

SREB

# Alabama

## Featured Facts

from the *SREB Fact Book on Higher Education*

2017

Southern  
Regional  
Education  
Board

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# The College Completion Challenge

*Improving Education Attainment. Maintaining Affordability. Preparing the Workforce*

## Education attainment continues slow climb upward

Increasing education attainment levels continues to be a top issue for state policymakers and education professionals. They know that good jobs (those paying at least \$35,000 annually to workers under age 45 and \$45,000 to workers ages 45 and older) increasingly are going to people with associate degrees or higher, according to the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. The percentage of working-age adults with an associate degree or higher in the SREB region still trails the national average. In the SREB region, the percentage of working-age adults (ages 25 to 64 years old) with an associate degree or higher was 37 percent in 2015, up from 35 percent in 2009 but lower than the 41 percent for the nation.

Data on educational progress at various points in the education pipeline offer some good news, but they also suggest the region might face some challenges. The good news is that the SREB region again increased in pre-K-12 enrollment from 2004 to 2014 — growth that will soon make its way to college. More good news is that high schools will see a net gain of high school graduates by 2031-32, according to the Knocking at the College Door Projections of High School Graduates. No other region is expected to have a net gain by 2031-32.

The fact that pre-K-12 enrollment and high school graduation rates are increasing is also good news for the potential improvement in education attainment levels. Pre-K through grade 12 enrollment rose 9 percent in the SREB region between fall 2004 and fall 2014. Nationwide, the increase was more modest, at 3 percent. As for high school graduation rates in the SREB region, the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) rose from 82 percent in 2012-13 to 86 percent in 2014-15, a larger gain than that of the nation, which was nearly 2 percentage points during that time.

## Improving college enrollment and completion rates proving difficult

While the future looks positive for college enrollment in the nation and region, the immediate past saw college enrollment in the United States decline. Without substantial increases in college enrollment and completion, the nation cannot improve its education attainment level. Total college enrollment declined almost 7 percent nationwide between fall 2010 and fall 2015. The SREB region also experienced a decrease with total enrollment dropping at a lower rate: 4 percent. The declines in enrollment varied by race/ethnicity, student level, part-time/full-time status, and type of institution. In the SREB region, total enrollment declined for white and black students, 11 and 9 percent respectively. Undergraduate enrollment decreased almost 5 percent, but graduate and professional enrollment increased nearly 1 percent between 2010 and 2015. Enrollment at four-year institutions increased about 2 percent while two-year college enrollment dropped 11 percent.

College progression rates are rising slowly but substantially at four-year institutions. If this continues, it will lead to higher completion rates. The cohort who entered in fall 2009 as first-time, full-time bachelor's degree seeking students had a 77 percent progression rate as of 2014-15 — a 5 percentage point increase over the last 10 years. Progression rates for degree- or certificate-seeking students at two-year colleges are slowly rising. First-time, full-time, degree- or certificate-seeking students who enrolled in two-year colleges in fall 2012 in the SREB region had a 52 percent progression rate by 2014-15, a 1 percentage point increase over those who entered in fall 2007.

## College affordability challenges efforts to raise education attainment levels

Keeping college affordable remains a challenge for SREB states and continues to be a key policy challenge for the region. Many factors, including tuition and fees, student financial aid, state support of higher education, and family income, affect college affordability, making it difficult for policymakers to unravel the complexities of funding postsecondary education. The data indicate that most students and their families continue to struggle with college costs.

*Continued on inside back cover*



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## 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 postsecondary 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 that provide 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.

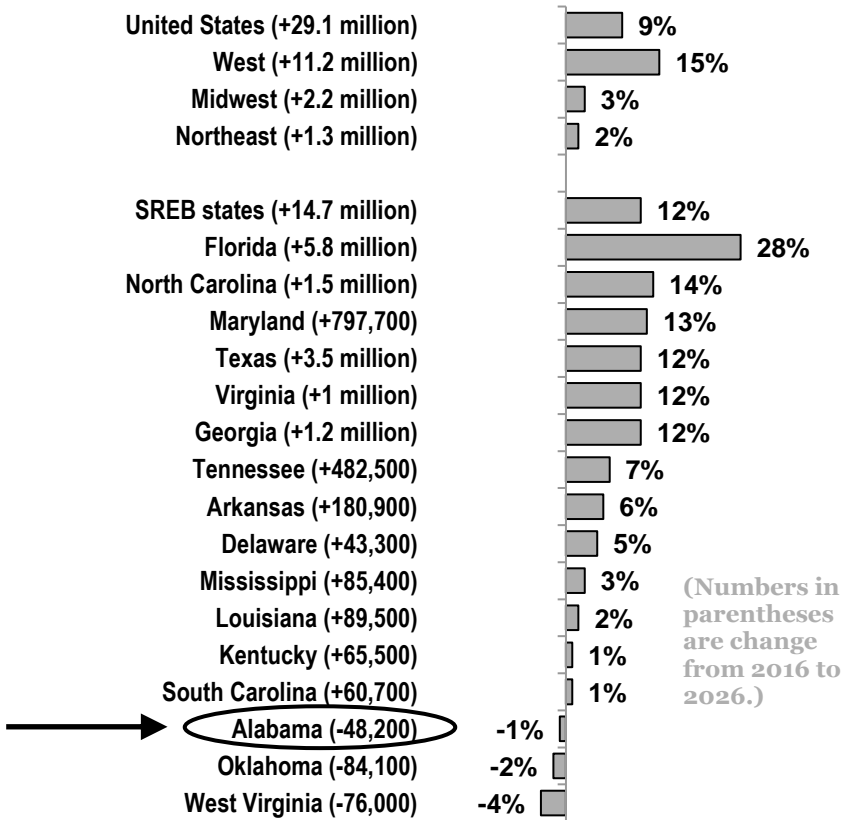
It also highlights areas that need our attention. College enrollment is down slightly — numbers we cannot ignore if we are to improve postsecondary attainment. Rising college tuition and fees, particularly in relation to family income, threatens college affordability. Additionally, more students are 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](http://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



## Projected Population Change 2016 to 2026

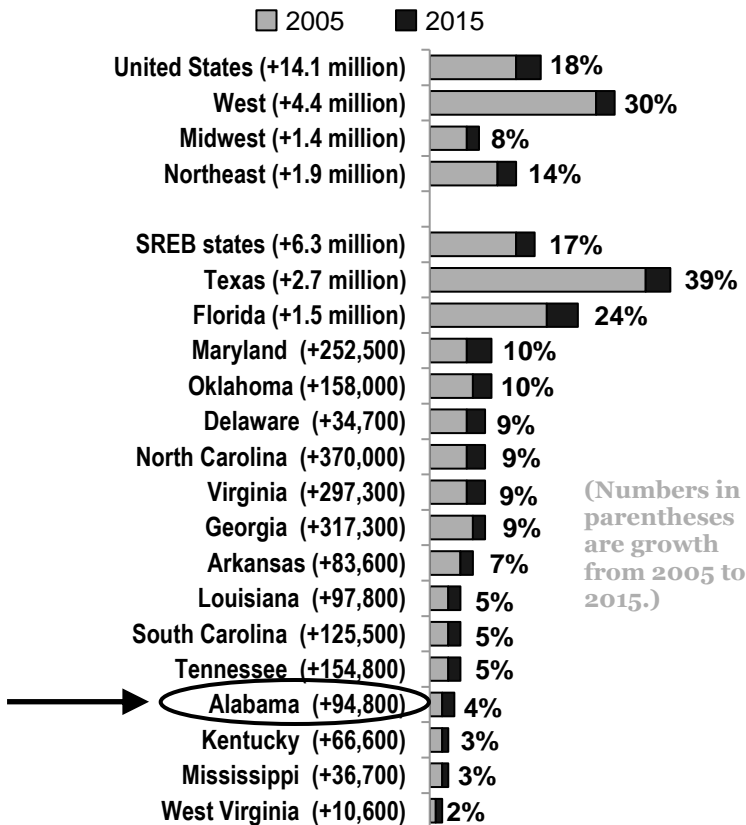


Source: Table 1, U.S. Census Bureau.

Over half (50.5 percent) of the nation's population growth from 2016 to 2026 is expected to be in the 16 SREB states — an increase of nearly 15 million. Alabama, projected to decline by 48,200 people between 2016 and 2026, is one of only three SREB states expected to see such declines during that period.



## Hispanic Population Change 2005 and 2015



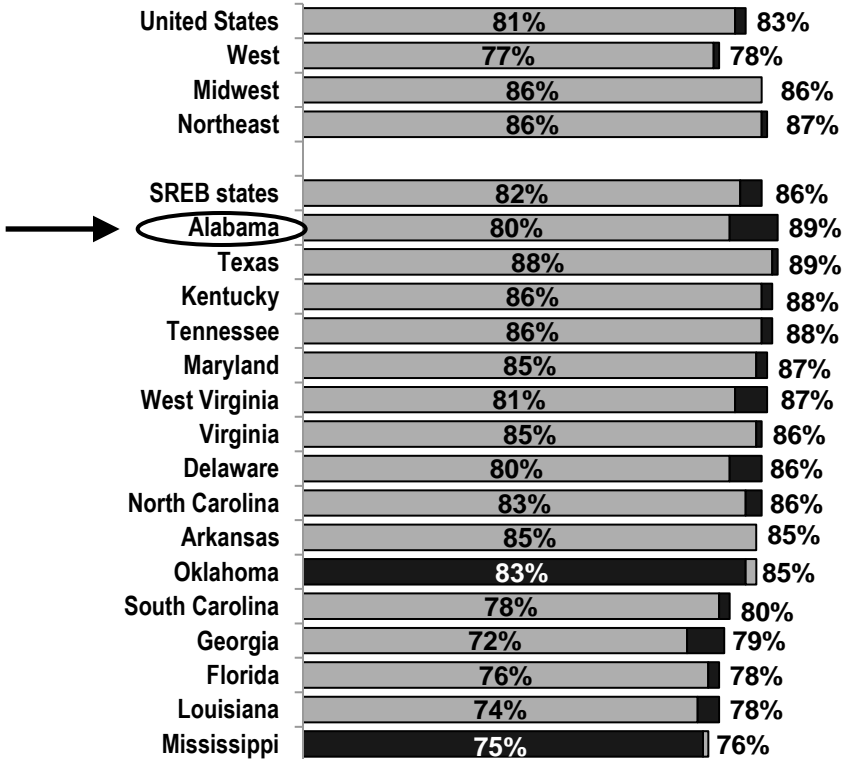
Source: Table 5, U.S. Census Bureau.

The increase in Hispanic residents is the region's major demographic trend. Hispanic population growth accounted for 46 percent of all growth in the SREB region from 2005 to 2015. The Hispanic population in Alabama grew by 94,800 — doubling the number of Hispanic residents in the state. This increase raised the proportion of Hispanic residents to 4 percent of the overall resident population of Alabama in 2015.



