

To: New Jersey Institutions of Higher Education
From: Chad L. May, Justin Schaffer, Thomas Zimmerman, and Mark Walzer
Date: December 23, 2024
Subject: Release of Preliminary Fall 2024 Data

We wish you an enjoyable and restful holiday season and Happy New Year!

The Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE) is pleased to share the Fall 2024 Preliminary Enrollment Report, infographic, and interactive data dashboard. The following files are attached:

- **Preliminary Enrollment Report Fall 2024:** Comprehensive preliminary fall 2024 enrollment data and trends
- **Preliminary Fall 2024 Enrollment Infographic:** Changes in preliminary fall 2024 enrollment compared with final fall 2023 data

The Fall 2024 Preliminary Enrollment Data Dashboard, which summarizes several data trends, is available by clicking this [link](#).

Thank you for your collaboration and support of our preliminary Fall Enrollment data collection efforts. Without your expertise and communication, this could not be possible.

Warm Regards,

The OSHE Research Team (Chad, Justin, Thomas, and Mark)

Fall 2024 Preliminary Enrollment at New Jersey Colleges and Universities

The following report provides a first look at the shape of New Jersey higher education enrollment during the current fall 2024 semester. The Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE) is releasing this preliminary enrollment estimate of all degree-granting Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) in New Jersey (92 Institutional reporting units) that report data using NJIPEDS Form #20- [Preliminary Fall Enrollment](#). Finalized fall 2024 enrollment data are reported through the federal [Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System \(IPEDS\) Fall Enrollment Survey](#) in April 2025, with analyses and results typically made available sometime in June 2025.

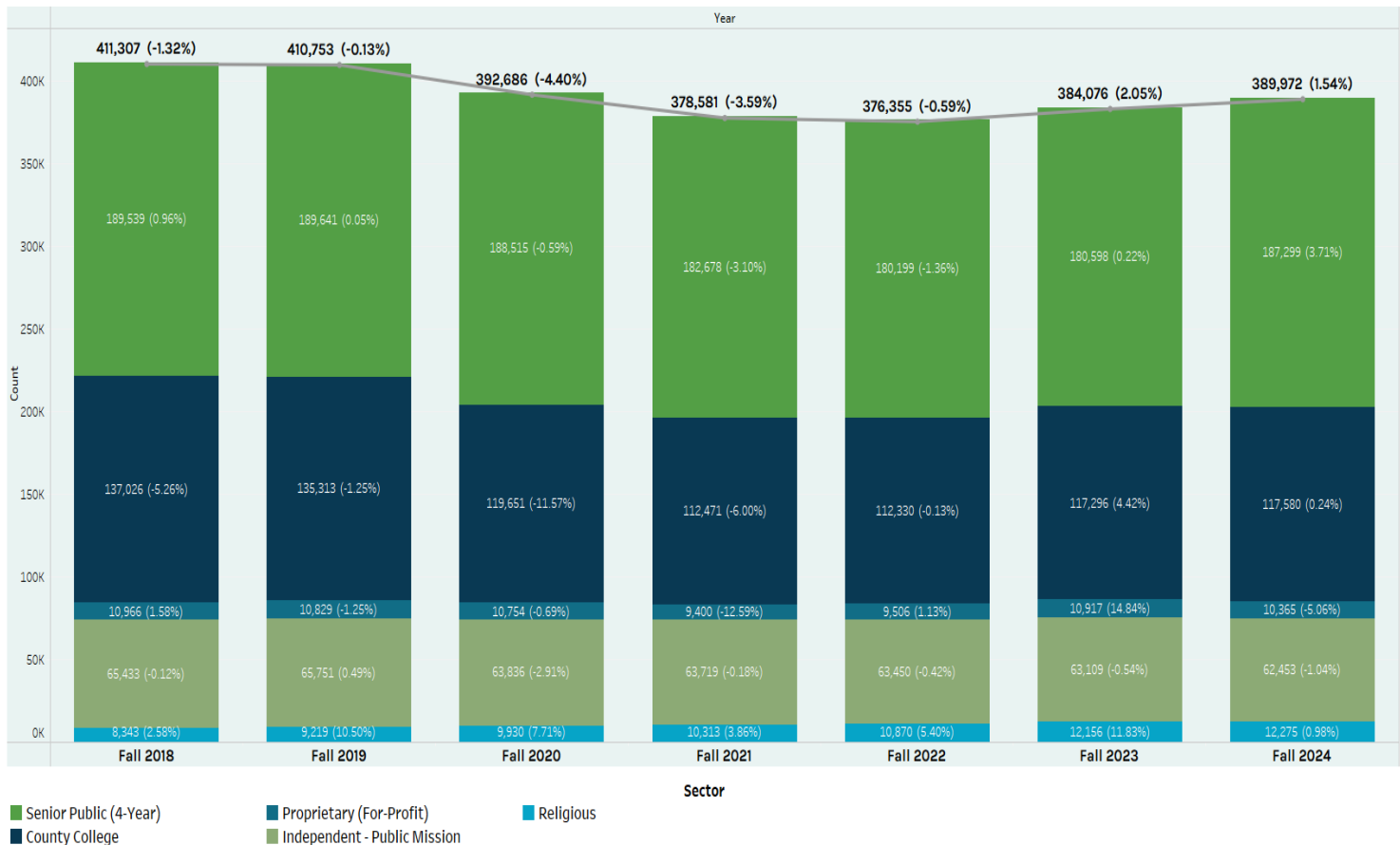
Fall 2024 enrollments at New Jersey colleges and universities held relatively steady and slightly increased compared to the prior year. Specifically:

