ACCSC

Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges

2021 School and Student Characteristics and Outcomes

ACCSC
Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges

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School and Student Characteristics and Student Achievement Outcomes

One of the many ways that ACCSC verifies the effectiveness of its work and that of the programs and services offered by ACCSC-accredited institutions is through detailed analysis of school characteristics and performance data. The Commission recently completed its analysis of the 2020 Annual Report and found once again that its accredited institutions continue to demonstrate significant institutional and student success through their rates of student graduation and graduate employment attainment.

These data are important indicators and are used by ACCSC to better understand its accredited institutions and the trends associated with career education, as well as to develop the Commission's accountability standards.

The information contained in this report is a summary of the key data points from the 2019 ACCSC Annual Report and provides detailed information pertaining to ACCSC school characteristics, student characteristics, program characteristics, and student achievement rates and trends.

Sincerely,

Michale S. McComis, Ed.D.
Executive Director

Summary of School and Student Characteristics

Student Demographics

Overall, the analysis of the 2020 Annual Report data shows that student enrollment increased for the second consecutive year, despite a slight decrease in the number of schools completing the 2020 Annual Report. Although the student population has increased, student demographics remain consistent. Based upon data submitted in the Annual Report, ACCSC-accredited institutions and their students show the following characteristics:

ACCSC-Accredited Schools serve

- ***Metropolitan Areas***
- ***Non-Traditional and Minority Populations***

In Small School Settings

- 75% of the schools had 300 or fewer students as of June 30, 2020. Average enrollment as of June 30, 2020 was 276 students, representing a 12% increase over the previous year.
- The majority of institutions are in metropolitan areas with populations of at least 250,000.
- 46% of the students are under the age 25 and 35% of the students are in the age group 25-34.
- Student population is almost evenly distributed with regard to gender; the percentage of male students (53%) is still higher than the percentage of female students (47%).
- 65% of classified students represent ethnic minority groups.

These figures show that ACCSC-accredited institutions continue to provide training in small school formats and serve a large percentage of non-traditional and ethnic minority students in urban and suburban settings.

Program Characteristics

With respect to the types of programs offered by ACCSC-accredited institutions, schools submitted summary information for 3,816 programs in over 120 different occupational areas. Key characteristics include the following:

- 44% of ACCSC-accredited institutions offer a degree program;
    - 36% of all programs offered at ACCSC-accredited institutions are degree programs.
- Of the 1,363 reported degree programs, 974 are associate degrees (71%), 309 are baccalaureate degrees (23%), and 80 are master's degrees (6%).
- 57% of students are enrolled in non-degree programs, 22% of students are enrolled in associate degree programs, 19% of students are enrolled in baccalaureate degree programs, and 2% of students are enrolled in master's degree programs.

