Patterns in overall enrollments
From 2012 to 2016, degree-seeking enrollment decreases overall were not concentrated in any one-year increment. Instead of any one-year decline, distance enrollments decreased steadily during a period in which total enrollment experienced smaller and more mixed-short-term losses. The greatest decline was in the for-profit sector, and the smallest decline was in the public sector outside of the United States.

Distance education enrollments are concentrated in a small number of institutions
Distance enrollments continue to be very uneven between different higher education sectors, with the best examples of concentration in the for-profit sector. This report shows that 46.9% of all students were enrolled at the top 47 institutions. The concentration rates are much higher for the for-profit sector, with the top 47 institutions representing 85.6% of all distance students. The top 47 institutions account for 84.2% of all for-profit students. In contrast, only 12.9% of non-profit students are enrolled at the top 47 institutions. By the same token, only 12.9% of public students (outside of the United States) are enrolled at the top 47 institutions.

Change in distance enrollments at degree-granting institutions, 2012–2016
Distance enrollments have grown steadily each year from 2012 to 2016. For-profit, private non-profit, and public institutions all increased their distance enrollments for the fourteenth straight year, growing faster than they had for the past several years. Distance enrollments increased for the fourth year in a row. From Fall 2015 to Fall 2016, they were up by an average of 2.8%. This study is aimed at answering fundamental questions about the nature and extent 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 at least in assessing fundamental questions about the nature and extent of distance education.

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). The study is at least in assessing fundamental questions about the nature and extent of distance education.

Read the complete report here.

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