## Public High School Graduation Rates 2012-13 and 2014-15

□ 2012-13 ■ 2014-15

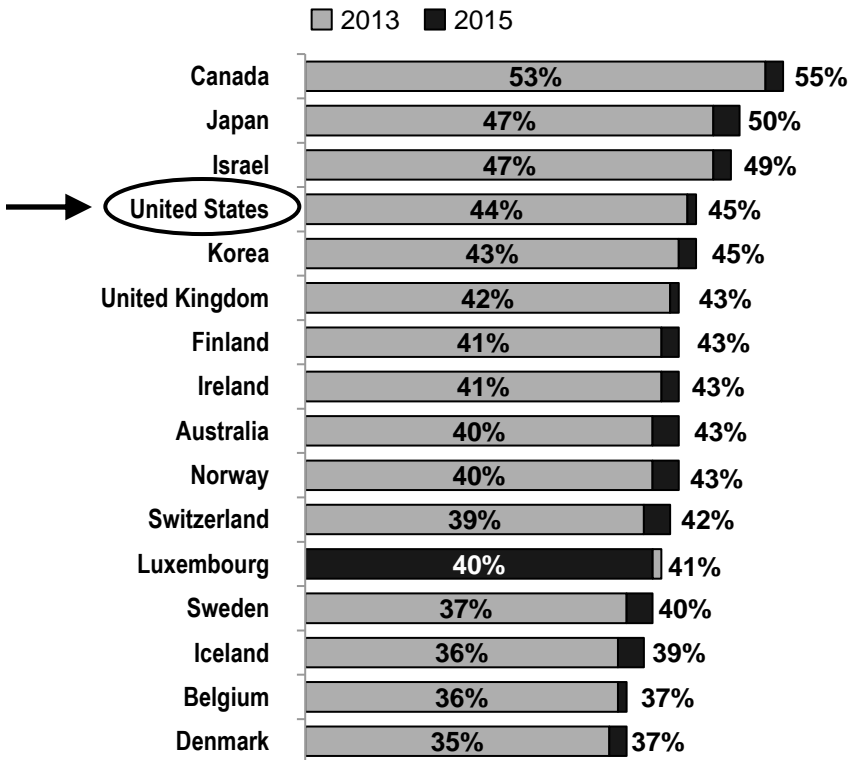


Source: Table 9, National Center for Education Statistics.

From 2013 to 2015, the SREB region's public high school graduation rate increased by 4 percentage points to 86 percent. In Alabama, the public high school graduation rate rose from 80 percent in 2012-13 to 89 percent in 2014-15.



**Percentage of Working-Age\*  
Population With an Associate  
Degree or Higher  
2013 and 2015**



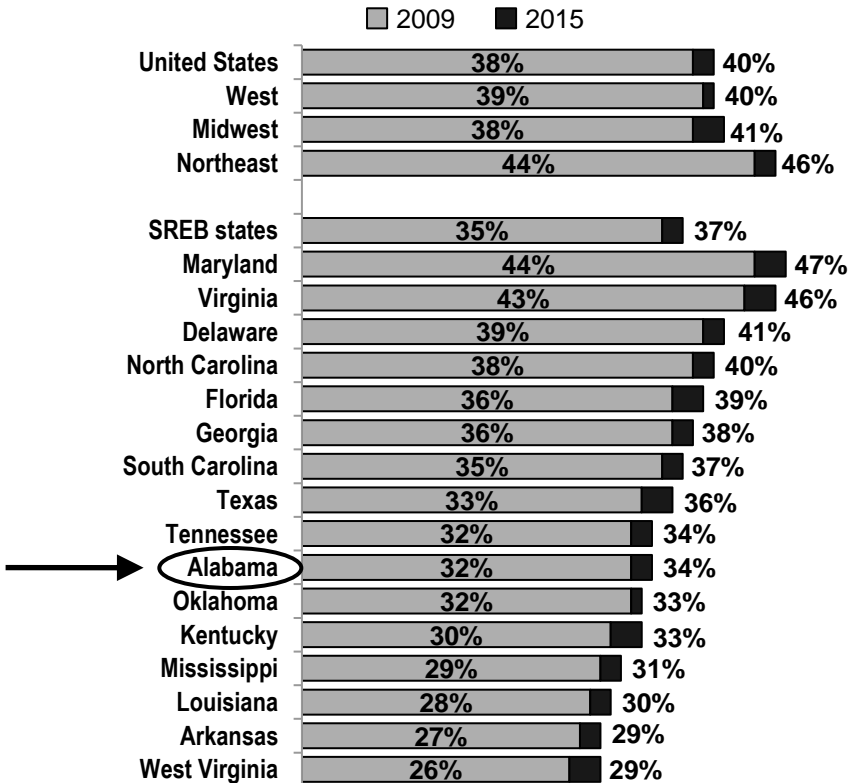
\*Ages 25 to 64.

Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Working-age adults have become a new focus among national leaders when comparing education levels. Using an equivalency yardstick common for international attainment comparisons (percentage with the equivalent of an associate degree or higher), the United States remains in fourth place internationally, behind Canada, Japan and Israel.



## Working-Age\* Adults With an Associate Degree or Higher 2009 and 2015



\*Ages 25 to 64.

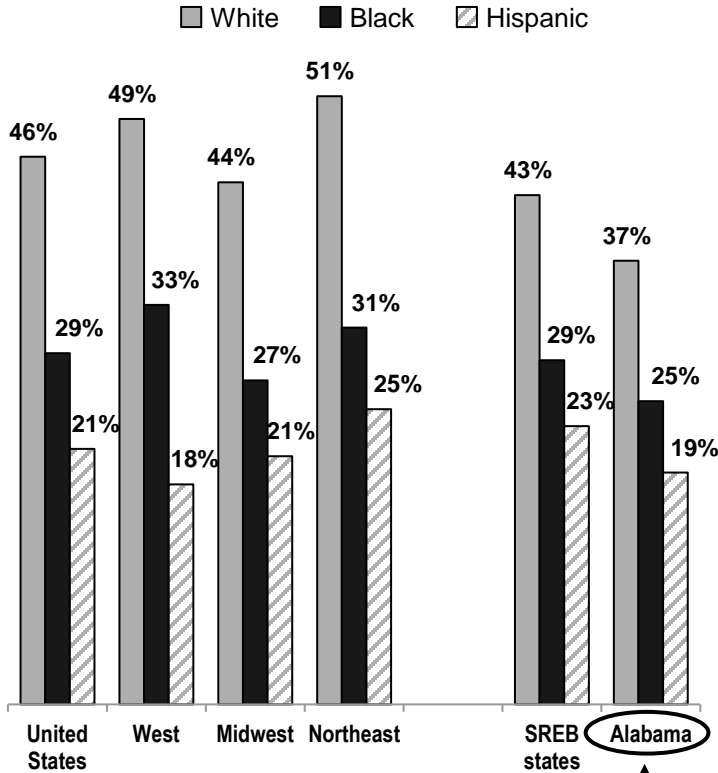
Source: Table 3, U.S. Census Bureau.

On U.S.-based measures of the 50 states, the percentage of adults with associate degrees or higher has risen since 2009 nationally and in all SREB states. In 2015, 34 percent of adults ages 25 to 64 in Alabama had at least an associate degree, up from 32 percent in 2009.





## Working-Age\* Adults With an Associate Degree or Higher 2015



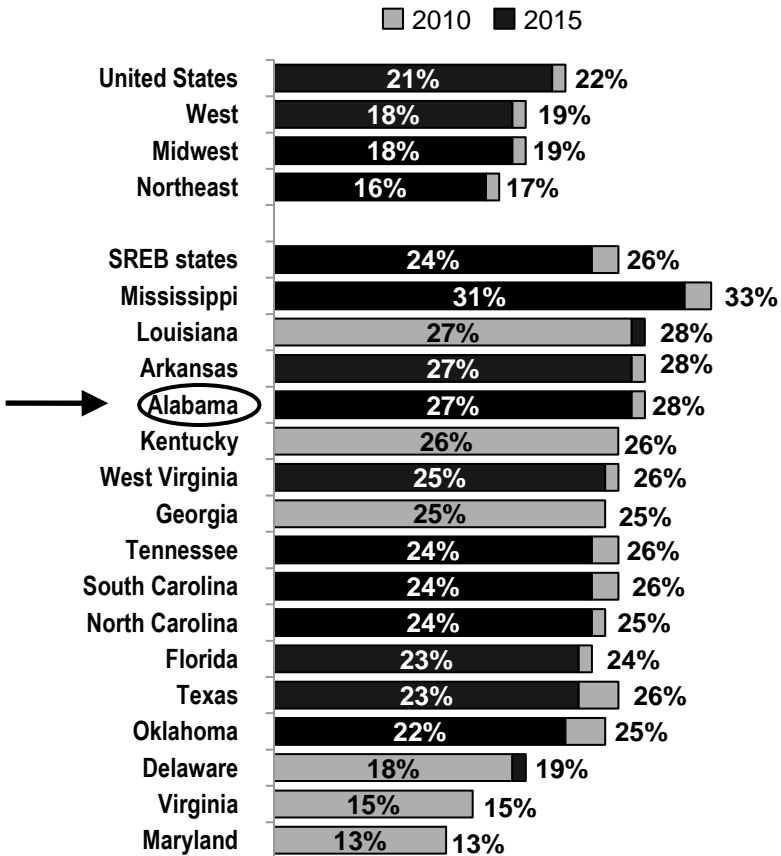
\*Ages 25 to 64.

Source: Table 4, U.S. Census Bureau.

The percentages of working-age adults with at least an associate degree nationwide vary by race and ethnicity. In the SREB region, they are below national averages for white adults but at or above the average for black and Hispanic adults. In 2015, 19 percent of Hispanic working-age adults in Alabama had an associate degree or higher, compared with 25 percent of black adults and 37 percent of white adults.



## Poverty Rates Among Children 2010 and 2015

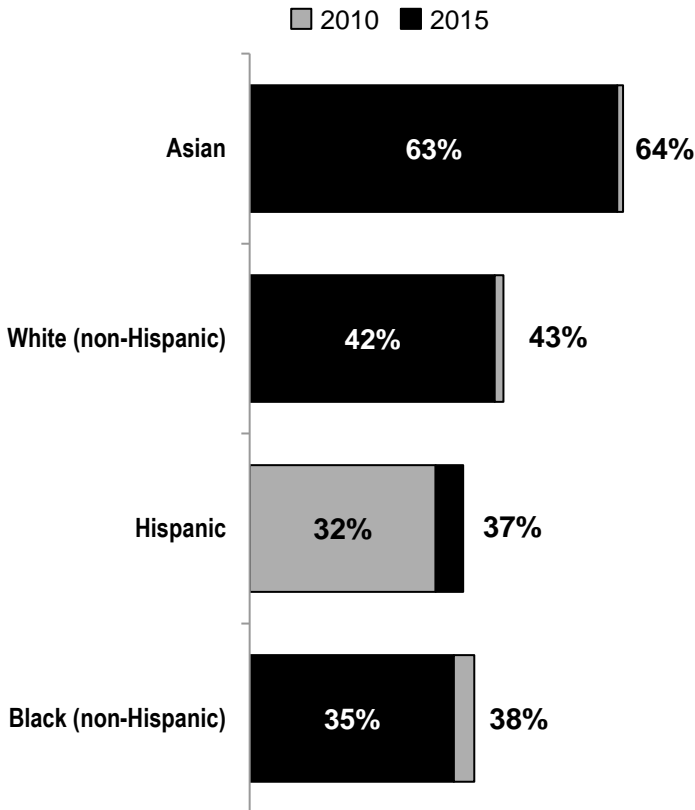


Source: Table 12, U.S. Census Bureau.

The number of children in poverty decreased 1 percentage point nationally and 2 percentage points in the SREB region since 2010. By 2015 in Alabama, 27 percent of children were in poverty, down from 28 percent in 2010.



