

**To:** Institutions of Higher Education  
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**Date:** January 11, 2024  
**Subject:** Preliminary Fall 2023 Enrollment Data Available

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The Office of the Secretary of Higher Education is pleased to share the Fall 2023 Preliminary Enrollment Report, infographic, and interactive data dashboard. Please see the following attached files:

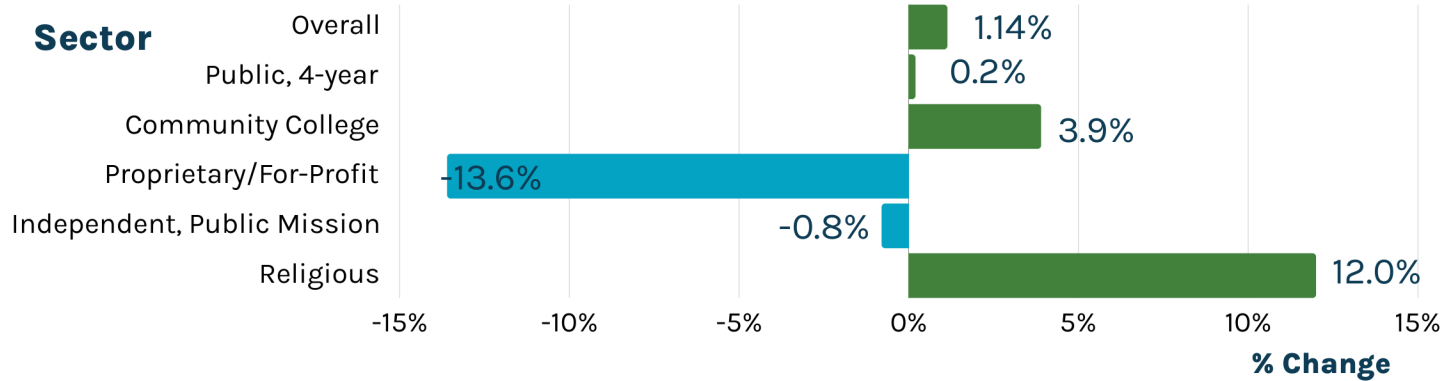
- Preliminary Enrollment Report Fall 2023: Comprehensive preliminary fall 2023 enrollment data and trends
- Preliminary Fall 2023 Enrollment Infographic: Changes in preliminary fall 2023 enrollment compared with fall 2022 data

Additionally, the Fall 2023 Preliminary Enrollment Data Dashboard, which summarizes several data trends, is available [here](#).

Thank you for your collaboration and support of our preliminary Fall Enrollment data collection efforts. Without your expertise and communication, this could not be possible.



### Statewide Student Enrollment Changes Final Fall 2022 vs. Preliminary Fall 2023



**1.14%** ↑ Overall increase in enrollment between Fall 2022 and Fall 2023 is slightly below the overall 2.0% increase nationally

#### Undergraduate

Total Undergraduate % Change 1.11%



##### All NJ Institutions Enrollment

**Full-Time Students**

↑ 1.9%

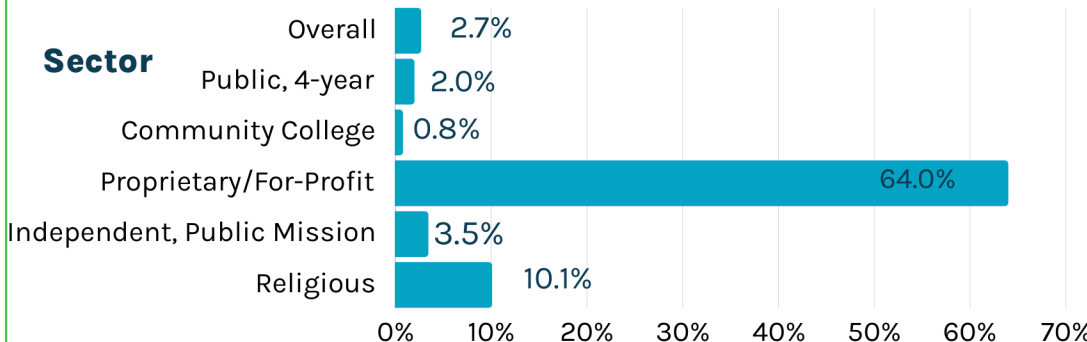
**Part-Time Students**

↓ -0.77%

#### Graduate

- Graduate enrollment for all NJ IHEs increased by 0.32%, slower growth from last year
- ↑ Graduate enrollment at public 4-year institutions increased by 1.8%.
- ↑ Graduate Full-time enrollment increased by 2.8%
- ↓ Graduate Part-time enrollments declined by 2.9%