- Preliminary Fall 2024 total enrollment (Undergraduate and Graduate/Professional) in New Jersey IHEs increased by about 1.54%;
- Undergraduate enrollment saw a 1.70% increase while Graduate enrollment growth slowed for the second straight year increasing less than one percent (0.43%);
- Total enrollment at senior (four-year) public institutions increased the most of any other institutional sector in New Jersey at a rate of 3.71%;
- Two-year public institutions (county colleges) continued to reverse over a decade of declining enrollment with a second consecutive year of increased enrollment (fall 2022 to fall 2023 was 4.42%, and fall 2023 to fall 2024 was 0.24%);
- Enrollment in the private non-profit sector (independent, public-mission) decreased slightly by just over one percent (-1.04%) in fall 2024, slightly more than the final Fall 2022 to Fall 2023 decline of about a half a percent;
- Enrollment at for-profit (independent, proprietary) Institutions declined the most at about -5.1% (note: Strayer University - New Jersey did not provide preliminary fall 2024 enrollment data by the date of publishing and therefore fall 2023 data is used as a placeholder);
- The religious sector (seminaries and yeshivas) saw an increase in enrollment of just under one percent (0.98% increase).
- Total first-time undergraduate enrollment increased for the third straight year (4.8% for fall 2024) after the decline in fall 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The increase in first-time students (full-time and part-time) continues to buck the national trend of decreasing first-time/freshman students, which continues to be encouraging for the future enrollment prospects at New Jersey IHEs.

The relative flattening of enrollments between fall 2021 through fall 2024 across all sectors follows a trend of declines in enrollment since fall 2017, which included two years of accelerated declines resulting from the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Between fall 2019 and fall 2024, enrollment at four-year public institutions declined by (1.2%); two-year publics declined by (13.1%); and independent, public-mission institutions declined by (5.0%). Proprietary, degree-granting institutions had the third steepest decline at (4.3%), while religious institutions (specialty yeshivas, seminaries, etc.) increased enrollment by 33.1% (note: approximately four new yeshivas gained State licensure to operate as degree-granting institutions in the State of New Jersey over the last four years). Overall, enrollment at NJ Institutions of Higher Education declined by (5.1%) from fall 2019 (413,006 total enrollment) to fall 2024 (389,266 total enrollment) preliminary enrollment. However, as of fall 2024, enrollment has re-bounded and increased by 1.5% over the final fall 2023.