## 18- to 24-Year-Olds in College United States, 2010 and 2015



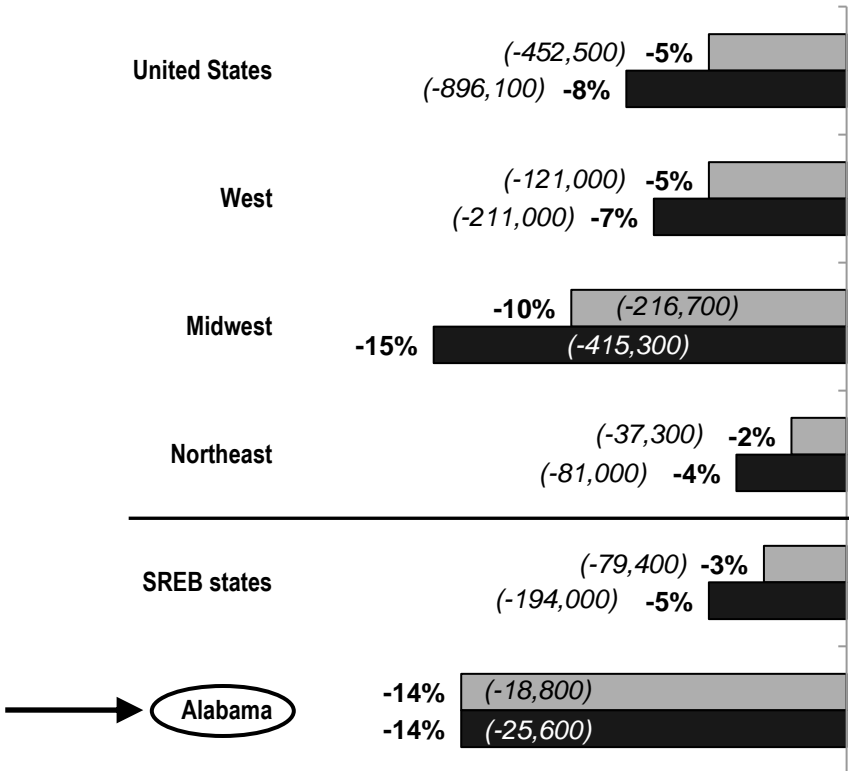
Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

A larger proportion of Hispanic young adults (37 percent) attended college than black young adults (35 percent) in the U.S. A smaller proportion of white young adults (42 percent) attended college in 2015 than in 2010 (43 percent).



## Enrollment Change All Degree-Granting Institutions 2010 to 2015

■ Men ■ Women

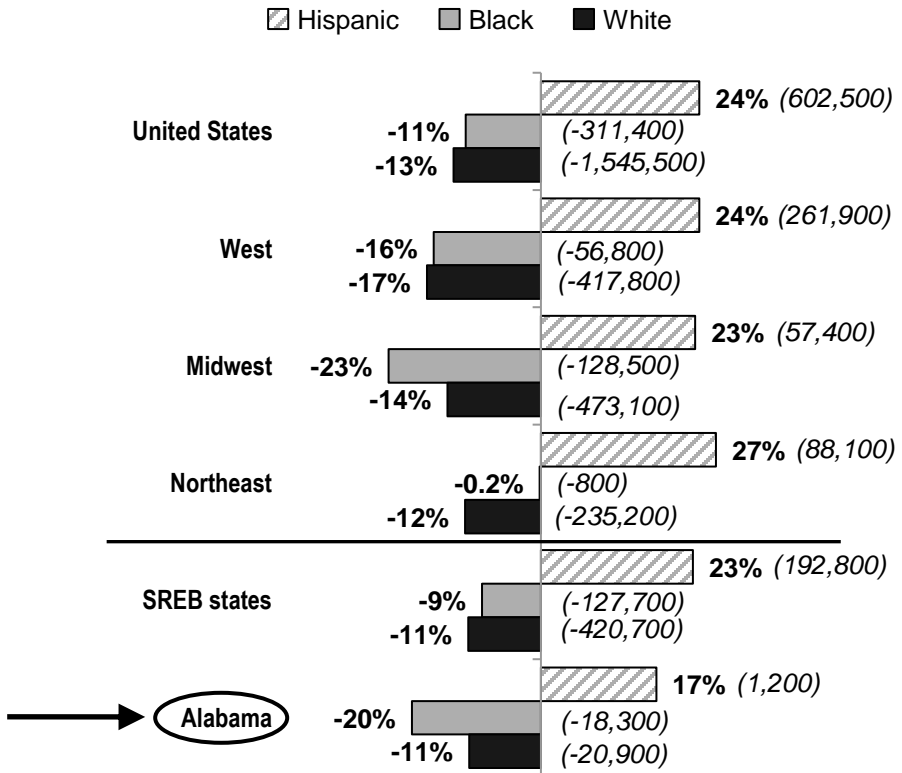


Note: Numbers in parentheses are change from 2010 to 2015.  
Source: Table 23, National Center for Education Statistics.

Between 2010 and 2015, the enrollment of men in U.S. colleges and universities decreased at a slower rate than the enrollment of women. In Alabama, the enrollment of both men and women dropped by 14 percent.



## Hispanic, Black and White Enrollment Change 2010 to 2015

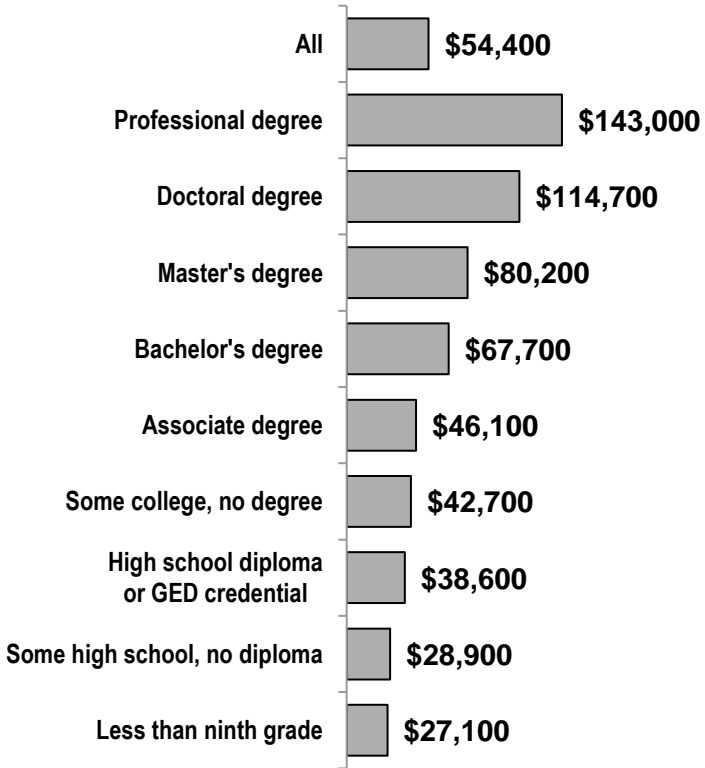


Note: Numbers in parentheses are change from 2010 to 2015.  
Source: Table 23, National Center for Education Statistics.

Among racial/ethnic groups, the number of Hispanic college students grew nationwide from fall 2010 to fall 2015. In Alabama, enrollment increased by 1,200 Hispanic students. Enrollment in Alabama also decreased by 18,300 black students and 20,900 white students from 2010 to 2015.



## Average Annual Earnings of Adults United States, 2015

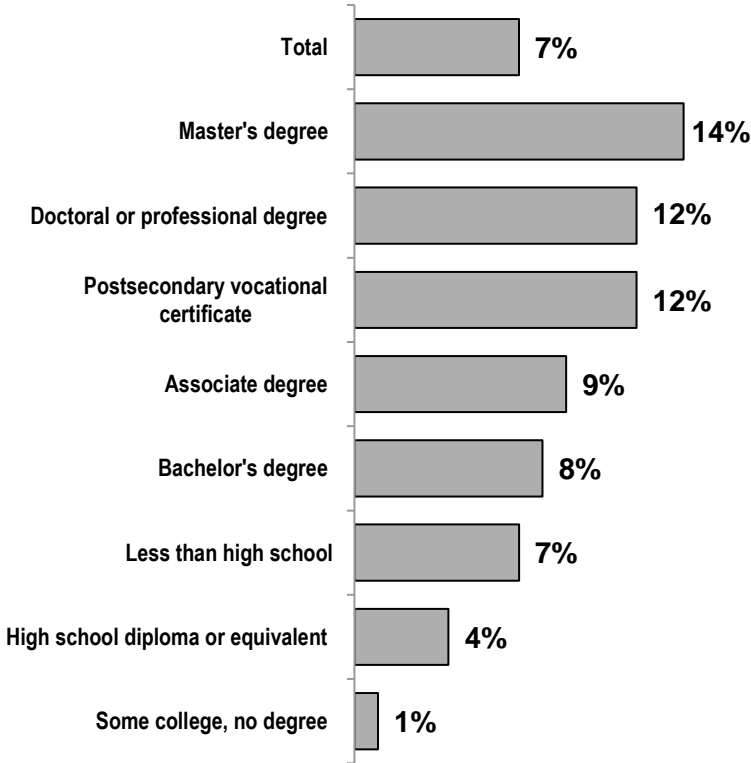


Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Education pays. In 2015, adults ages 25 and older with associate degrees earned 19 percent more than those with only high school-level credentials. Those with bachelor's degrees earned 75 percent more than high school graduates. And those with professional degrees in fields such as law and medicine earned 111 percent more than those with bachelor's degrees.



## Projected Increase in Job Openings by Education or Training United States, 2014 to 2024

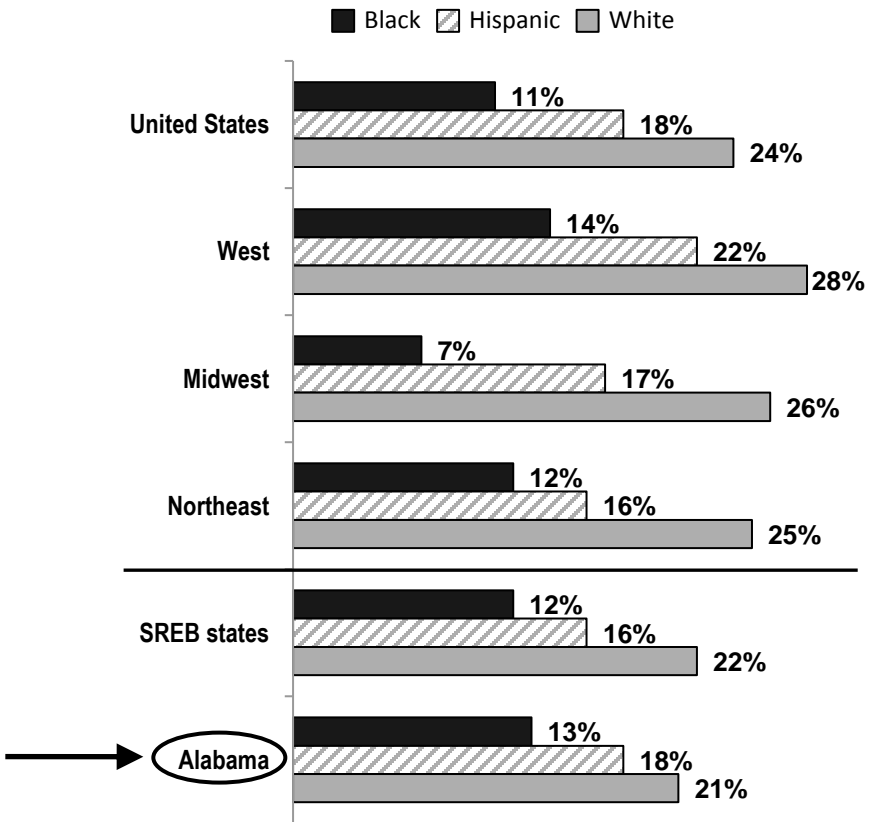


Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

In the U.S., the fastest-growing, highest-paying jobs require education beyond high school. For all job categories requiring an associate degree or higher, jobs are projected to increase more than the overall 7 percent gain in total job openings.



### Three-Year Graduation Rates Public Two-Year Colleges, 2012 Cohort



Source: Table 45, National Center for Education Statistics.