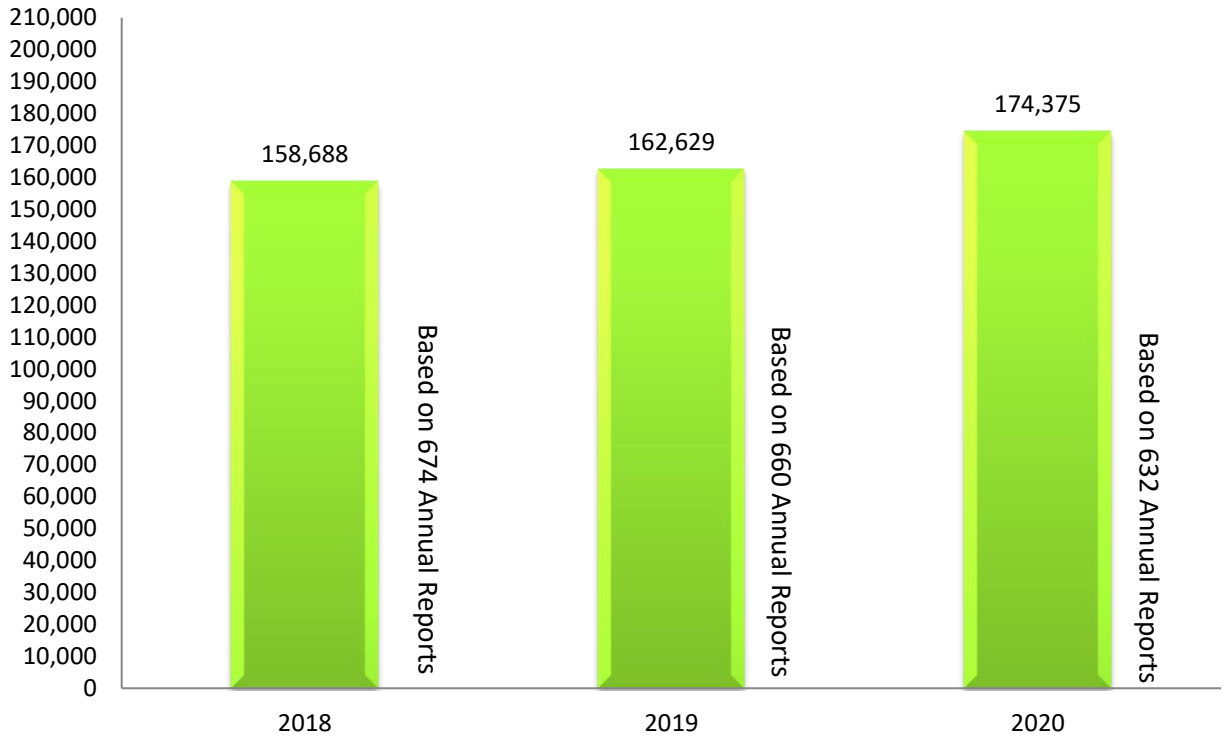
With less schools reporting data for the 2020 Annual Report, the total number of programs with reportable enrollments represents a 5% decrease over the prior year. The most notable decrease was in the number of associate degree programs (2% decrease) over the previous year. The percentage of baccalaureate degree programs remained steady over the previous year. The most notable increase was in the number of master's degrees. The number of master's degrees increased by 14% (n=80) over the previous year (n=70), resulting in a 1% increase in the number of master's degrees as a percentage of overall degrees. Member institutions continue to assess program