Figure 1

Preliminary Fall 2024 Enrollment suggests total enrollment at NJ institutions have stabilized/increased from the steep declines during the Covid-19 Pandemic



Source: OSHE Preliminary Enrollment NJIPEDS Form #20, Internal Analysis

New Jersey enrollment trends mirror enrollment trends at the national level in some ways and differ in other ways. Fall 2024 preliminary national estimates show total enrollment grew by 2.9% from fall 2023 (3.0% for undergraduate and 2.1% for graduate). For NJ IHEs, undergraduate enrollment grew by just over half the national rate at 1.7%, and graduate enrollment grew even less than half of the national rate at less than a half percent (0.43%). National enrollment growth was driven by Public 2-year (Community Colleges) and Public Primarily Associate Degree Granting Baccalaureate Institutions and private, for-profit 4-year institutions, where enrollment grew 4.7%, 4.9%, and 5.2%, respectively, since last fall based on National Student Clearinghouse ([NSC](#)) [first look as of Fall 2024](#).

Enrollments in IHEs seem to be recovering after the effects of the pandemic. As of fall 2024, total enrollment in higher education across New Jersey is back above where it was in fall 2021 and just under where it was in fall 2020 (about a net loss of 3,500 students). Nationally, proprietary four-year institutions have been hit hardest, with undergraduate enrollment declining by 2.4%. However, early national estimates suggest those institutions saw an increase of 6.4% in fall 2023 and another 4.9% in fall 2024. On the other hand, New Jersey independent, for-profit/proprietary institutions saw a one-year decline of (5.6%). The NSC first look report suggested that enrollment

increases for undergraduates are being driven by increases in non-first-time students (transfer-in and continuing students by about 4.7%) and large increases in dual enrollment students (students who are under the age of 17 and still in high school but enrolled in some college-level coursework +7.2%). In addition, national enrollment in short-term credentials or certificate programs extended a multiyear gain with a 7.3% increase for fall 2024 from fall 2023, which, as noted in last year's report, are heavily over-represented by for-profit institutions. Perhaps this trend will emerge in NJ once final fall 2024 enrollment data is available, as preliminary data is not disaggregated by degree/certificate type. Based on final fall 2023 data in the NJ OSHE SURE system, dual enrollment (high school students taking college-level coursework at NJ IHEs) grew by 15.0% to over 19,000 students, more than doubling the estimated seven percent increase nationally.

As is typically the case in New Jersey higher education, enrollment levels have varied by institution and within sectors. Among senior public institutions, New Jersey City University saw the largest enrollment decline (-6.9%), followed by Rutgers-Camden and Stockton University at -1.8% each, while Ramapo, The College of New Jersey, and Rowan University all saw enrollment increases over 6% based on preliminary fall 2024 enrollment data. For County Colleges, Passaic and Atlantic Cape Community College saw declines of over 7%, while Middlesex and RCSJ-Cumberland County Campus saw increases of 5% or more. Readers can check out the [preliminary data dashboard](#) to look at these trends for specific institutions of interest.