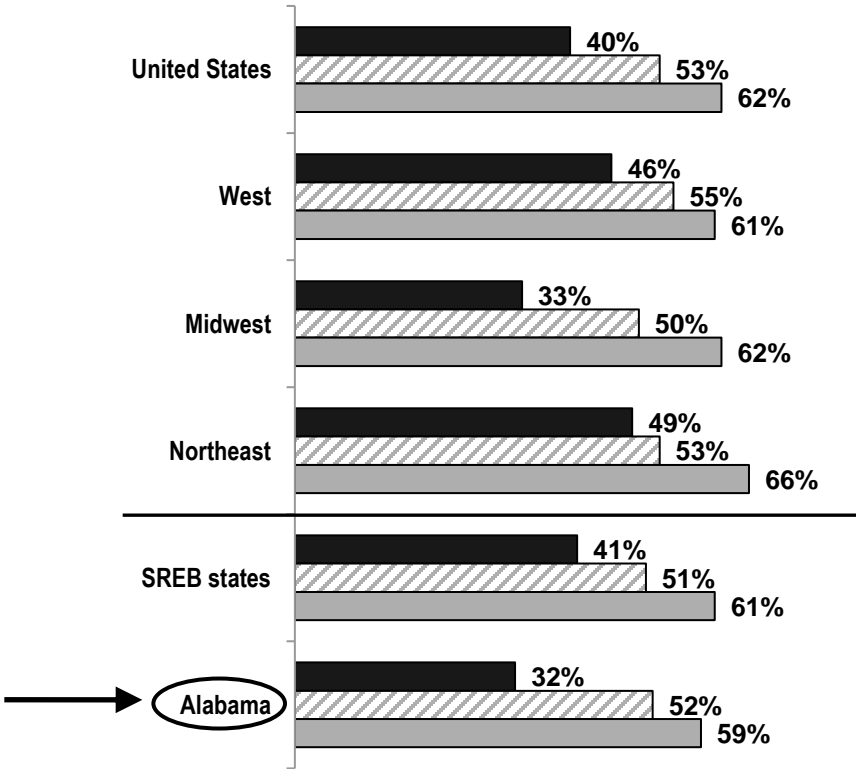
At public two-year colleges, the highest three-year graduation rate for the 2012 cohort was in the West. Gaps in the rates for racial and ethnic groups remain in all regions. Graduation rates in Alabama’s public two-year colleges were above SREB averages for black and Hispanic students. The graduation rate for white students in Alabama was 1 percentage point below the SREB average.





## Six-Year Graduation Rates Public Four-Year Colleges, 2009 Cohort

■ Black    ▨ Hispanic    ■ White



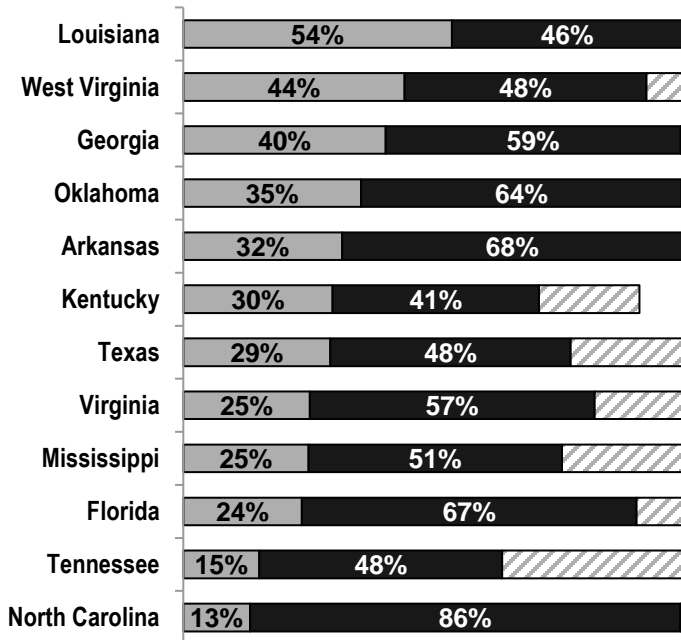
Source: Table 45, National Center for Education Statistics.

At public four-year colleges, the SREB region's six-year graduation rates for Hispanic and white students in the 2009 cohort were below those of their national counterparts. Graduation rates for black and white students in Alabama's four-year colleges were below SREB averages for their counterparts.



## Transfer Status of Associate Graduates Public Two-Year Colleges Participating SREB States, 2014-15

- Transfer student at graduating college
- First time in college at graduating college
- ▨ Other or unknown whether first-time or transfer

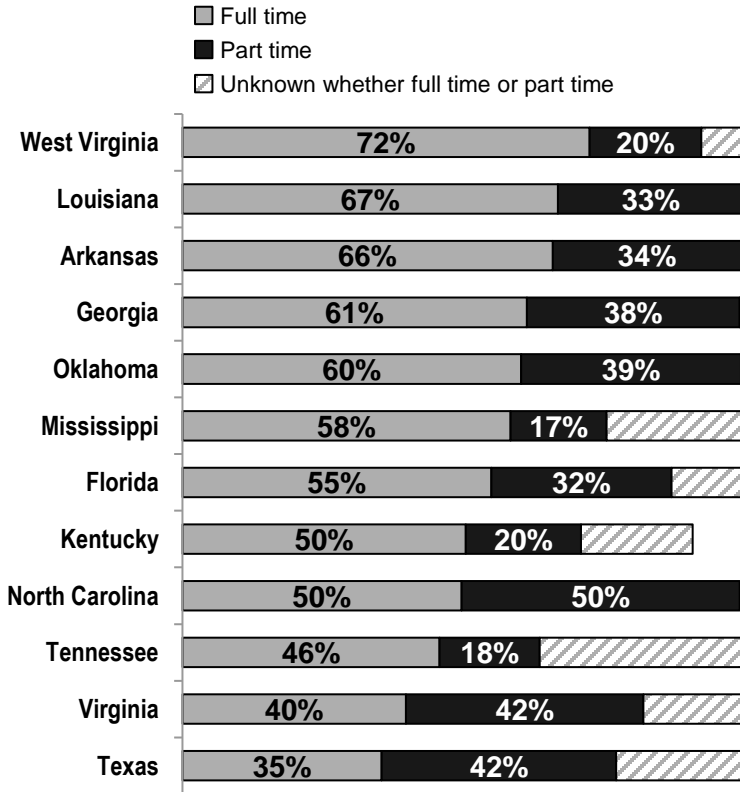


Source: Table 51, SREB-State Data Exchange.

A substantial percentage of associate degree graduates in 2014-15 were transfer students to the colleges awarding their degrees. Among the 12 states participating in an SREB data collection on the entering status of graduates, the percentage of transfers ranged from 54 percent in Louisiana to 13 percent in North Carolina.



## Full-Time Status of Associate Graduates Public Two-Year Colleges Participating SREB States, 2014-15



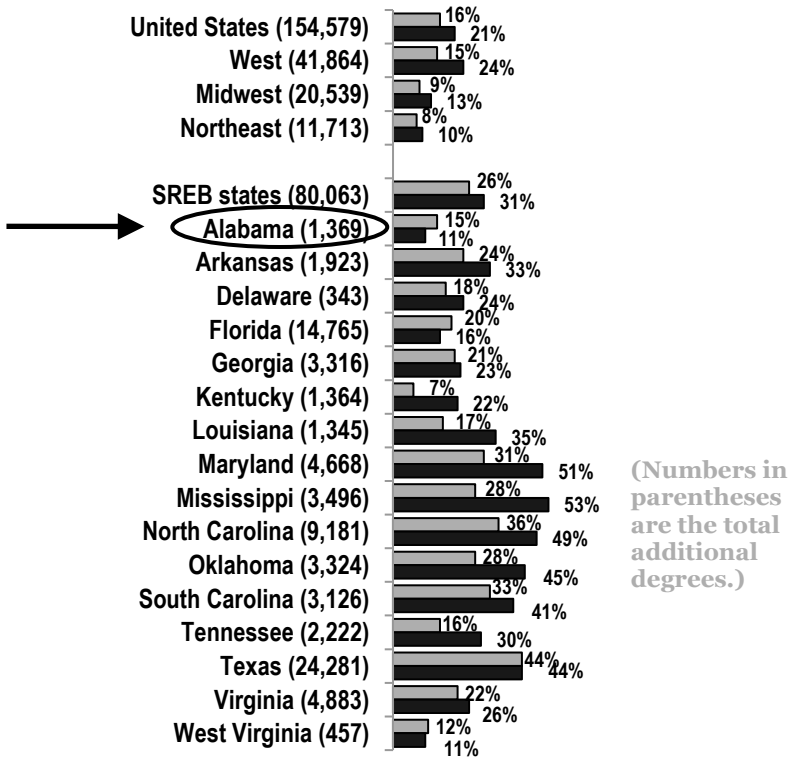
Source: Table 51, SREB-State Data Exchange.

In many states, the majority of associate degree graduates in 2014-15 entered the colleges from which they graduated as full-time students. Among the 12 states participating in an SREB data collection on the entering status of graduates, the percentage who attended full time ranged from 72 percent in West Virginia to 35 percent in Texas.



## Increase in Associate Degrees Earned by Men and Women 2009-10 to 2014-15

Women    
  Men

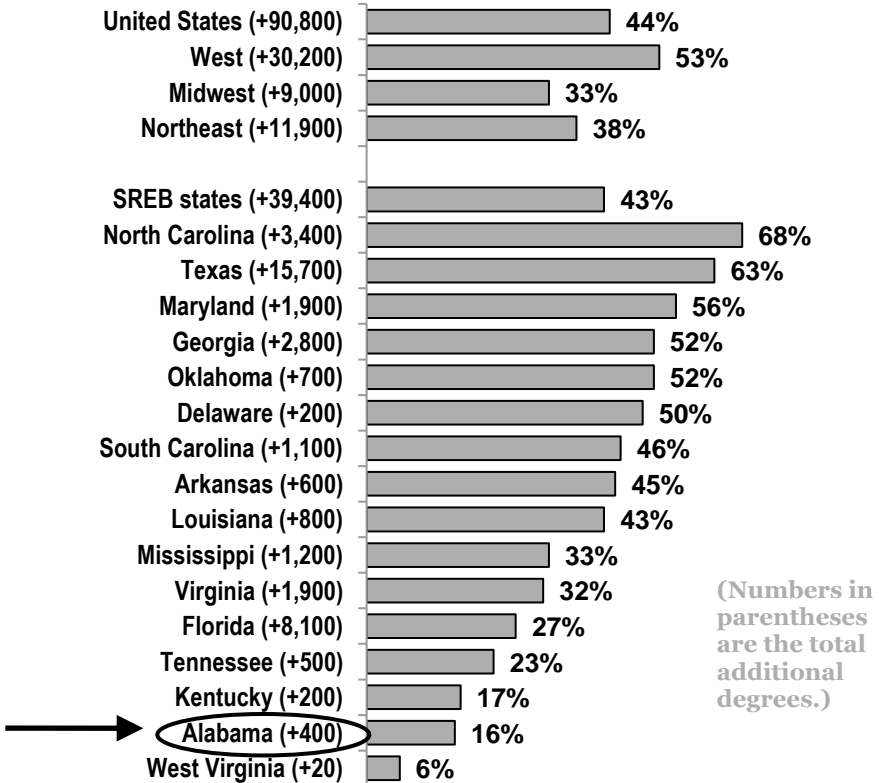


Source: Table 49, National Center for Education Statistics.

In all but three SREB states, associate degrees awarded to men rose faster than those to women from 2009-10 to 2014-15. In Alabama, the men’s increase (11 percent) was less than the women’s increase (15 percent). Men were 35 percent of the associate graduates in 2014-15.