offerings and adapt to the changing needs of prospective students and to meet the needs of community employers, often discontinuing programs no longer needed by the local employment community. The overall percentage of ACCSC degree granting institutions was 44% (a 2% decrease). Graduate programs continue to represent a small portion of the degree offerings (6%) and degree program enrollments (2%).

Institutional Characteristics

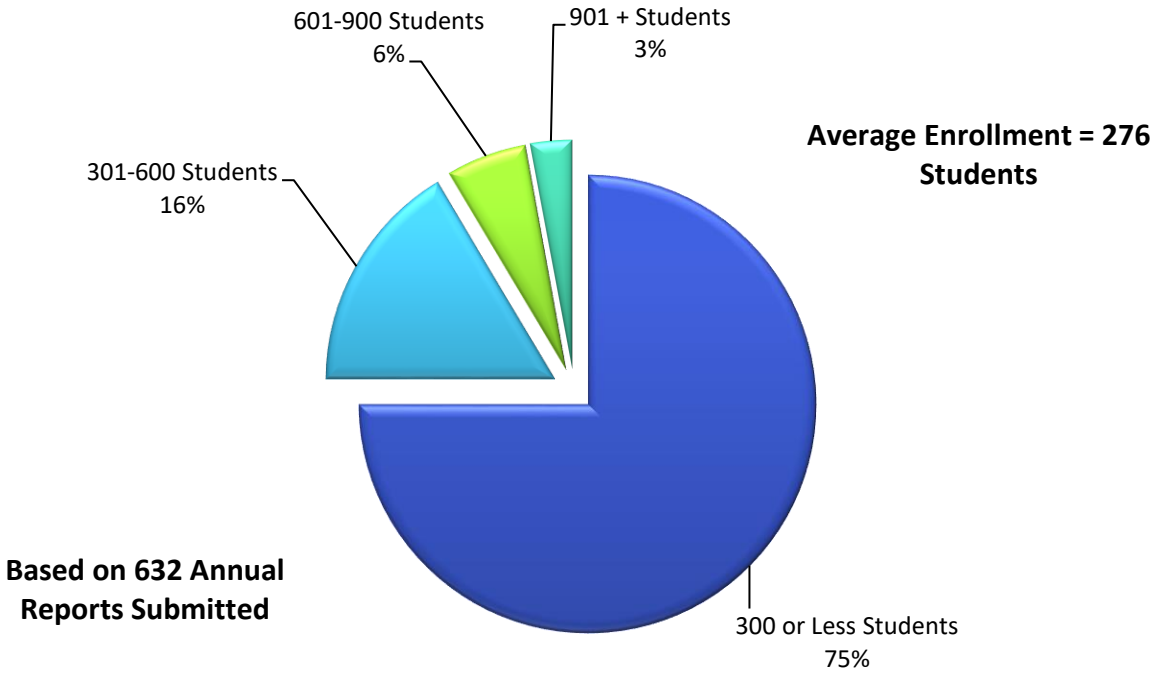
The number of schools reporting was 632 schools, a 4% decrease over 2019. However, total student enrollment increased for a third year. The total student enrollment (174,375) representing a 7% increase in enrollment over 2019.