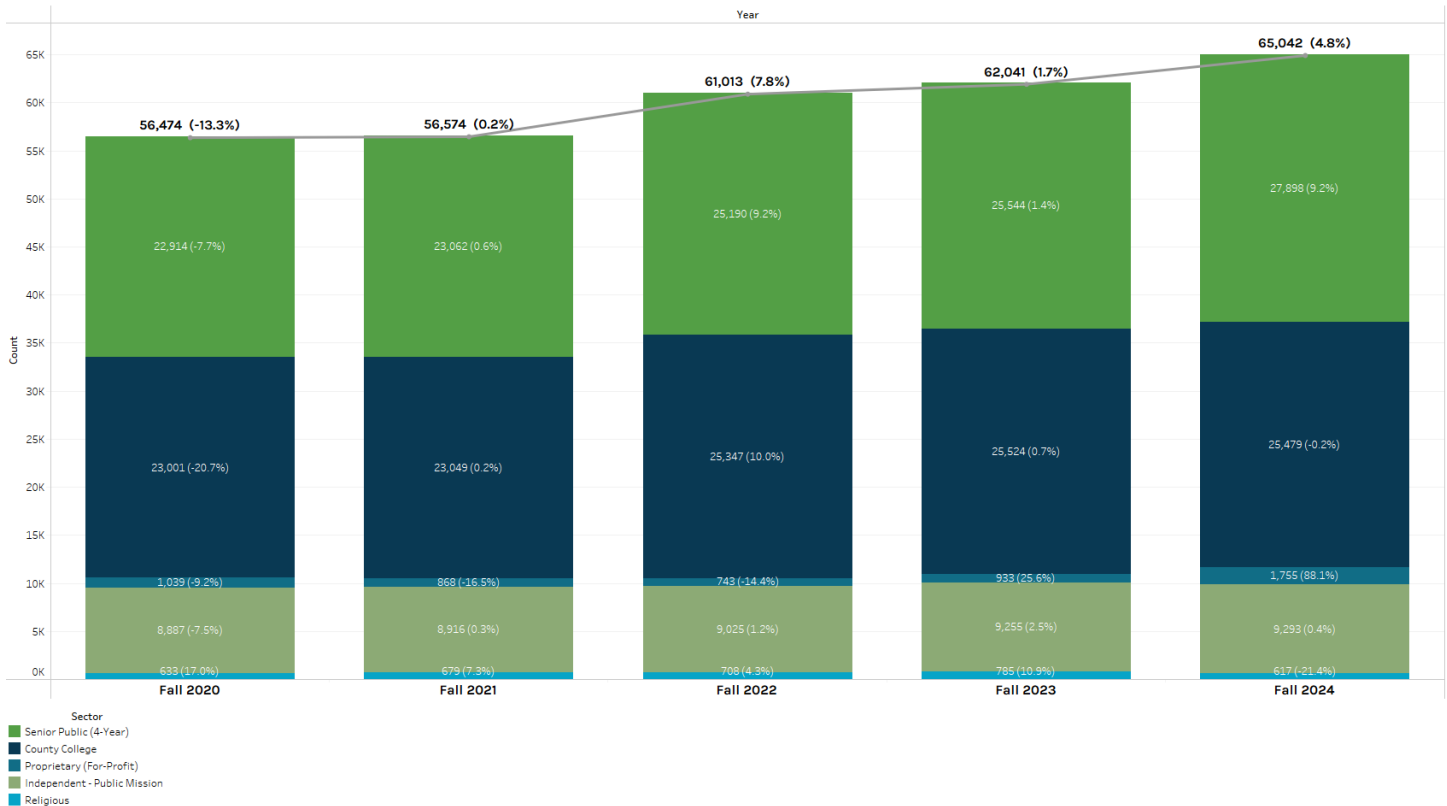
First Time Student Enrollment

While there are many ways to disaggregate enrollment trends, one important dimension is first-time students just beginning their postsecondary careers. This is important because it may project future enrollment levels. If there is an increase in the number of first-time students and persistence rates hold steady, then many of those students will continue growing total enrollments in future semesters and years. Between fall 2021 and fall 2023, the number of first-time, full-time students grew by 5,467 across the state, a 9.7% increase. For fall 2024, the preliminary number of first-time students increased by 4.8% or by about 3,001 students compared with the previous fall term. It should be noted that not all institutions or sectors saw an increase in first-time students; public, four-year institutions saw a 9.2% increase, while county colleges saw a decline of less than 1 percent (0.2%); private, not-for-profit colleges/universities saw a slight increase (0.4%) from 9,255 to 9,293.

National estimates suggest that first-time enrollment at public two-year colleges declined by about 0.2% for fall 2023. However, note that for fall 2024, first-time enrollment at NJ county colleges declined by a similar 0.2 percent, bringing the number of first-time students to a value larger than fall 2022 but less than fall 2023. Some have argued that this might be the result of the problems with launching the new FAFSA during the 2024-25 academic year. These issues that prevented students from filing the FAFSA in a timely manner and created frustration among students may have impacted underserved students and communities the most. If these difficulties contributed to the net impact on enrollment, a smoother launch of the new FAFSA for 2025-26 may result in a rebound in first-time enrollment at community colleges. However, given the increase in first-time students across other higher education sectors in New Jersey, the FAFSA rollout's impact seems negligible, at least on the whole.