### Undergraduate New First-Time Full-Time Enrollment Changes Final Fall 2022 vs. Preliminary Fall 2023



↓ **-4.2%**  
First-Time, Full-Time Enrollment since Fall 2019

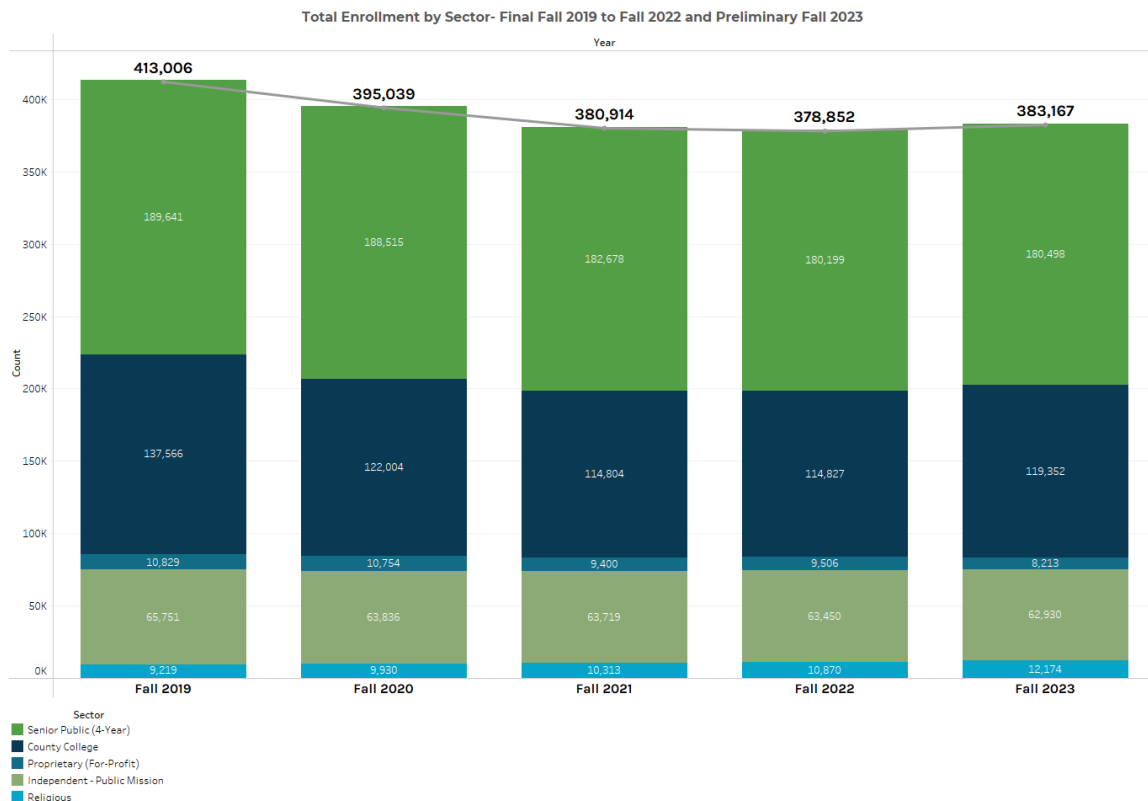
## Fall 2023 Preliminary Enrollment at Colleges/Universities in New Jersey

The following report provides a first look at the New Jersey higher education enrollment trends for the fall 2023 semester. Findings are based on the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE)'s initial review of preliminary enrollment data from all colleges and universities in the State of New Jersey. Finalized data are reported through the federal Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Fall Enrollment Survey in April 2024.

Overall, fall 2023 enrollments at New Jersey colleges and universities held relatively steady with a slight increase compared to the prior year. Specifically:

- Total fall 2023 enrollment in New Jersey Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) increased by 1.14%, after just about 11 years of consecutive enrollment declines since fall 2011;
- Two-year public institutions (community colleges) reversed more than a decade of declining enrollment with a second consecutive year of enrollment increase (fall 2022 to fall 2023 was 3.9%);
- Total enrollment at senior (four-year) public institutions increased modestly at 0.2%;
- Enrollment in the private non-profit sector (independent, public-mission) decreased slightly (-0.8%);
- Enrollment at independent, proprietary (for-profit) institutions declined the most at -13.6%; and
- The Religious sector (seminaries and yeshivas) saw a 12% increase in enrollment.

Figure 1



Source: OSHE Preliminary Enrollment NJIPEDS Form #20

The relative flattening of enrollments between fall 2021 through fall 2023 across sectors follows a trend of declines in enrollment since fall 2017, which include two years of accelerated declines (in fall 2020 and fall 2021) resulting from the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since fall 2019, enrollment at four-year public institutions declined by 4.8%; two-year publics declined 13.2%; and the independent, public-mission institutions declined by 4.3%. Proprietary, degree-granting institutions had the steepest decline at 24.2%, while religious institutions (specialty yeshivas, seminaries, etc.) increased enrollment by 32.1%.<sup>1</sup> Overall, enrollment at NJ institutions of higher education has declined by 7.2% from fall 2019 (413,006 total enrollment) to fall 2023 (383,167 total enrollment).