School Information for Fiscal Year 2021	TOTAL
ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (as of June 30, 2021)	
Main Schools	396
Branch Schools	227
TOTAL ACCREDITED SCHOOLS	**623**
SCHOOL CLOSURES & VOLUNTARY WITHDRAWALS (FY2021)	
Closures	22
Voluntary Withdrawals	8
ADVERSE ACTIONS (FY2021)	
Denials	0
Withdrawal	6

Enrollment as of June 30, 2020

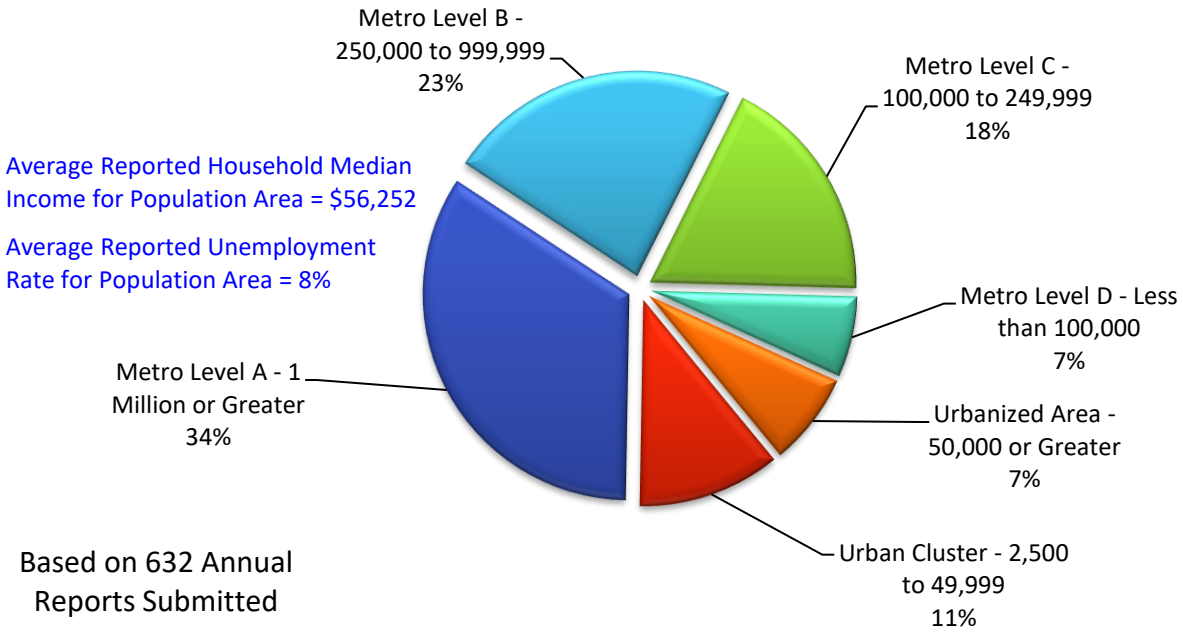