Figure 2

First-Time Undergraduate Student Enrollment (Full-time and Part-time) at New Jersey Institutions of Higher Education increased to almost pre-pandemic levels as of Fall 2024



Source: OSHE Preliminary Enrollment NJIPEDS Form #20, Internal Analysis

Overall, New Jersey independent, public-mission colleges/universities slightly increased new first-time students by 0.4% for fall 2024, while last year, in fall 2023, they saw a larger increase of 2.5%. Similar arguments about the FAFSA roll-out might have impacted enrollment at these private institutions if financial aid offers couldn't get out prior to students making enrollment decisions.

As always, we invite readers to use OSHE's interactive dashboards on the OSHE [research and data website](#). A special interactive dashboard with [preliminary Fall 2024 enrollment data](#) complements this written report. Analyzing the enrollment levels by other dimensions may provide additional insights into the health of New Jersey's institutions of higher education. Dashboard users can also compare federal IPEDS data over multiple years, tuition and fees data for the last five academic years, New Jersey postsecondary degree trends, and other data dashboards.

Conclusions

There are numerous factors that might explain why some enrollments are going up while others are going down. The pandemic disrupted many aspects of our lives, and economic uncertainty still exists, whether due to inflation or the prospect of a potential economic recession. These factors, along with the varying and impending political, social, and economic impacts of the new US presidential administration, signal that the one certainty today is uncertainty. As is the case with human behavior, many confounding variables can, will, and do influence students' decisions to

enroll and pursue a higher education. A few high-level observations from the preliminary Fall 2024 enrollment data are summarized below:

- 1.) First-time student enrollment increased by 4.8% and is approaching the seven-year high of fall 2019 prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2.) Community College enrollment had a slight increase in enrollment from fall 2021 to fall 2022, while strengthening that trend from fall 2022 to fall 2023. These increases represent the first upward enrollment trend for community colleges in over a decade. Enrollment within Community Colleges for fall 2024 increased ever so slightly at 0.24%. Similar to national trends, NJ County Colleges may attribute some of this enrollment increase to dual-enrolled students. We will need to monitor these trends carefully over the next several years. Note that New Jersey Community Colleges saw an increase of dual enrollment students (20%) in Fall 2023 over Fall 2022.
- 3.) Fall 2024 preliminary enrollment offers some encouraging news, given the total enrollment increase of about 1.5%. However, enrollment will continue to be a concern, especially given the sharp decline of high school graduates expected in 2025-26 and the national decline in first-time students for fall 2024 based on preliminary NSC data.
- 4.) Despite these concerns, educational attainment comes with economic and social benefits. College graduates earn higher wages, are more likely to have health insurance, pay taxes, vote, and volunteer, and are less likely to rely on public assistance. The New Jersey Statewide Data System (NJSDS) released a report in January of 2023 on the benefits of higher education in New Jersey. This report, which can be found [here](#), empirically shows positive impacts and return on investment of higher education both for individuals and the State. This report is currently being updated and expanded upon with new data and will be released in early 2025.

The New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education will continually monitor enrollment trends within higher education and provide updated data, reports, and analyses as new data become available.

