



GENERAL REPORT

March 2024

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Analysis: Stacking General Education Awards

In Utah, earning a general education certificate or an associate degree increases the likelihood of earning a bachelor’s degree. This analysis uses data from Utah’s public higher education institutions, tracking students who first earned a general education certificate or associate degree in the 2016-17 academic through the 2022-23 academic year. All students included in this analysis earned a bachelor’s degree.

Key Findings

- From this cohort, 45.0% earned a bachelor’s degree after earning a general education certificate or an associate degree.
- Males and those who earned an associate degree first were more likely to earn a bachelor’s degree.
- Black/African Americans were less likely to earn a bachelor’s degree after earning a general education certificate or an associate degree.

Analysis

From this cohort, 45.0% earned a general education certificate or associate degree from one of the eight public degree-granting institutions in the 2016-17 academic year before earning a bachelor’s degree. Most were female (55.2%, 44.8% male) and white (82.3%). Ten percent were Latinx/Hispanic, and the remaining 7.7% were Black, indigenous, or people of color.

For bachelor’s degree earners, most earned an associate degree (88.7%; 14.0% general education certificate earners), and 24.0% earned multiple certificates or certificates *and* an associate degree. Students tended to earn their bachelor’s degree at the same institution they earned the first award. Most who earned a bachelor’s degree (58.9%) enrolled initially as full-time students compared to the 41.1% who enrolled as part-time.

Factors predicting whether students would stack awards included being male, first award, GPA, and earning an associate degree. Male students were 1.3 times more likely to pursue a bachelor’s degree than female students. Students who first earned a certificate or an associate degree were 1.8 times more likely to pursue a bachelor’s degree than those who earned a certificate. Black/African American students were 0.7 times less likely than white students to pursue a bachelor’s degree. Students with higher GPAs at the end of their first award were 1.2 times more likely to seek a bachelor’s degree.

Table 1. Percentage of bachelor degrees from students who earn an associate degree or general education certificate. Percentages are summed by total bachelor degrees earned.

First Award	Bachelor’s Degree		
	BA	BS	Other
Associate of Arts	2.7%	4.4%	< 1.0%
Associate of Science	5.4%	74.9%	2.1%
Certificate	< 1.0%	9.2%	< 1.0%

* Other includes degrees such as Bachelor of Integrated Studies and Bachelor of Undergraduate Studies.