Institution Size By Student Enrollment - All Schools



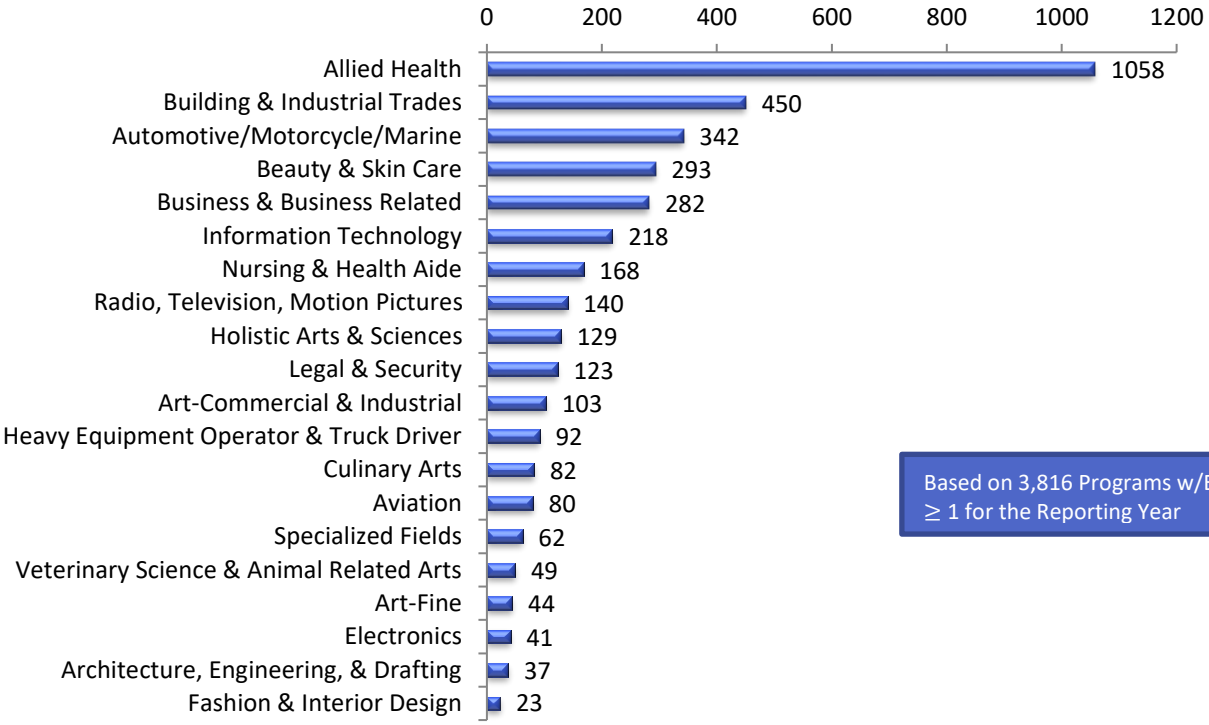
School and Student Characteristics

Distribution of All Schools by Population Area



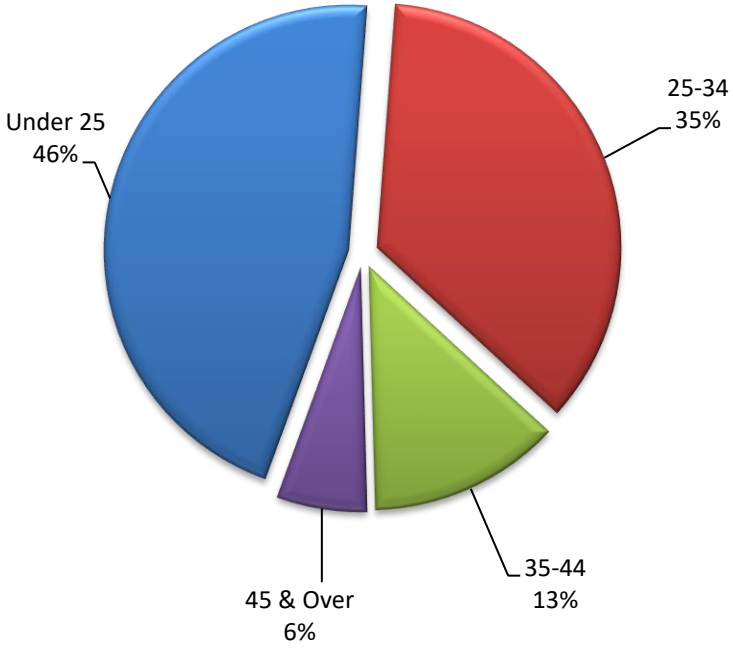
Based on 632 Annual Reports Submitted

Distribution of Programs by Program Area



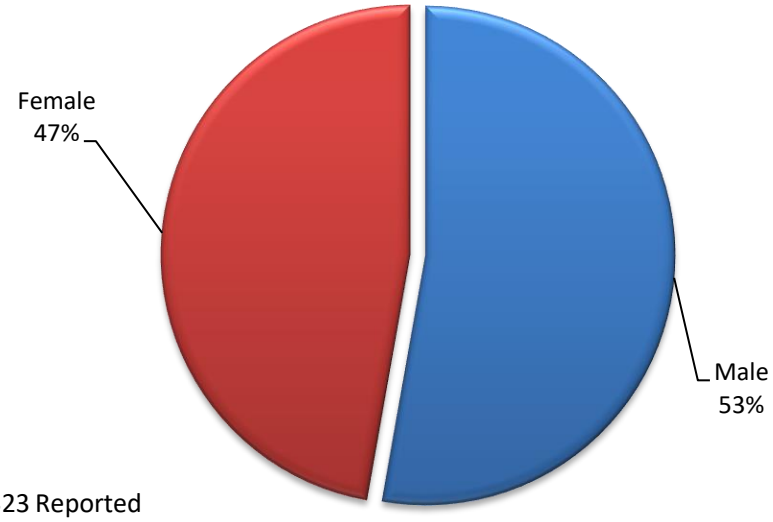
Based on 3,816 Programs w/Enrollments ≥ 1 for the Reporting Year