New Jersey enrollment trends seem to mirror those at the national level. Fall 2023 national estimates show total enrollment grew by 2.1%. This increase was driven by 4.4% growth in Community Colleges since last fall based on the National Student Clearinghouse ([NSC first look at fall 2023](#)). The complementary findings of the NSC First Look report and the New Jersey preliminary fall 2023 enrollment data indicate that the trend of decline is slowing and possibly reversing. This is evidenced by Figure 1, which shows that New Jersey enrollment declines shrank each year since fall 2020, until an overall increase in fall 2023. Nationally, proprietary four-year institutions have been hit hardest, with undergraduate enrollment declining by 2.4% in fall 2022 but with early national estimates suggesting an increase of 6.4% in the sector in fall 2023. Conversely, New Jersey proprietary institutions saw the largest one-year decline of 24.2%. The finalized fall 2023 data for New Jersey may show a different trend at proprietary institutions, especially when considering the national rise in enrollment at these institutions.

Additionally, the NSC First Look report shows an increase in earned short-term credentials where for-profit providers are heavily over-represented, which further suggests interest in matriculation at these institutions. Proprietary institutions are also more likely to have alternative academic calendars and rolling enrollment, course, and program start dates through the traditional 15/16 week fall semester where final enrollment will capture additional students that these preliminary numbers might not.

As is typically the case in New Jersey higher education, enrollment levels have varied by institution and within sectors from fall 2022 to fall 2023. As an example, Saint Peter's University saw a 7.1% increase while Pillar College saw a 4.7% decline. Atlantic Cape Community College and Bergen Community College saw increases of 9.8% and 5.6%, respectively, while Camden County College and Salem Community College saw 6.3% and 1.6% declines, respectively.

### **First Time Student Enrollment**

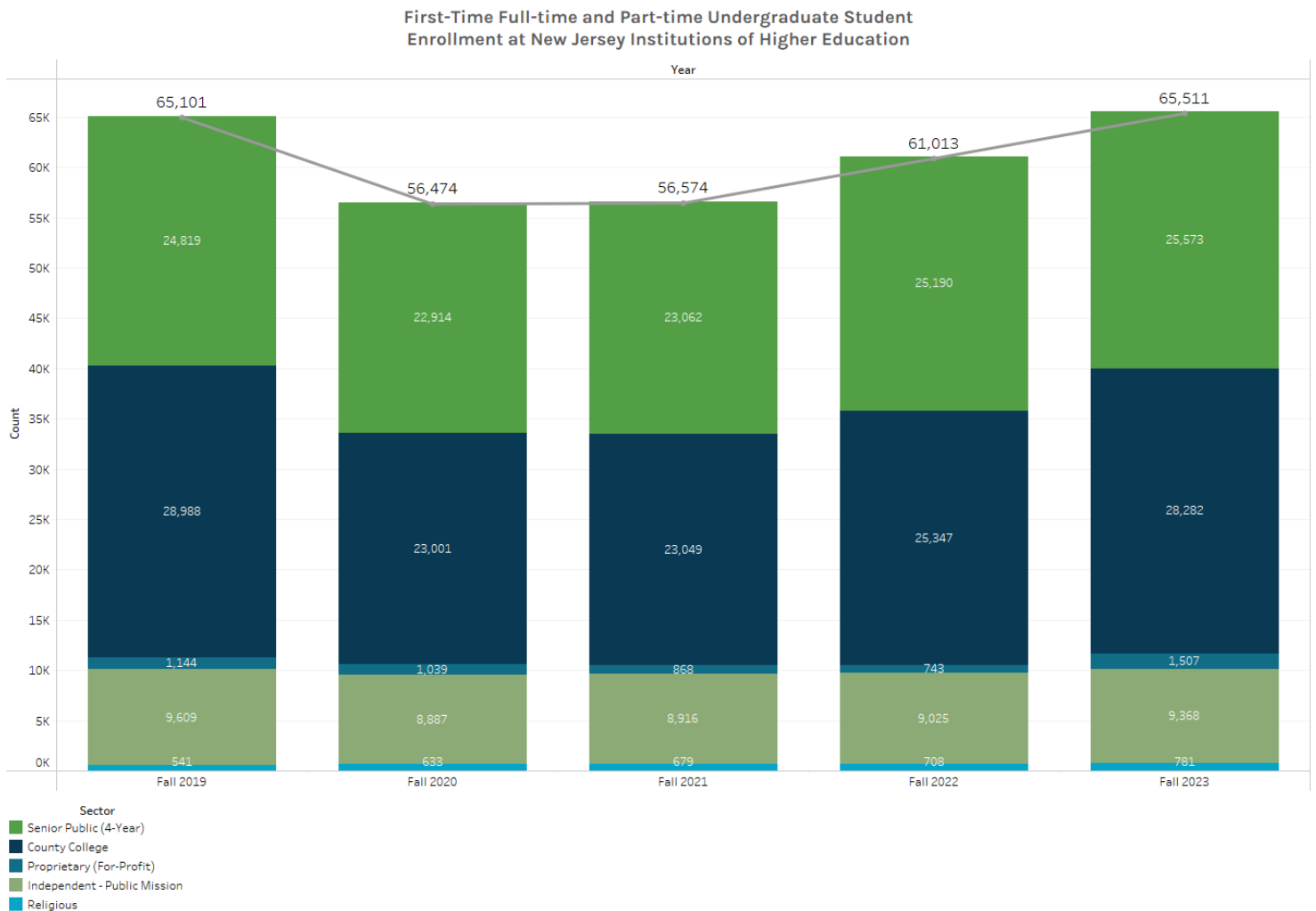
While there are many ways to disaggregate enrollment trends, one important dimension is first-time students—those just beginning their postsecondary career. This group is important because its changes may project future enrollment levels. If there is an increase in the number of first-time students and persistence rates hold steady, then many of those students will continue growing total enrollments in future semesters and years. Between fall 2021 and fall 2023, the number of first-time, full-time students grew by 5,206 across the state, an 11% increase. The largest percentage increase of first-time, full-time undergraduate students at public, four-year

