

Fact Book

on Higher Education

U.S. Regions and 50 States in Perspective

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November 2017

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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

When SREB first published the *Fact Book on Higher Education* in 1956, only 6 percent of the region's adults held bachelor's degrees. By 2015, that percentage had risen to 29 percent of the working-age population — over 37 percent of that population if we include those with associate degrees.

SREB's Challenge to Lead goals for education call for states to prepare 60 percent of its working-age population with a post-secondary certificate or associate degree — or higher — by 2020.

The SREB *Fact Book* provides key data to help states track their progress toward that goal. It includes data that allow us to examine long-term national, regional and state trends. It also includes data from our own SREB-State Data Exchange survey, which provides critical information about the progress states are making and the work that still needs to be done.

Data Exchange survey data are collected at the institution level and are cataloged in electronic files on the SREB website. Policymakers and their researchers can access these data to examine transitions in the education pipeline. They can identify for themselves gaps in the progress of their state's students, and then consider how to encourage college-ready high school graduates to pursue postsecondary education and complete postsecondary credentials.

This 2017 *Fact Book* reveals that the region has made progress on some of its key college-readiness and postsecondary completion measures. Public high school graduation rates, college progression rates, and degrees and certificates awarded are all areas that have seen increases. State support for public four-year institutions has increased recently, potentially signaling a change from the past downward trend of state appropriations.

It also highlights areas that need our attention. College enrollment is down slightly — numbers we cannot ignore if we are to improve postsecondary attainment. Rising college tuition and fees, particularly in relation to family income, threatens college affordability. Additionally, more students are graduating with student loan debt — and the amounts they owe are rising. Too many of them are questioning the value of a college education. These factors will ultimately affect college completion and educational attainment. You'll want to study these issues more closely in the pages that follow.

This 2017 *Fact Book* continues its more-than-60-year tradition of being an asset to the region. Whether through the book or the online repository of data at sreb.org/factbook, policymakers can get the information they need to help them evaluate their state's progress toward education goals within the context of the region and the nation. I know you'll turn to it as often as I do.

Dave Spence
President

SREB's *Fact Book on
Higher Education* keeps
counting and paying
attention to what matters



Acknowledgments

The first *SREB Fact Book* was published in 1956. At the time, it focused on enrollment and revenue data. Over the years, it has evolved to cover more topics and include more data. The *Fact Book* now includes six chapters on topics ranging from population and the economy to college participation and completion, to revenues and expenditures. Until 2011, the *Fact Book* reported data on SREB states exclusively. At that time, the *Fact Book* expanded to include data on all 50 states on many topics. Much of the credit for this evolution of the *Fact Book* goes to Joe Marks, former Director of Data Services, who was employed with SREB for 30 years. We thank Joe for his contributions.

The SREB-State Data Exchange, which began in 1969, serves as the foundation for the *Fact Book*. With the assistance of Data Exchange coordinators from all 16 SREB states, we collect up-to-date comparative data on degrees and certificates awarded, student persistence and progression, time- and credits-to-degree, full-time-equivalent enrollment, distance education, funding, tuition and mandatory fees, and faculty salaries. We greatly appreciate the work of these coordinators in submitting timely and accurate data.

Data are compiled from many sources, including professional organizations and federal agencies. These include the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine; the American Medical Association; the Association of Research Libraries; the Center for the Study of Education Policy 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.

Production of the *SREB Fact Book* requires a group of dedicated professionals. SREB Vice President of Education Data, Policy Research, and Programs, Joan Lord, provided valuable feedback on drafts and advice on the focus of the book. Editorial consultant Teresa Valentine contributed to the accuracy, consistency, and readability of the book through her careful review of drafts. Senior Designer and Production Manager, Lety Jones, was responsible for the design and layout of the book. Lisa Martin, former Survey Coordinator and Data Analyst at SREB, played a major role in preparing the Data Exchange data used in this edition. Christiana Datubo-Brown, Data Analyst, and Samantha Durrance, Policy Analyst, provided invaluable assistance in the drafting and review of chapters.



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