



The Utah System of Higher Education at 50

The year 2019 marks the 50th anniversary of the creation of the Utah System of Higher Education. As state policymakers and education leaders celebrate this important event, this issue brief looks back on USHE's journey.

Background

In 1969, the Utah Legislature created the Utah State System of Higher Education with a single board to govern the new System which consisted of nine member institutions:

- University of Utah (1850)
- Utah State University (1888)
- Snow College (1888)
- Weber State College (1889)
- Southern Utah State College (1897)
- Dixie Junior College (1911)
- College of Eastern Utah (1937)
- Utah Technical College at Provo (1941)
- Utah Technical College at Salt Lake (1947)

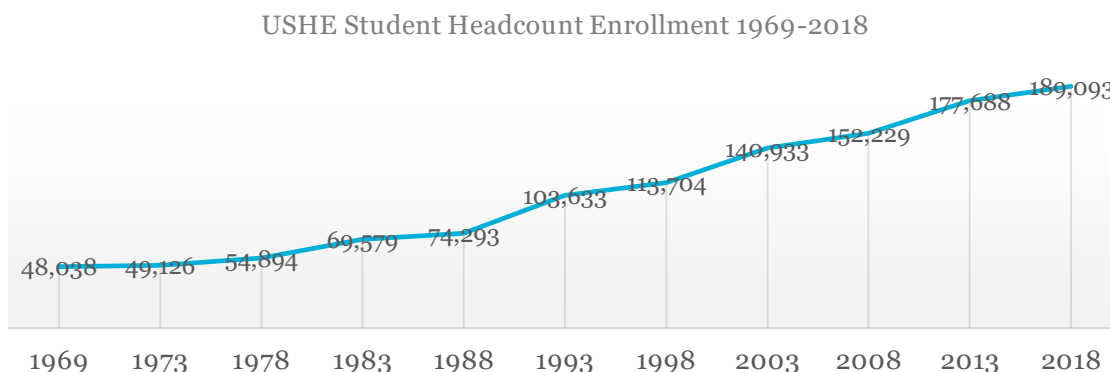
In 1987, Utah Technical College at Salt Lake became Salt Lake Community College. In 1991, Southern Utah State College and Weber State College became Southern Utah University and Weber State University, respectively. However, it took Utah Technical College at Provo and Dixie Junior College quite some effort to reach university status. In 1987, Utah Technical College at Provo's name changed to Utah Valley Community College, which changed again to Utah Valley State College in 1993. In 2008, the institution underwent another mission and name change to Utah Valley University. Similarly, Dixie Junior College's name changed to Dixie College in 1972 and then to Dixie State College of Utah in 2000. In 2013, the Utah State Legislature expanded the role of the institution to become a university.

On the other hand, the College of Eastern Utah joined Utah State University in 2010 as a regional campus and is currently called Utah State University Eastern. Now, the Utah System of Higher Education has eight member institutions including two research universities (University of Utah and Utah State University), four regional universities (Weber State University, Southern Utah University, Utah Valley

University, and Dixie State University), and two comprehensive community colleges (Snow College and Salt Lake Community College).

Student enrollment

Student enrollment has been growing steadily at Utah’s public colleges and universities over the past 50 years. In fall 1969, USHE had a total headcount enrollment of 48,038¹. The number went up to 110,594 (an increase of 130%) in fall 1994 and climbed up to 189,093 (an increase of nearly 300%) in fall 2018 (see appendix Table 1 for details).

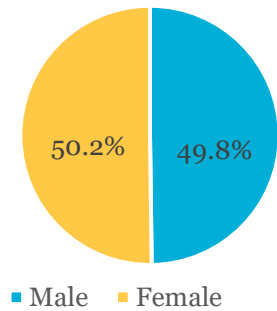


In fall 1994, male students made up 50.3% of the student population at Utah’s public colleges and universities, while female students made up 48.8%. By fall 2018, the gender distribution at USHE institutions had slightly changed, with female students making up 50.2% of the student body and male students accounting for 49.8%. This is quite different from the national trend. According to the National Center for Education Statistics², in fall 2017, female students made up 56% of total undergraduate enrollment and male students made up 44%, with a gender gap of 12%.

1. Fall 1969 headcount enrollment number was originally reported as 40,409 in the First Annual Report to the Governor and Legislature by Utah State Board of Higher Education (1969-1970) but was later changed to 48,038 in the Tenth Annual Report to the Governor and the Legislature by Utah State Board of Regents (1978-79).