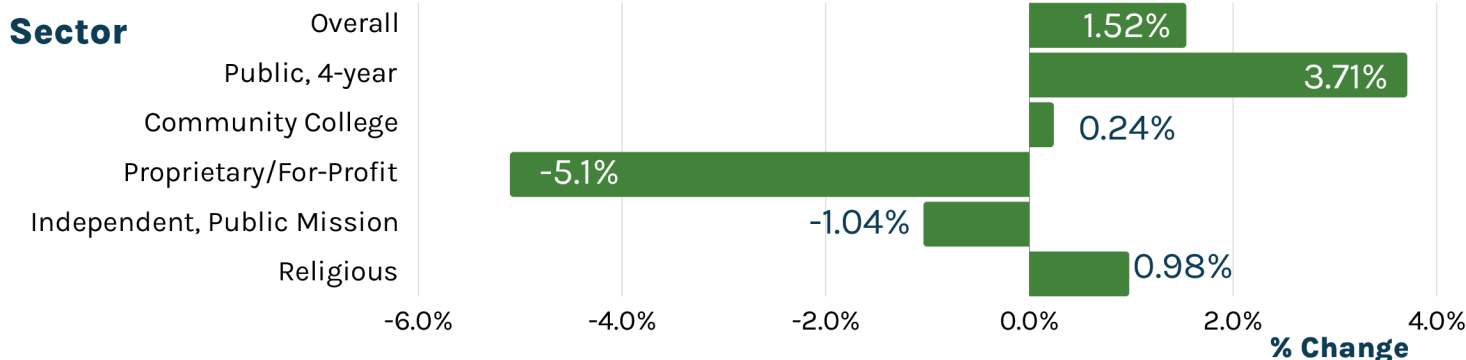
Notes on Methodology

The OSHE NJIPEDS Preliminary Enrollment form asks institutions to capture enrollment counts earlier in the year before the counts become the official enrollment record for the fall semester. This matters because the initial weeks of a semester are very much in flux as students are able to add or drop classes without penalty. Thus, for many of the institutions, federally-reported enrollment counts will differ from these preliminary estimates—sometimes significantly in both directions (more or less). For fall 2024, note that two institutions' (Strayer University- New Jersey) didn't report preliminary enrollment data; hence, their fall 2023 enrollment numbers are used as a placeholder for fall 2024).

New Jersey Colleges and Universities Preliminary Fall Enrollment for 2024 At-a-Glance

Statewide Student Enrollment Changes

Final Fall 2023 vs. Preliminary Fall 2024



1.54%



Overall increase in enrollment between Fall 2023 and Fall 2024 is below the overall 2.9% increase nationally

Undergraduate

Total Undergraduate % Change **1.70%**



All NJ Institutions Enrollment

Full-Time Students

↑ 2.7%

Part-Time Students

↓ -0.7%

Graduate



Graduate enrollment for all NJ IHEs increased marginally by 0.44%.



Graduate enrollment at public 4-year institutions increased by 1.34%.



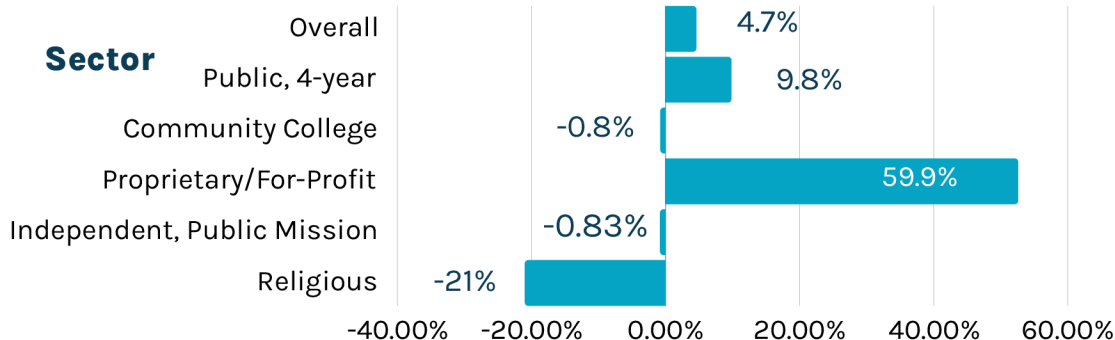
Graduate Full-time enrollment increased by 0.7%



Graduate Part-time enrollments increased by 0.2%

Undergraduate New First-Time Full-Time Enrollment Changes

Final Fall 2023 vs. Preliminary Fall 2024



-0.96%

First-Time, Full-Time Enrollment since Fall 2019, as of Fall 2024 is approaching pre-pandemic level