



## Introduction

This 2015 edition of the *SREB Fact Book on Higher Education* continues a long tradition begun in 1956 of presenting comparative data for colleges and universities in the SREB region in a national context. This edition is the third Fact Book to include data for all 50 states and the District of Columbia, organized into geographical regions defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. This expanded, national format provides leaders in both education and government with information to help them identify emerging trends, evaluate progress and make informed judgments about the impact of state and institutional policies.

Included are detailed national, regional and state data on topics state leaders rely on to inform their decisions, including: education attainment and demographics; economic indicators; elementary and secondary school enrollments; high school graduation rates; employment and unemployment; government revenues and expenditures; college-going rates; first-year college student persistence rates; enrollments by age, sex, racial/ethnic group and full-time or part-time attendance; undergraduate, graduate and professional-level enrollments; e-learning trends; graduation and progression rates and degrees granted; tuition and fees; financial aid to students; student debt; average salaries of faculty and administrators; funding for higher education; and college and university revenues and expenditures.

The 2015 edition also includes data on college completion and affordability. You will find valuable data on postsecondary career and technical education certificates and diplomas, degrees awarded by online-only colleges and universities, college credits taken by high school students, time- and credits-to-degree for bachelor's- and associate-degree graduates, and education attainment comparisons for different categories of the working-age population, in addition to the traditional report on adults ages 25 and over. "Net price" of college for students by family income level, cost of attendance, postsecondary graduation rates and student-to-faculty ratios are also reported.

These expanded data collections answer questions about the effectiveness of state, local and institutional policies and make it possible for state leaders to track their state's progress toward SREB's Challenge to Lead 2020 goals for education. Extensive national tables show where your state stands on critical issues related to the goals, such as:

### **How the state compares on achievement in education and careers:**

- Are the percentages of residents who have graduated from high school, college and professional school adequate for economic competitiveness and overall progress?
- What percentages of recent high school graduates and older students enroll in postsecondary education?
- How does the state compare in personal income levels, per capita wealth, employment growth, and the mix of industries and unemployment rates?
- How many students from each category of race/ethnicity earn degrees or certificates?
- How well do students persist and progress through college?
- How long does it take different types of students to complete degrees?
- How many graduates are there in important fields of study?

---

### Whether cost is a barrier to further education:

- Are the costs to attend universities, colleges, and technical institutes or colleges in line with students' and families' ability to pay?
- Does my state support adequate and appropriate amounts and types of student financial aid?

### Whether state financial support for education matches the state's needs and ability to pay:

- Is tax revenue growth in line with personal income growth and with the demand for government services?
- Is per student funding sufficient for universities, colleges, and technical institutes or colleges to achieve what is expected of them?
- Do state and local budgets devote adequate percentages to education and other major priorities? Are these budgets responding appropriately to changing needs for services?
- Is there a proper balance among college revenues between those from state and local appropriations and those from tuition and fees?
- Do colleges balance their spending properly among instruction, research, public service, academic and administrative support, and student scholarships?

While data on higher education have become more reliable and comparable over the years, comparisons among states should always be viewed carefully. Readers should take into account the many differences among states that can affect comparisons and rankings. You are encouraged to contact the SREB-State Data Exchange agencies in Appendix B for state-specific perspectives on trends in higher education.

SREB welcomes suggestions and comments about the *Fact Book*. For those who are interested in doing their own analysis, the SREB website at [www.sreb.org/data](http://www.sreb.org/data) also provides access to much of the data used to create the graphs and tables found in the *Fact Book*.