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that during that time frame approximately 4 new yeshivas gained State licensure to operate as degree-granting institutions in the State of New Jersey

institutions was at the New Jersey Institute of Technology (22%), while the sector saw a 2% increase of first-time, full-time students for fall 2023.

**Figure 2**



Source: OSHE Preliminary Enrollment NJIPEDS Form #20

It is worth noting the strong growth of county college first-time enrollment, as this sector exhibited the second largest increase for the year for new first-time student enrollment gained 11.6% as seen in Figure 2 above. This figure far out-paces estimates of -0.2% decrease at community colleges nationally.

Overall, independent, public-mission colleges/universities in New Jersey had a slight (3.8%) increase of new first-time students. However, trends are disparate between institutions within the sector. Felician University and Drew University had the largest percentage increases, while Centenary University and Saint Elizabeth University saw decreases in first-time students.

As always, we invite readers to use OSHE’s interactive dashboards on the OSHE [research and data website](#). A special interactive dashboard with [preliminary fall 2023 enrollment data](#) is available to complement this written report. Analyzing the enrollment levels by other dimensions may provide

additional insights into the health of New Jersey's IHEs. Dashboard users can also compare federal IPEDS data over multiple years, track tuition and fees data for the last five academic years, observe New Jersey postsecondary degree trends, and explore other data.

## Conclusions

Numerous factors might explain differences in the direction of enrollment changes, from strong declines to strong increases. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted many aspects of our lives, and its resultant economic uncertainty still exists and may be influencing students' decisions to enroll and pursue a higher education. A few high-level observations from the preliminary fall 2023 data can provide context for these changes:

- 1.) First-time student enrollment has continued to rebound for the second year in a row, possibly due to a continued influx of students who delayed college enrollment during the pandemic.
- 2.) Community college enrollment slightly increased from fall 2021 to fall 2022, while strengthening that trend from fall 2022 to fall 2023. This second year of enrollment increase for community colleges in over a decade may be a sign of returning interest in workforce development and upskilling as the labor market continues to be in flux and shows some signs of tightening. In addition to increases in dual enrollment specifically at county colleges as evidenced by increases in part-time undergraduate enrollment.
- 3.) Encouraging news is that enrollment has rebounded from recent declines with an overall increase of about 1%. However, enrollment will continue to be a concern, especially given the sharp decline of high school graduates expected in 2025.
- 4.) Despite these concerns, educational attainment comes with economic and social benefits. College graduates earn higher wages, are more likely to have health insurance, pay taxes, vote and volunteer, and are less likely to rely on public assistance. The New Jersey Statewide Data System (NJSDS) recently released a [report](#) demonstrating the positive return on investment of higher education in New Jersey for both individuals and the State.

The Office of the Secretary of Higher Education of New Jersey will continually monitor higher education enrollment trends and provide updated reports and analyses as new data become available.

## Notes on Methodology

The OSHE NJIPEDS Form #20-Preliminary Enrollment asks institutions to capture enrollment counts prior to reporting the official enrollment record for the fall semester. This matters because the initial weeks of a semester are very much in flux as students can add or drop classes without penalty for a certain period. Thus, federally reported enrollment counts will differ from these preliminary estimates for many institutions —sometimes significantly.