## Increase in Associate Degrees Earned by Black and Hispanic Students 2009-10 to 2014-15



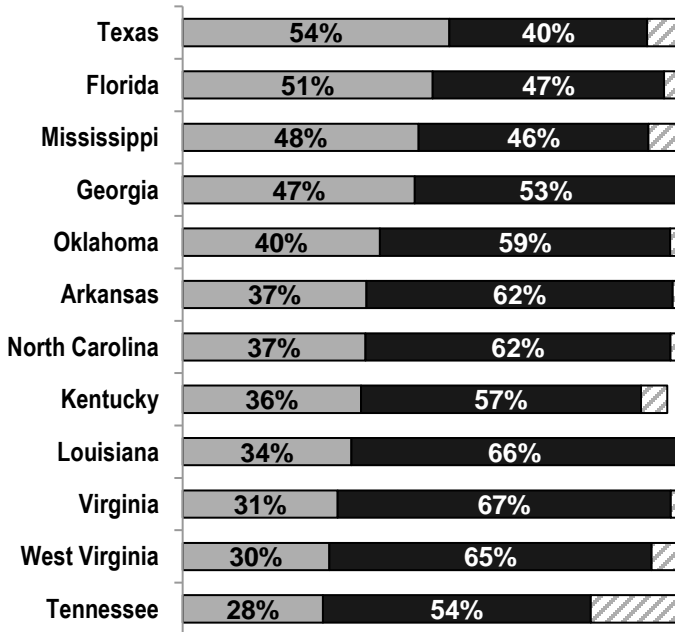
Source: Table 49, National Center for Education Statistics.

The number of associate degrees earned by black and Hispanic graduates increased by 44 percent nationally and by 43 percent in the SREB region from 2009-10 to 2014-15. In Alabama, the number rose by 400, for a 16 percent increase during the period. Furthermore, in Alabama in 2014-15, black and Hispanic students added up to 30 percent of the graduates in the state.



## Transfer Status of Bachelor's Graduates Public Four-Year Colleges and Universities Participating SREB States, 2014-15

- Transfer student at graduating college
- First time in college at graduating college
- Other or unknown whether first-time or transfer

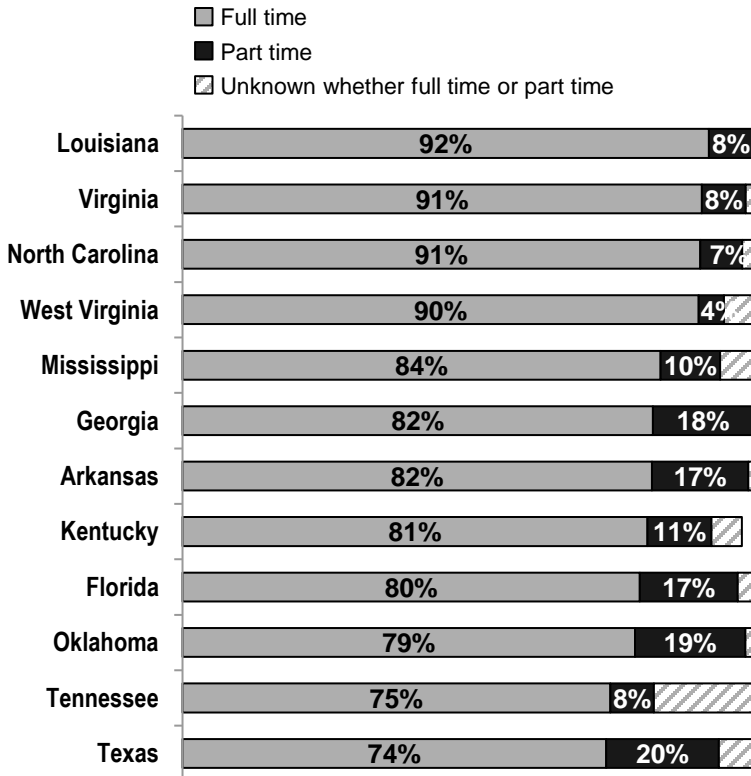


Source: Table 52, SREB-State Data Exchange.

A significant percentage of bachelor's degree graduates in 2014-15 were transfer students to the colleges awarding their degrees. Among the 12 states participating in an SREB data collection on the entering status of graduates, the percentage of transfers ranged from 54 percent in Texas to 28 percent in Tennessee.



## Full-Time Status of Bachelor's Graduates Public Four-Year Colleges and Universities Participating SREB States, 2014-15

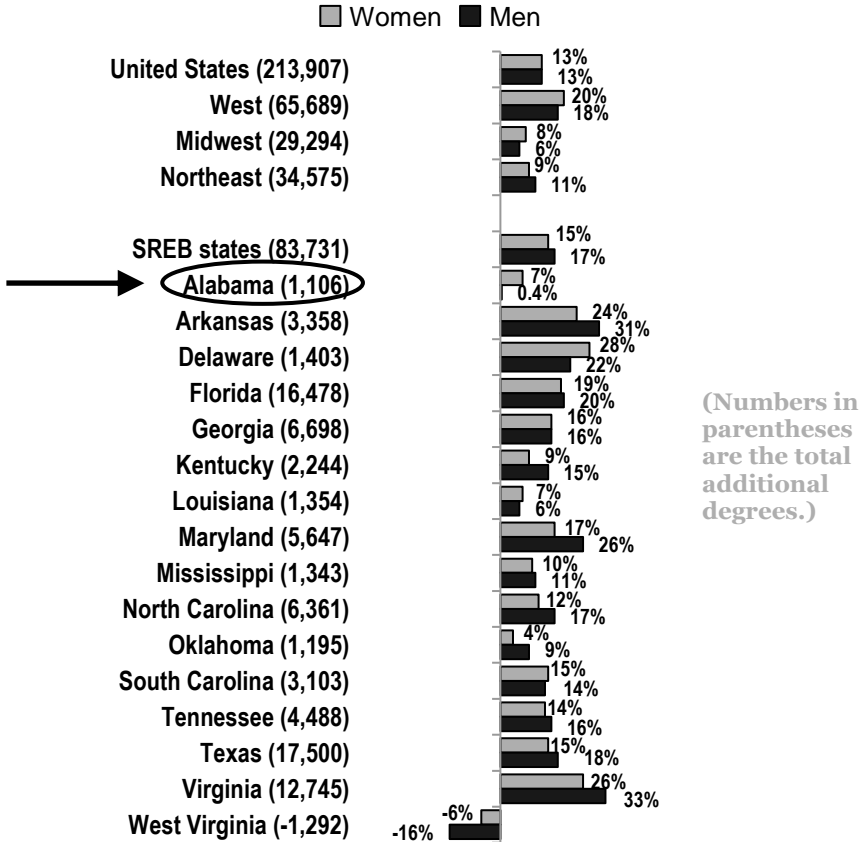


Source: Table 52, SREB-State Data Exchange.

A very high percentage of bachelor's degree graduates in 2014-15 entered the colleges from which they graduated as full-time students. Among the 12 states participating in an SREB data collection on the entering status of graduates, the percentage who attended full time ranged from 92 percent in Louisiana to 74 percent in Texas.



## Change in Bachelor's Degrees Earned by Men and Women 2009-10 to 2014-15



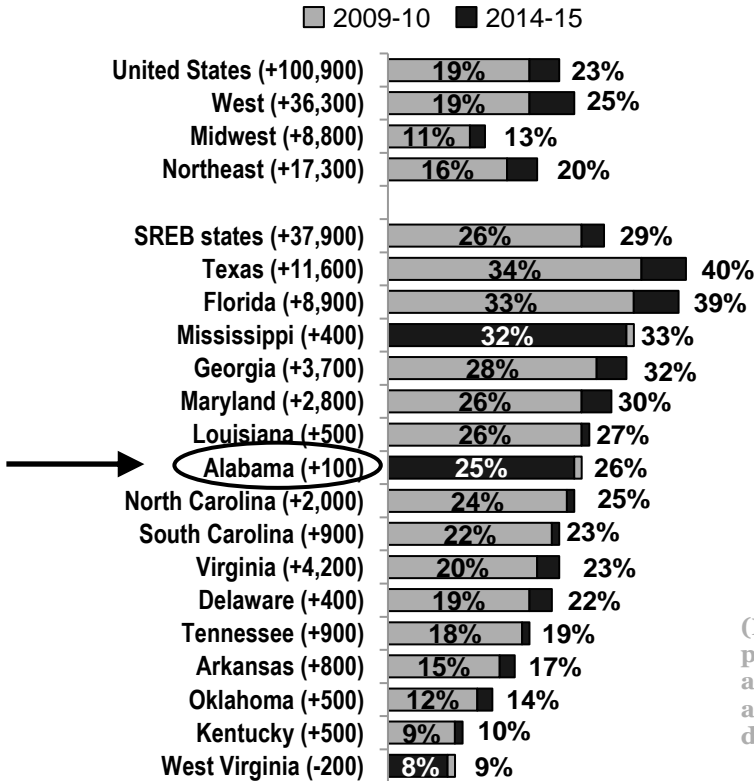
Source: Table 53, National Center for Education Statistics.

In all but four SREB states, bachelor's degrees awarded to men rose faster than those to women from 2009-10 to 2014-15. In Alabama, the women's increase was 7 percent and men increased by less than 1 percent. Men were 43 percent of graduates in 2009-10 and 41 percent in 2014-15.





## Bachelor's Degrees Earned by Black and Hispanic Students 2009-10 to 2014-15



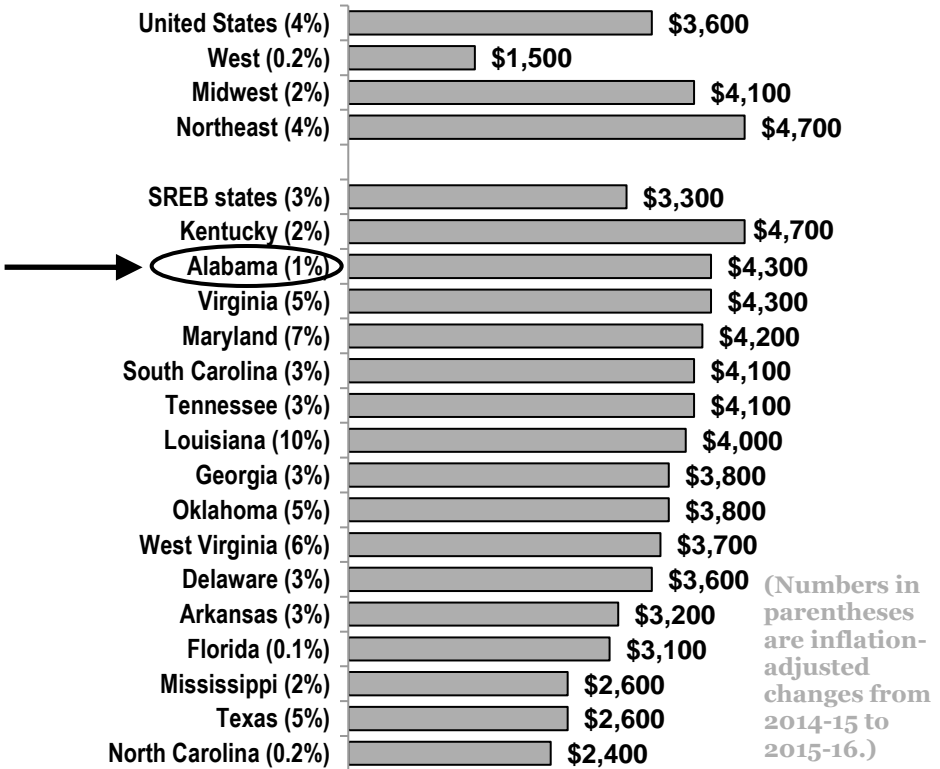
(Numbers in parentheses are the total additional degrees.)

