

Fact Book

on Higher Education

U.S. Regions and 50 States in Perspective

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Copies of the *Fact Book on Higher Education* are available from the SREB publications office. SREB continuously monitors new comparative data and makes them available on the SREB website: www.sreb.org. The website also features an online edition of the *Fact Book* with links to the latest updates of the tables and individual *Featured Facts* reports for each of the 16 SREB states.





Message from the SREB President

A state's prosperity depends on the education level of its people. This is at the heart of SREB's mission and the reason we bring you the *Fact Book on Higher Education*.

In 1956, when SREB first published the *Fact Book on Higher Education*, 6 percent of the region's adults held bachelor's degrees. Today, that rate has climbed to over 28 percent — 36 percent when we include those who hold associate degrees.

But the times have changed, too. The demands of today's economy set the bar even higher, as so many more of today's jobs — and tomorrow's — require postsecondary credentials. SREB's Challenge to Lead goals for education call for 60 percent of the working-age population to have at least a postsecondary certificate or associate degree by 2020.

The SREB *Fact Book* is an important tool to help us get there. It affords us the opportunity to look at both long-term national trends as well as specifics by types of institutions in each state. Leaders can study data that influence key transitions along the education continuum so they can develop effective policies to encourage college-ready high school graduates to pursue postsecondary education.

A look down the education pipeline shows areas of improvement. Public high school graduation rates, college progression rates, and numbers of degrees and certificates awarded — all show increases in this edition.

We also see trends that need our attention. College affordability is a growing threat to higher attainment, and the *Fact Book* documents that low-income students have lost ground in paying for college. Tuition and fees have risen faster than incomes. Pell Grants have lost buying power over the last 30 years. And debt has risen as more students take out loans to finance their education.

This 2015 *Fact Book* continues SREB's long commitment — for almost 60 years — of providing member states information to help them monitor their improvements in education. It includes data on all 50 states for a nationwide context for regional trends. The data are updated regularly online, and we are making improvements to how we bring the *Fact Book* to you digitally.

Armed with these facts, education leaders and state policymakers can evaluate progress toward education goals — and determine how best to influence a future where more-employable residents grow our states' economies.

Dave Spence
President



Acknowledgments

The annual SREB-State Data Exchange is the foundation of each edition of the *SREB Fact Book on Higher Education*. The SREB-State Data Exchange partners, listed in Appendix B, are essential to the collection of the comprehensive, up-to-date comparative data that serve as the basis for much of the Fact Book.

Several organizations and federal agencies also are important sources of information: the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine; the American Medical Association; the Association of Research Libraries; the Center for Higher Education at Illinois State University; *The Chronicle of Higher Education*; the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources; the Institute for College Access and Success; the National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs; the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems; the National Science Foundation; the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association; the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis; the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; the U.S. Census Bureau; the Washington Office of The College Board; and various offices of the U.S. Department of Education, especially the National Center for Education Statistics, the Office of Postsecondary Education and the Office of Student Financial Assistance.

The *SREB Fact Book* is a team effort. The thoughtful suggestions of SREB Vice President of Education Data, Policy Research and Programs, Joan Lord improved the book's topical focus. Editorial consultant Teresa Valentine contributed greatly to accuracy, consistency and readability. Senior Designer and Production Manager Lety Jones gracefully handled all pre-publication production.



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