2021) The State of Graduate Enrollment Management
- RNL & PLEXUSS 2021 Graduate Student Recruitment Report
- Nathan Grawe – Demographics and the Impact on Higher Education