Source: Table 53, National Center for Education Statistics.

The number of bachelor's degrees earned by black and Hispanic graduates increased from 19 percent of the total nationally in 2009-10 to 23 percent in 2014-15. In Alabama, the number of bachelor's degrees earned by black and Hispanic graduates rose by 100 students but decreased to 25 percent of the total.



**Tuition and Required Fees  
Public Two-Year Colleges  
In-State Undergraduates, 2015-16**



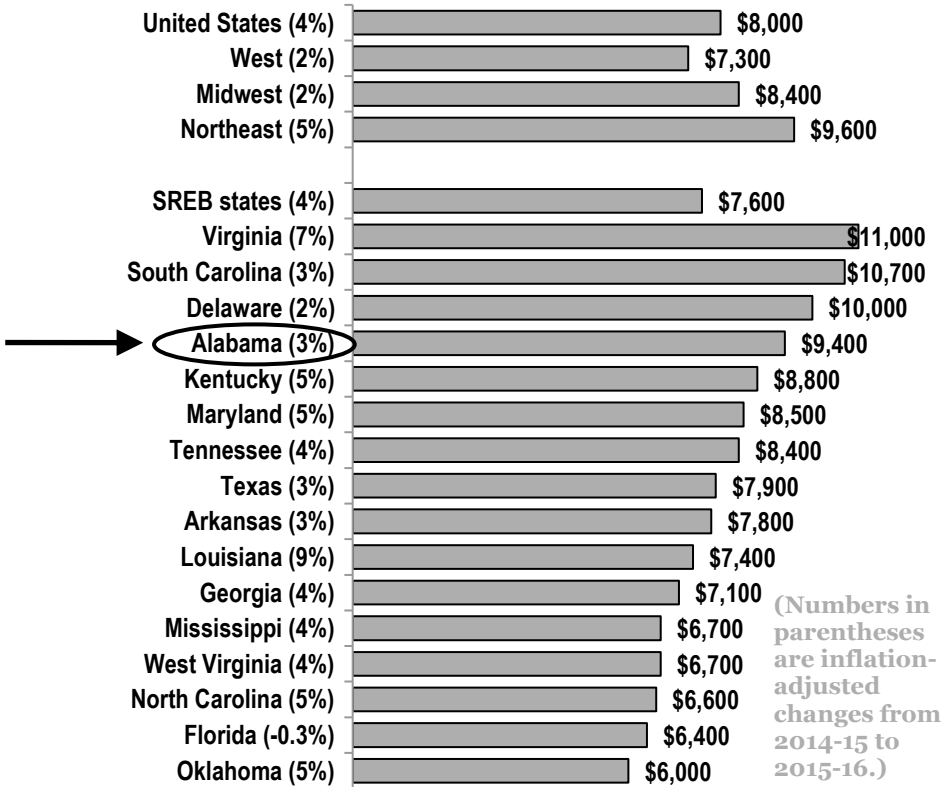
Note: Based on the academic-year Consumer Price Index, which rose 0.2 percent over the period.

Source: Table 62, SREB-State Data Exchange and National Center for Education Statistics.

Median annual tuition and required fees (often called sticker price) at public two-year colleges reached \$3,300 in SREB states in 2015-16. This was 3 percent more than in 2014-15 after adjusting for inflation. In Alabama, tuition and fees at public two-year colleges were \$4,300 — 1 percent higher than in 2014-15 after adjusting for inflation.



**Tuition and Required Fees  
Public Four-Year Colleges and Universities  
In-State Undergraduates, 2015-16**



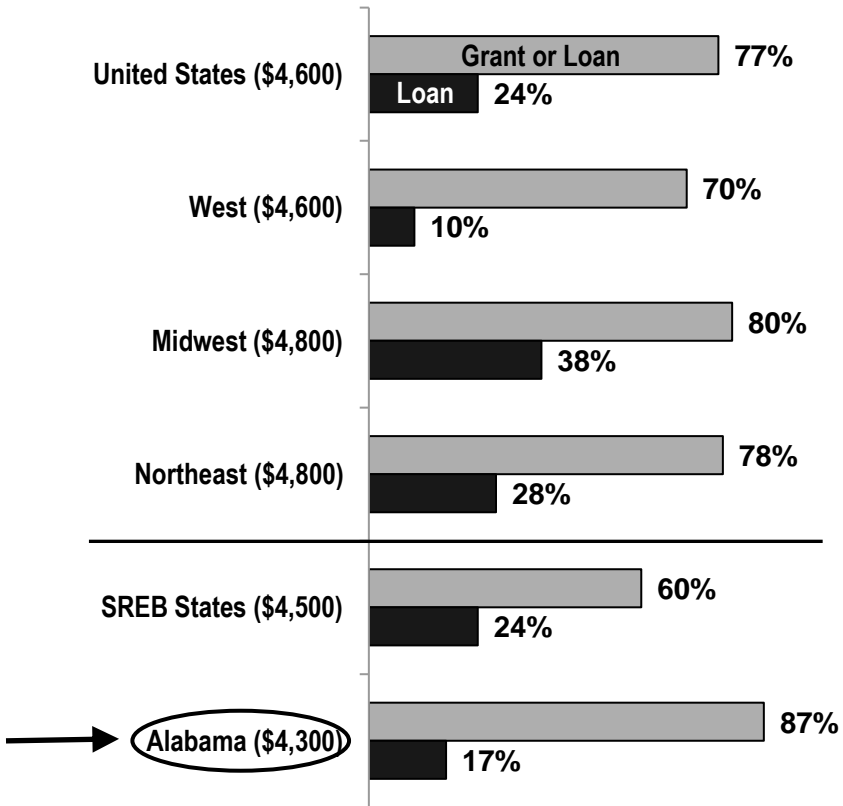
Note: Based on the academic-year Consumer Price Index, which rose 0.2 percent over the period.

Source: Table 62, SREB-State Data Exchange and National Center for Education Statistics.

The median annual cost for tuition and required fees (often called sticker price) was \$7,600 for public four-year colleges in the SREB region in 2015-16. This was 4 percent more than in 2014-15 after adjusting for inflation. In Alabama, tuition and fees at public four-year colleges were \$9,400 – an increase of 3 percent from 2014-15.



## Percentage of Freshmen With Grants or Loans Public Two-Year Colleges, 2014-15

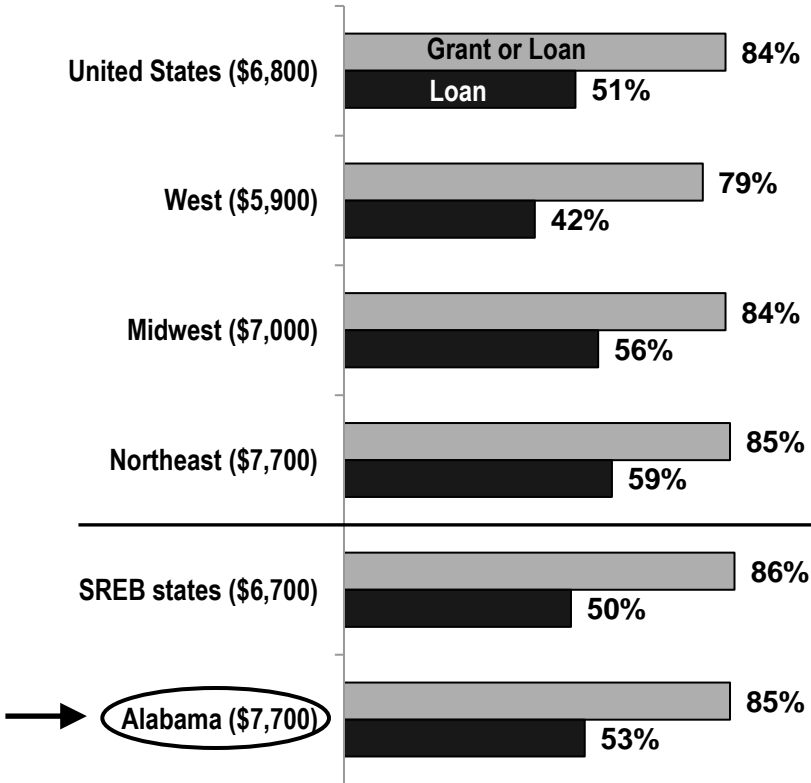


Note: Numbers in parentheses are average loan amounts.  
Source: Table 70, National Center for Education Statistics.

Nationally, 77 percent of first-time, full-time freshmen seeking degrees or certificates at public two-year colleges received a financial aid grant, took out a student loan, or both, in 2014-15. Twenty-four percent took out loans. In Alabama, 87 percent had a grant, loan or both, and 17 percent had loans, which averaged \$4,300 that year.



**Percentage of Freshmen With  
Grants or Loans  
Public Four-Year Colleges and Universities  
2014-15**

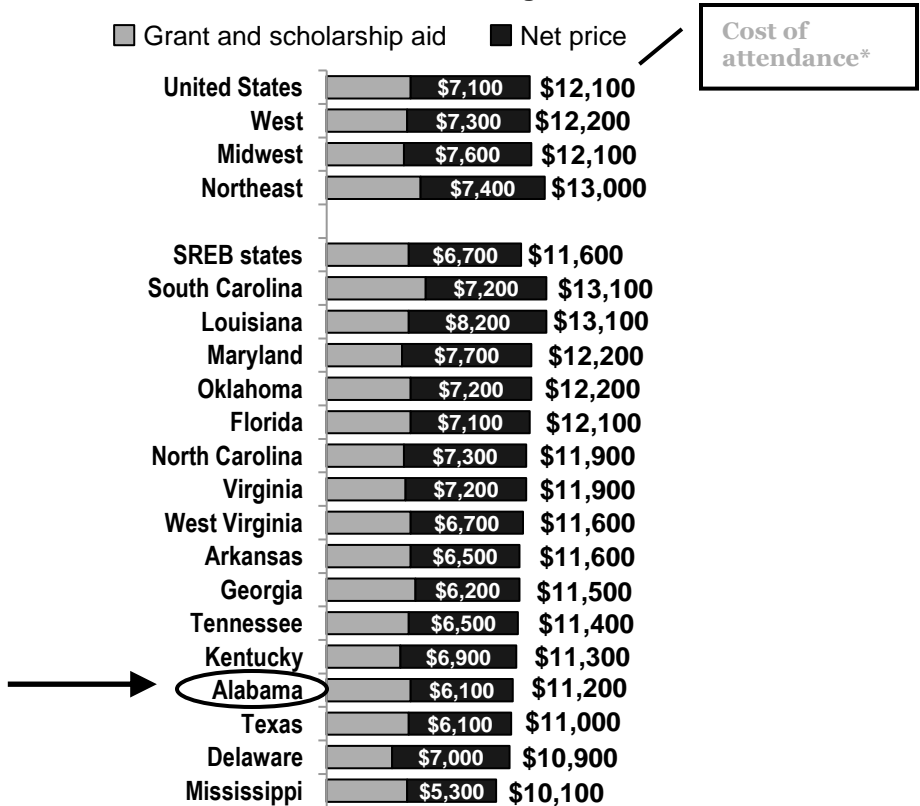


Note: Numbers in parentheses are average loan amounts.  
Source: Table 69, National Center for Education Statistics.

Nationally, 84 percent of first-time, full-time freshmen seeking undergraduate degrees at public four-year colleges or universities received a financial aid grant, took out a student loan, or both, in 2014-15. Fifty-one percent took out loans. In Alabama, the percentages were 85 and 53, respectively. The average loan amount for Alabama freshmen taking out loans that year was \$7,700.