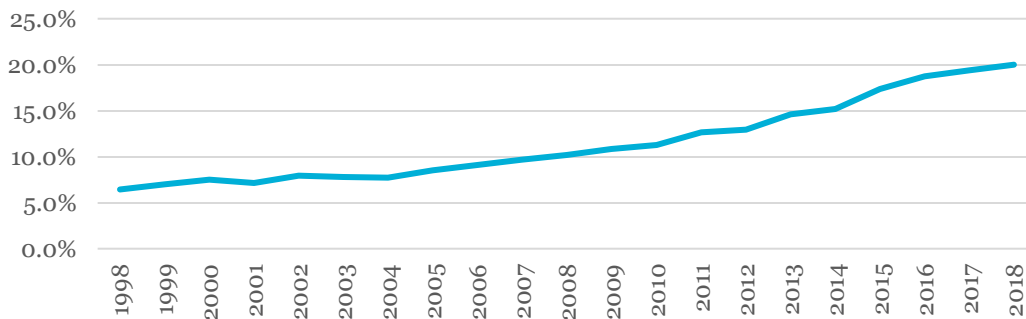
2. National Center for Education Statistics. “Undergraduate Enrollment (2019),” Accessed July 26, 2019. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cha.asp.

Fall 2018 Student Enrollment by Gender



More significantly, USHE institutions are becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. In fall 1998, only 6.4% of students at Utah’s public colleges and universities were students of color. That percentage rose to 10.2% in fall 2008 and climbed to 20.0% in fall 2018. Correspondingly, between 1998 and 2018, the percentage of students enrolled in USHE institutions who were White decreased from 82.9% to 73.6%.

Percentage of Students of Color Enrolled at USHE Institutions

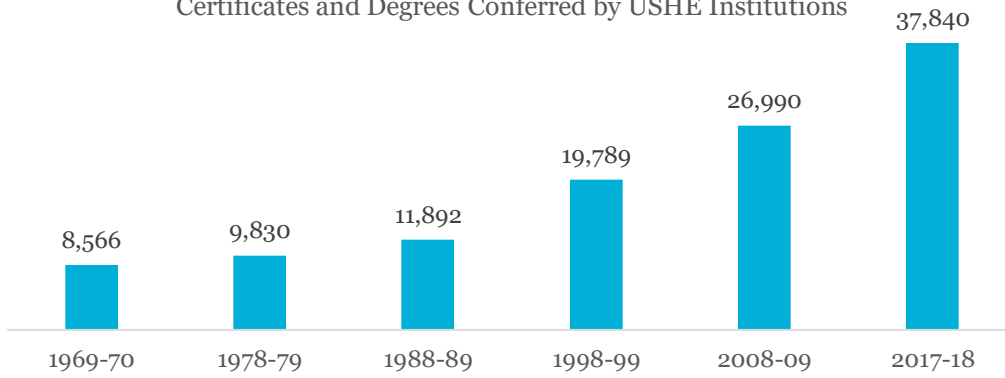


Specifically, between fall 1998 and fall 2018, the number of students enrolled in USHE institutions who were Hispanic increased by nearly 600%, from 3,140 to 21,900. The number of Black students increased by nearly 300%, from 655 to 2,614. In contrast, during this time period the number of Asian/Pacific Islander, White, and American Indian/Alaska Native students increased by 148%, 48%, and 28%, respectively.

Degrees and Awards

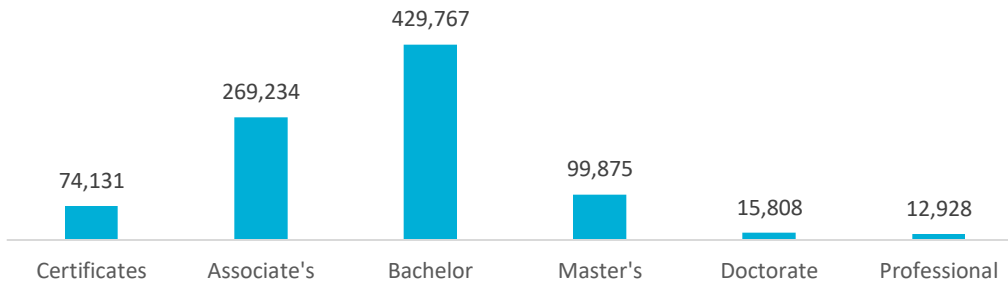
The number of postsecondary certificates and degrees conferred by Utah’s public higher education institutions has risen dramatically over the past 50 years. In 1969-70, USHE institutions conferred 8,566 postsecondary certificates and degrees. That number surged to 37,840 in 2017-18, representing an increase of 342% during this period. Between 1969-70 and 2017-18, Utah’s public colleges and universities conferred altogether 901,743 postsecondary certificates and degrees.

Certificates and Degrees Conferred by USHE Institutions



Specifically, between 1969-70 and 2017-18, USHE institutions conferred 74,131 certificates, 269,234 associate’s degrees, 429,767 bachelor’s degrees, 99,875 master’s degrees, 15,808 doctoral degrees, and 12,928 first-professional degrees.

Number of Certificates and Degrees Conferred by USHE Institutions by Level between 1969-70 and 2017-18



In summary, since 1969, USHE has worked tirelessly “to provide high quality academic, professional, and applied technology learning opportunities designed to advance the intellectual, cultural, social, and economic well-being of the state and its people.” Over the past five decades, student enrollment has grown steadily, USHE campuses have become more racially and ethnically diverse, and the number of postsecondary certificates and degrees awarded by USHE institutions has risen dramatically.