

# Grade Increase

## Tracking Distance Education in the United States

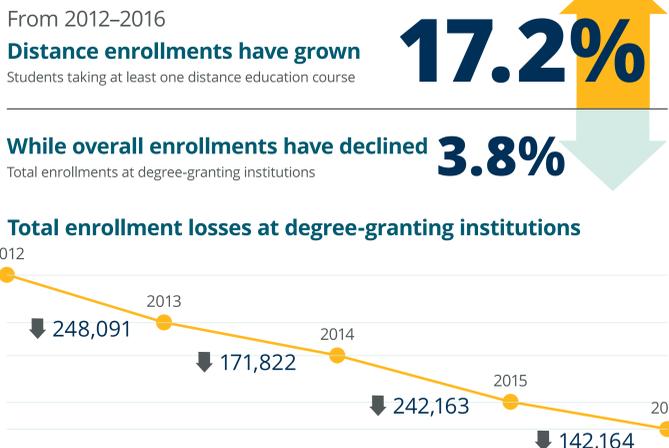
Julia E. Seaman, I. Elaine Allen, and Jeff Seaman  
Babson Survey Research Group



In 2016, higher ed **distance enrollments increased for the fourteenth straight year**, growing faster than they had for the past several years.

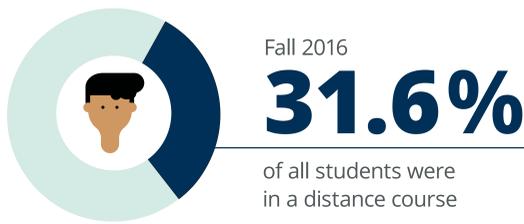
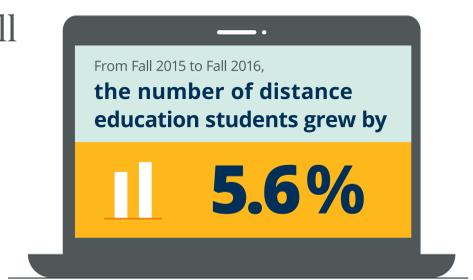
### Patterns in overall enrollments

From 2002 to 2012 both distance and overall enrollments at degree-granting institutions grew annually. But since 2012, distance growth has continued its steady increase while overall enrollments have declined and the largest for-profit distance education institutions continue to face serious issues and lose their enrollments.



### Distance enrollments growth overall

**6,359,121**  
Students taking at least one distance course, Fall 2016



**14.9%** took exclusively distance courses

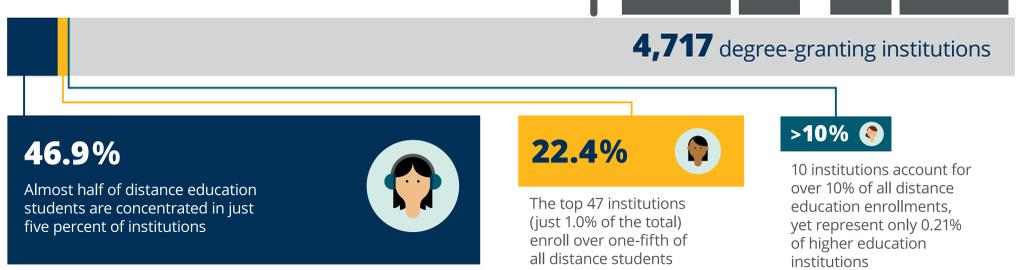
**16.7%** took both distance and non-distance courses

### Distance education enrollments are concentrated in a small number of institutions

This report examines data from 4,717 degree-granting institutions that were active and open to the public in Fall 2016. Of these, 3,338 (70.8%) institutions reported having at least one distance education student.



#### Distribution of distance education students



**85.6%** The vast majority of distance students in the for-profit sector are enrolled at the top 5% of institutions

Concentration rates for private not-for-profit institutions are lower, while public institutions show very low levels of concentration.

### Distance learners by level

Distance education students, Fall 2016



The number of distance students at both the undergraduate and graduate level increased steadily each year from 2012 to 2016.

### Uneven distance enrollments

Distance enrollments continue to be very uneven between different higher education sectors, with continued steady growth for public institutions, similar levels of growth (albeit on a much smaller base) for the private non-profit sector, and the continuation of the decline in total enrollments for the private for-profit sector for the fourth year in a row.

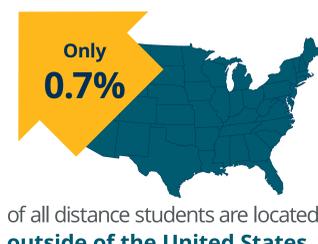
#### Change in distance enrollments at degree-granting institutions, 2012–2016



### Distance enrollments remain local

Students taking exclusively distance courses who **resided in the same state as the institution** at which they were enrolled

2012 **50.3%** 2016 **56.1%**

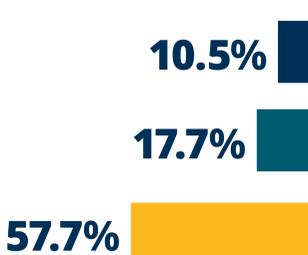


States vary greatly in the proportion of exclusively distance learners that are resident students

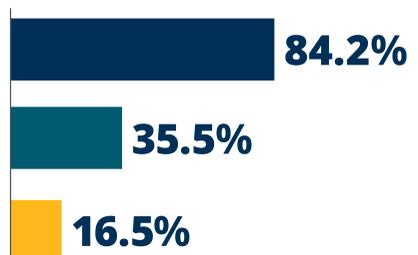


The number of students studying on a campus has dropped by **1,173,805** (or 6.4%) between 2012 and 2016

#### Percentage of students taking exclusively distance courses, Fall 2016



#### Percentage of those students taking exclusively distance courses located in the same state as the institution, 2016



### Want to know more?

*Grade Increase: Tracking Distance Education in the United States* is the 14th annual report on the state of online learning in U.S. higher education. The analysis by the Babson Survey Research Group is based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics' Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). This study is aimed at answering fundamental questions about the nature and extent of distance education.

Read the complete **Grade Increase** >>

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