



Introduction

The 2019 edition of the *SREB Fact Book on Higher Education* continues a long history of providing comparative data that dates back to 1956. The *Fact Book* began as a compilation of data on enrollment and revenues for use by states in the region. Since then, the *Fact Book* has evolved to include data on education attainment and demographics; economic indicators; elementary and secondary school enrollment and graduation rates; government revenues and expenditures; college enrollment disaggregated by characteristics such as age, sex and race/ethnicity; persistence and progression rates; dual enrollment; e-learning enrollment; degrees awarded; tuition and mandatory fees; cost of attendance; student financial aid and student debt; faculty and administrator salaries; state funding for higher education; college and university revenues and expenditures; federal support for research; and university endowments. The *Fact Book* also expanded in 2011 to include data on all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

The SREB-State Data Exchange survey collects much of the data that serves as the foundation for the *Fact Book*.

The *Fact Book* is divided into six chapters covering topics related to postsecondary education. These chapters cover student **participation** in postsecondary programs, **completion** of certificates and associate degrees to graduate and professional degrees, the **affordability** of college coupled with the effect of rising costs on families, the changes in postsecondary staffing including **faculty**, and the factors that influence institutional **budgets and expenditures**. These chapters are preceded by a chapter on the **population and economics** of the region. This first chapter sets an important context for readers and researchers by providing data from P-12 and postsecondary education on demographic and economic trends that affect education outcomes.

These chapters provide data and analysis policymakers need to answer key questions. Without current, high-quality data and timely comparisons from region to region and state to state, policymakers are left without insights they need to answer key questions and make important, often critical, decisions. The *Fact Book* provides data to help answer these questions, including the ones that follow.

How do states compare with their neighbors and peers?

- How is education attainment changing in a state? Is the state on track to meet education attainment goals?
- Are the percentages of residents who have graduated from high school, college and professional school adequate to meet workforce projections?
- How does a state compare with its peers with respect to personal income levels, per capita wealth, employment growth and unemployment rates?
- Are there race/ethnicity gaps with respect to high school graduation, college enrollment and college completion?

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- What percentage of students persist and progress through college?
 - How long does it take students to complete bachelor's degrees? Do they accumulate the appropriate number of credit hours for the degree?
 - How many degrees were awarded in high-demand fields of study?

Are states making postsecondary education affordable for their residents?

- Are the costs to attend universities, colleges, and technical colleges or institutes in line with students' and families' ability to pay?
- Are states providing adequate and appropriate amounts and types of student financial aid?
- What percentage of graduates have student debt, and what is the average amount of debt per graduate?

Are states funding postsecondary education at an appropriate level?

- Is higher education revenue keeping pace with inflation and changes in enrollment?
- How has state support for postsecondary education changed over time?
- Do state and local budgets devote adequate funding to education and other major priorities? Are these budgets responding appropriately to changing needs for services?
- How has spending by postsecondary institutions changed with respect to instruction, research, public service, academic and administrative support, and student scholarships?

The amount of data collected on various facets of postsecondary education has increased in recent years. Although the amount of data has increased, there is no guarantee that the quality of those data has improved. Readers are cautioned to consider the many differences between states that can affect the comparisons and rankings contained in this book. You are encouraged to contact the SREB-State Data Exchange agencies in Appendix B for state-specific context on these data.

As always, SREB welcomes feedback on the *Fact Book*. For those who are interested in doing their own analysis, the SREB Data Services website at www.sreb.org/fact-book-ed-data provides access to much of the data used to create the tables and graphs in the *Fact Book*.