Distribution of Students By Age



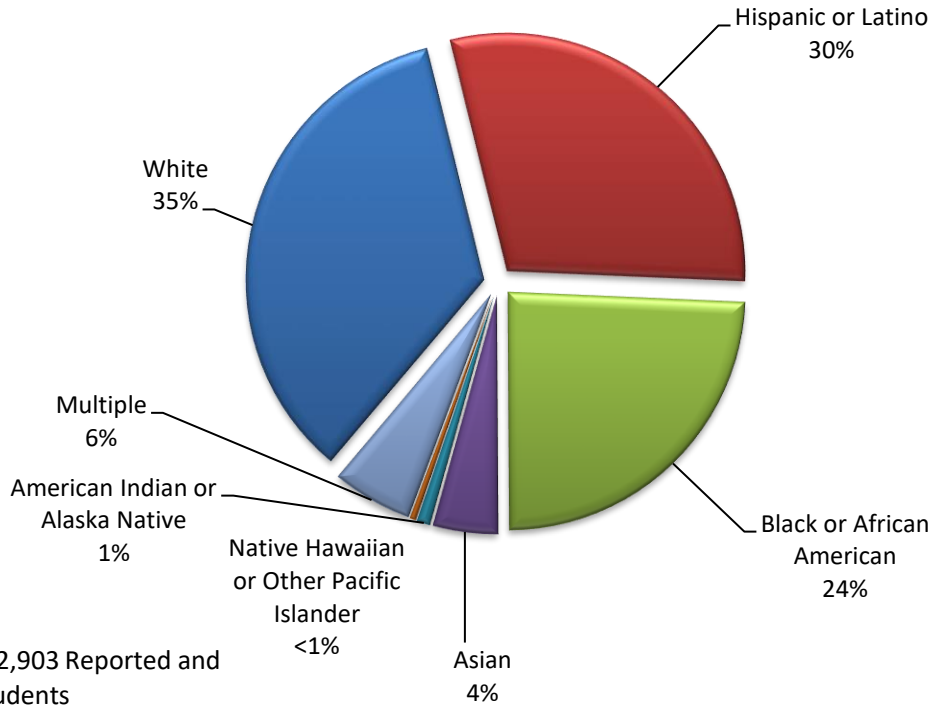
Based on 174,375
Reported Students

Distribution of Students By Gender



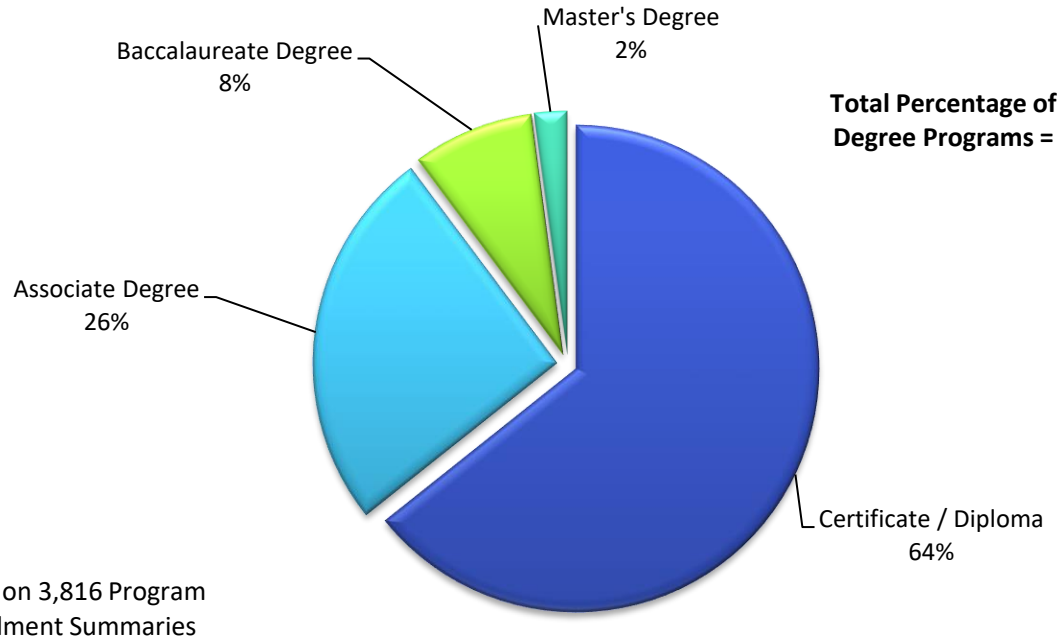
Based on 172,323 Reported
& Classified Students