## Cost of Attendance and Net Price After Grant Aid Public Two-Year Colleges, 2014-15



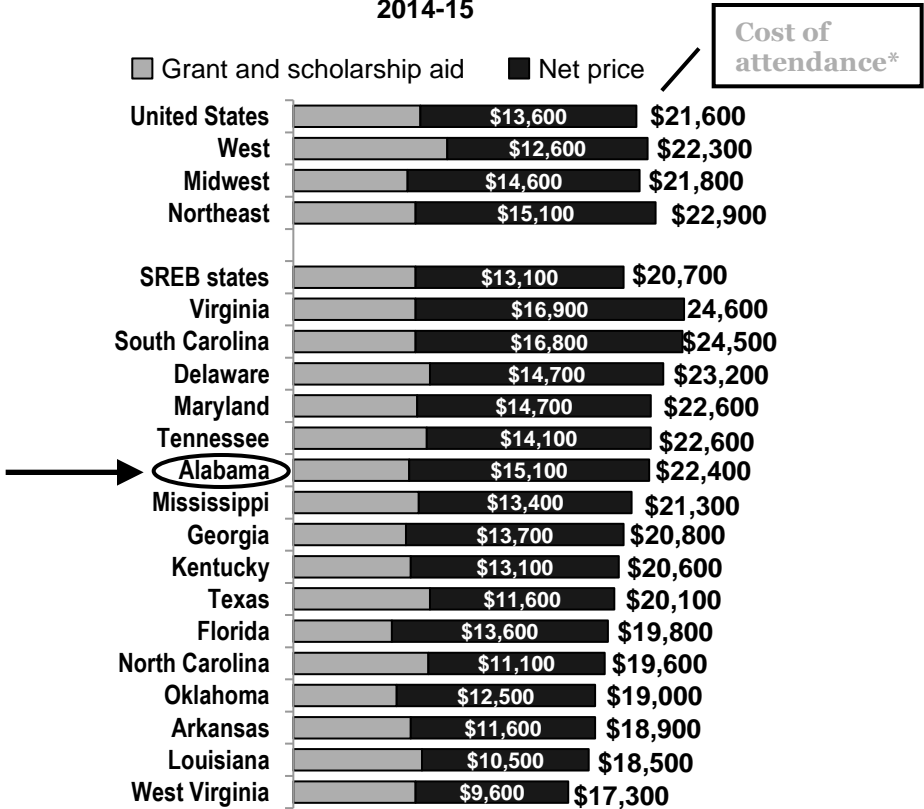
\*Cost of attendance consists of tuition/fees, books/supplies, room/board and other expenses. Figures are for full-time, degree-/certificate-seeking undergraduates who paid in-state or in-district tuition and received government or institutional scholarships or grants.

Source: Table 71, National Center for Education Statistics.

The average net price of college (cost of attendance minus grant and scholarship aid) for full-time, in-state undergraduates at public two-year colleges in the SREB region in 2014-15 was \$6,700, the lowest of any U.S. region. In Alabama, the net price at public two-year colleges was \$6,100.



## Cost of Attendance and Net Price After Grant Aid Public Four-Year Colleges and Universities 2014-15



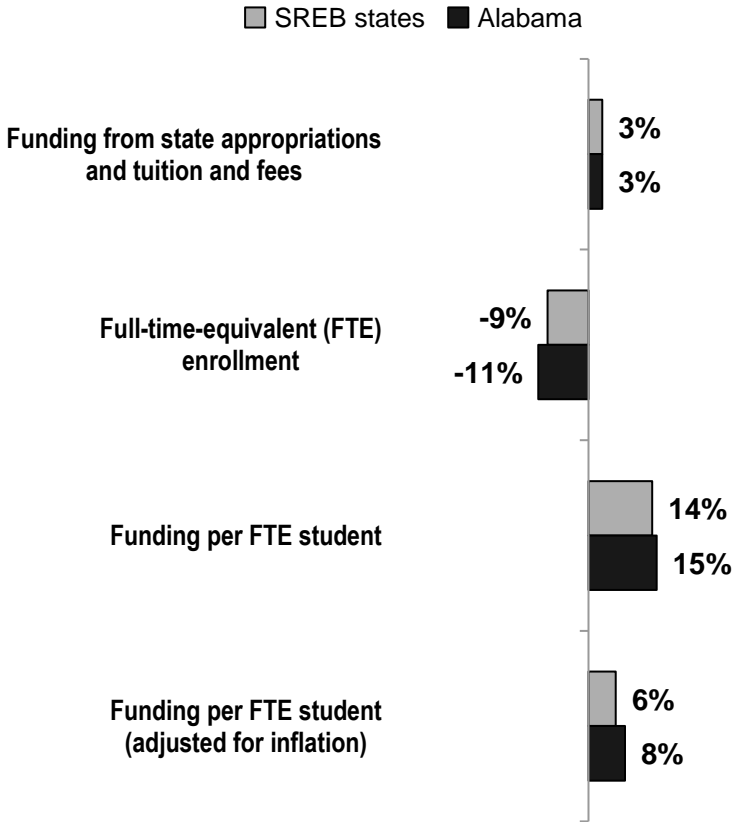
\*Cost of attendance consists of tuition/fees, books/supplies, room/board and other expenses. Figures are for full-time, degree-/certificate-seeking undergraduates who paid in-state or in-district tuition and received government or institutional scholarships or grants.

Source: Table 71, National Center for Education Statistics.

The average net price of college (cost of attendance minus grant and scholarship aid) for full-time, in-state undergraduates at public four-year colleges and universities in the SREB region in 2014-15 was \$13,100. In Alabama, the net price at public four-year colleges was \$15,100.



## Enrollment and Funding Changes Public Two-Year Colleges, 2012-13 to 2015-16



Note: Based on the Higher Education Price Index (HEPI), which increased by 7.1 percent from 2012-13 to 2015-16.

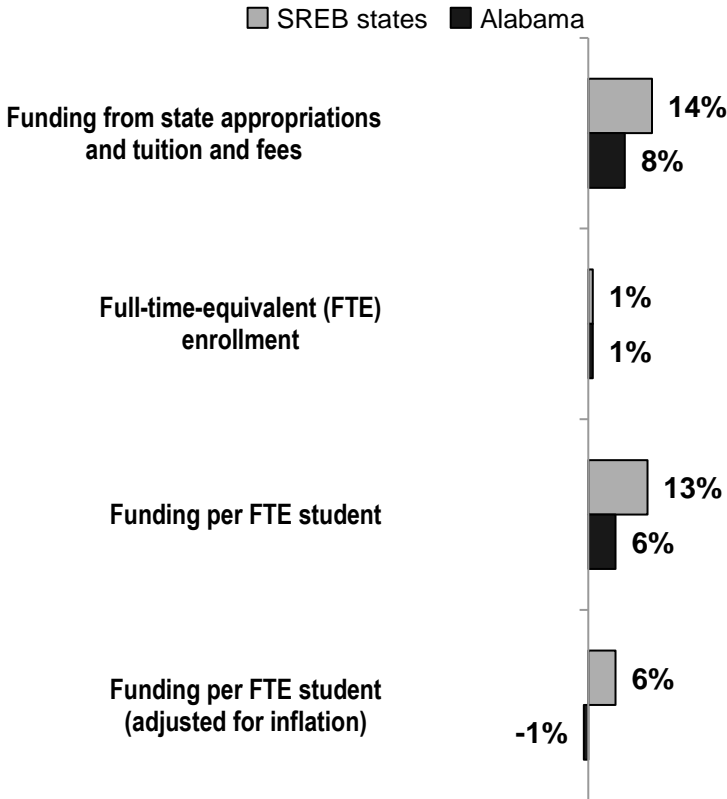
Source: Table 89, SREB-State Data Exchange.

In Alabama in 2015-16, funding from state appropriations and tuition and fees per FTE student for public two-year colleges was \$8,800 — 8 percent (\$700) more than in 2012-13 after adjusting for inflation. The regional average funding per FTE student was \$7,800 — 6 percent (\$500) more than in 2012-13 after adjusting for inflation.





## Enrollment and Funding Changes Public Four-Year Colleges and Universities 2012-13 to 2015-16



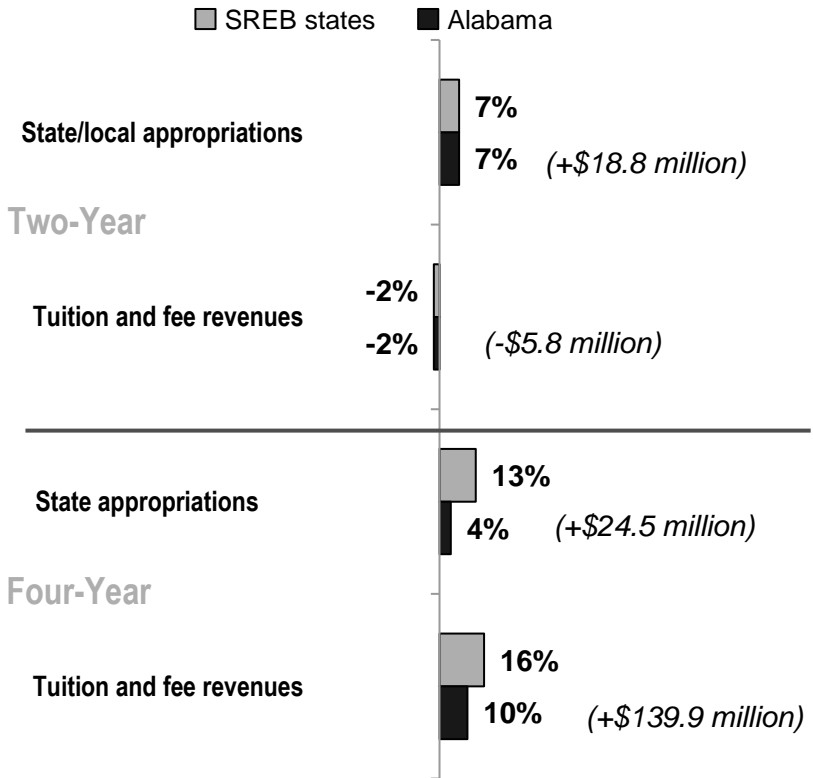
Note: Based on the Higher Education Price Index (HEPI), which increased by 7.1 percent from 2012-13 to 2015-16.

Source: Table 89, SREB-State Data Exchange.

In Alabama in 2015-16, funding from state appropriations and tuition and fees per FTE student for public four-year colleges and universities was \$17,600 — 1 percent (\$100) less than in 2012-13 after adjusting for inflation. The regional average funding per FTE student was \$16,100 — nearly \$900 more than the 2012-13 average after adjusting for inflation.



## Change in Appropriations and Tuition Public Colleges and Universities 2012-13 to 2015-16



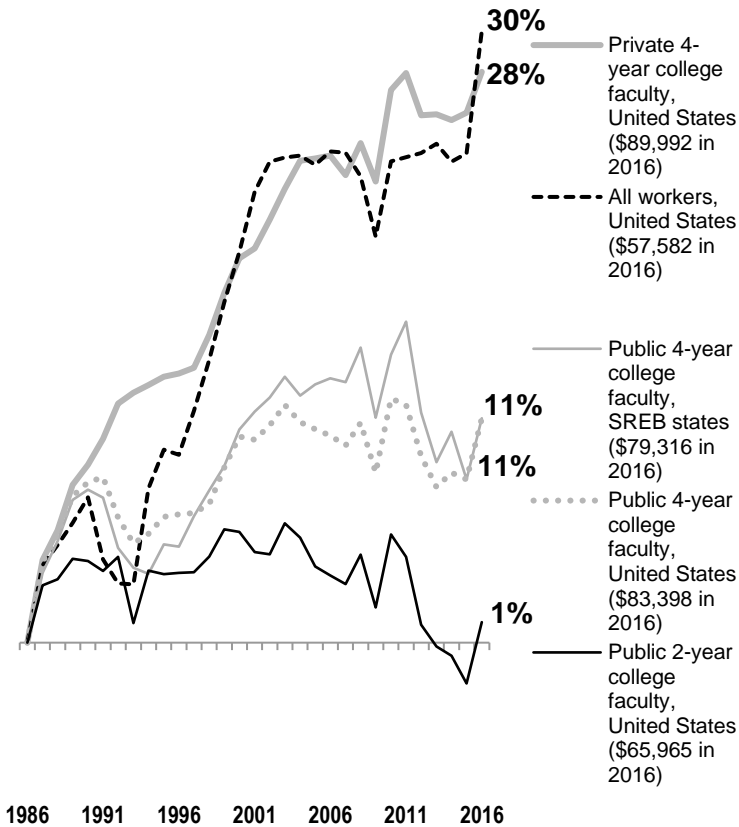
Note: Amounts in parentheses are changes from 2012-13 to 2015-16.  
Sources: Tables 89-90, SREB-State Data Exchange.

At Alabama's public two-year colleges, state/local appropriations rose \$18.8 million from 2012-13 to 2015-16, while tuition and fee revenue decreased \$5.8 million — for a net funding increase of \$13 million.

At Alabama's public four-year colleges, state appropriations increased \$24.5 million from 2012-13 to 2015-16, while tuition and fee revenue increased \$139.9 million — for a net funding increase of \$164.4 million.



## Changes in Annual Pay (adjusted for inflation)

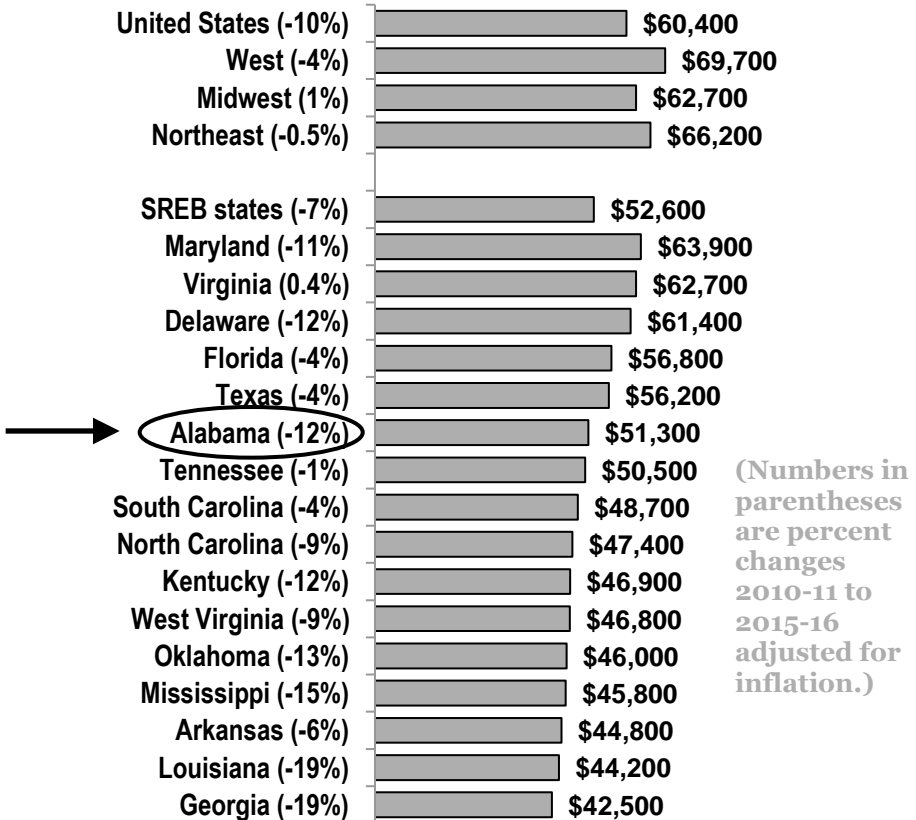


Sources: SREB-State Data Exchange, National Center for Education Statistics and U.S. Census Bureau.

College faculty have higher levels of education and higher pay than American workers overall, but public sector faculty salaries have not grown as fast when compared with growth of the average American wage. Faculty salaries at public four-year colleges in the SREB region were 11 percent higher in 2016 than in 1986 when adjusted for inflation. The average increase for all workers nationwide was 30 percent.



## Faculty Salaries Public Two-Year Colleges, 2015-16



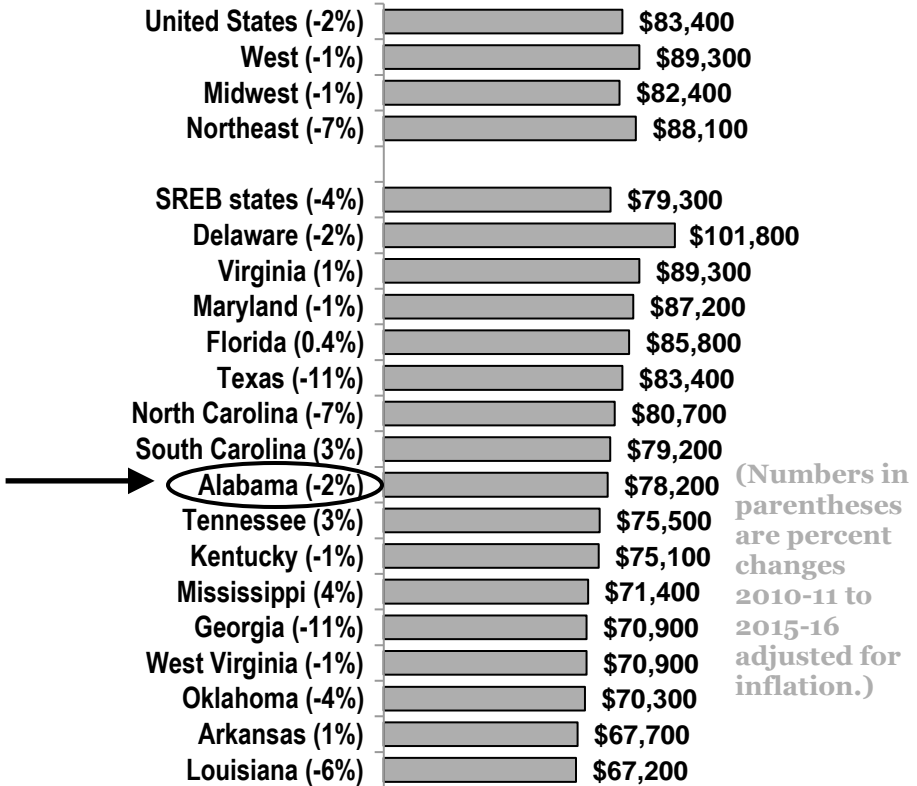
Note: Inflation adjustment based on the academic-year Consumer Price Index, which rose 9.5 percent over the period.

Source: Table 84, SREB-State Data Exchange and National Center for Education Statistics.

From 2010-11 to 2015-16, the SREB region's average two-year faculty salary, when adjusted for inflation, decreased 7 percent to \$52,600 and remained lower than the national average of \$60,400. The average salary at public two-year colleges in Alabama declined 12 percent to \$51,300.



## Faculty Salaries Public Four-Year Colleges and Universities 2015-16



Note: Inflation adjustment based on the academic-year Consumer Price Index, which rose 9.5 percent over the period.

Source: Table 83, SREB-State Data Exchange and National Center for Education Statistics.

From 2010-11 to 2015-16, the SREB region's average four-year faculty salary decreased 4 percent to \$79,300 when adjusted for inflation, and remained below the national average of \$83,400. The average salary at public four-year colleges in Alabama fell 2 percent to \$78,200.



## The College Completion Challenge

*Improving Education Attainment. Maintaining Affordability. Preparing the Workforce*

The median annual tuition and fees for the SREB region rose once again in 2015-16. The median annual tuition and fees for in-state undergraduates at public four-year institutions in 2015-16 was \$7,632, an increase of 4 percent over 2014-15, adjusting for inflation. At two-year institutions, the median annual tuition and fees for in-state undergraduates was \$3,347 in 2015-16, a 3 percent increase over the prior year. Not all SREB states experienced tuition and fee increases. Florida's \$6,368 annual tuition and required fees represented no increase, after adjusting for inflation. Louisiana, however, experienced a 9 percent increase, after adjusting for inflation.

The increases in tuition and fees outpaced rises in incomes, causing them to add to the overall cost of college. SREB states, however, seem to be taking steps to control the impact of rising tuition and fees. In-state undergraduate tuition and fees at public four-year colleges and universities in the SREB region accounted for 13 percent of annual family income for those in the middle quintile, less than a 1 percentage point increase over 2014-15. In comparison, tuition and fees accounted for 46 percent of annual family income for low-income families, a 1 percentage point decrease from 2014-15.

Although nationwide student loans represent a lower percentage of total student aid than grants and scholarships, the percentage of first-time, full-time students who took out loans increased about 1 percentage point for both four-year and two-year colleges between 2009-10 and 2014-15. In addition, the percentage of college graduates with student loan debt has increased 4 percentage points between 2009 and 2014 and the average amount owed increased over 33 percent. Thus, students are continuing to take out loans to pay for their college education and, as a result, accumulating more debt. For some, the worry about accumulating this amount of **debt outweighs the benefits of a four-year degree.**

### State support for four-year institutions foreshadows start to rebound

State support for public four-year institutions in the SREB region might be reversing course. It increased 5 percent from 2014-15 to 2015-16 and 13 percent between 2012-13 and 2015-16 for four-year institutions. Prior to that time, SREB four-year institutions had experienced a decline in state appropriations. Two-year colleges have also experienced an increase in state support, with over a 2 percent increase from 2014-15 to 2015-16 and an almost 7 percent rise from 2012-13 to 2015-16.

State funding for postsecondary education also varies by state. For example, state appropriations in Mississippi increased less than 1 percent from 2012-13 to 2016-17 when adjusted for inflation, while state funding in Florida rose 26 percent over the same period, also adjusting for inflation. Seven SREB states experienced decreases in state funding — Arkansas, Delaware, Kentucky, Louisiana, North Carolina, Oklahoma and West Virginia — during this period. The decreases ranged from less than 1 percent in Delaware to nearly 25 percent in Oklahoma, after adjusting for inflation.

While education attainment rates have not increased as quickly as policymakers had hoped they would when they set goals earlier in this decade, the signs of progress are evident. Projecting from rising K-12 enrollments in SREB states, increasing enrollments for higher education are likely on the horizon. Stronger high school graduation rates than ever for SREB states boosts the effect of that enrollment growth and means more students will have met the basic college entrance criteria. Better progression rates mean students are staying in post-secondary programs longer. If states can find solutions for the stranglehold that the high cost of college has on students and their families, the education attainment rates that states set as goals might be reachable after all.

Copies of the *Fact Book* are available from the SREB publications office. All of the databases for the *SREB Fact Book* are continuously updated as new comparative data are available on the SREB website: [www.sreb.org/data](http://www.sreb.org/data). The website also contains online editions of the state *Featured Facts* reports for each of the 16 SREB states. For more information about the *SREB Fact Book on Higher Education*, contact Susan Lounsbury, director of Education Data Services, at (404) 875-9211 or [Susan.Lounsbury@SREB.org](mailto:Susan.Lounsbury@SREB.org).