Distribution of Students By Ethnicity



Based on 152,903 Reported and Classified Students

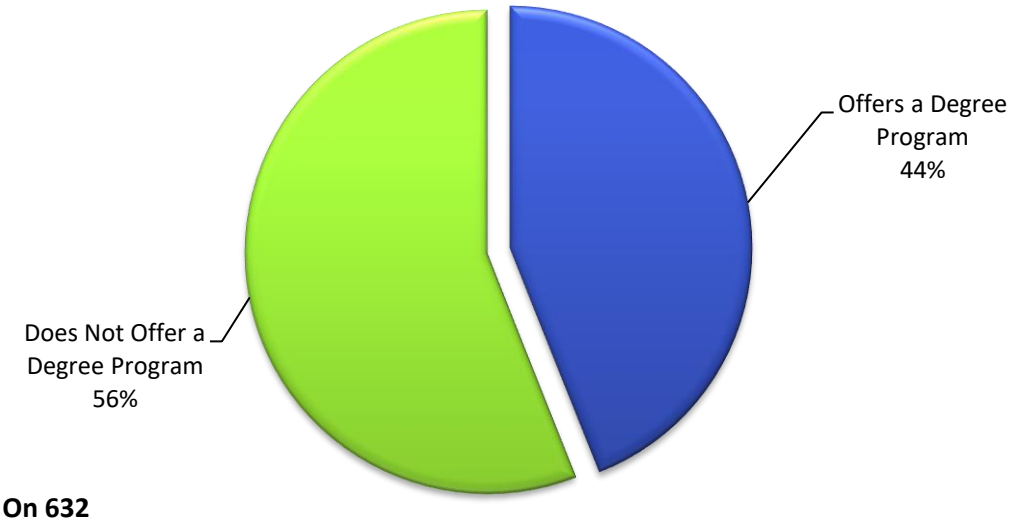
Distribution of Programs By Credential



Total Percentage of Degree Programs =

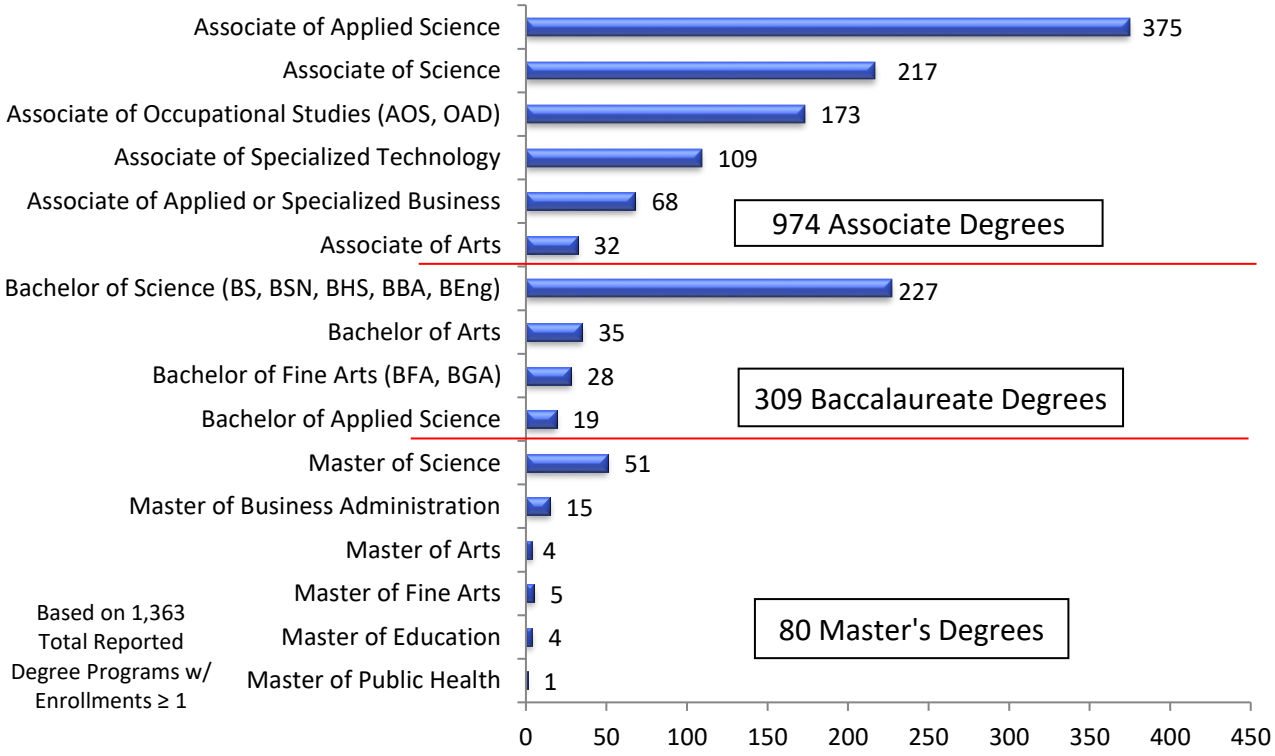
Based on 3,816 Program Enrollment Summaries w/ Enrollment ≥ 1

Percentage of Schools Which Offer Degree Programs



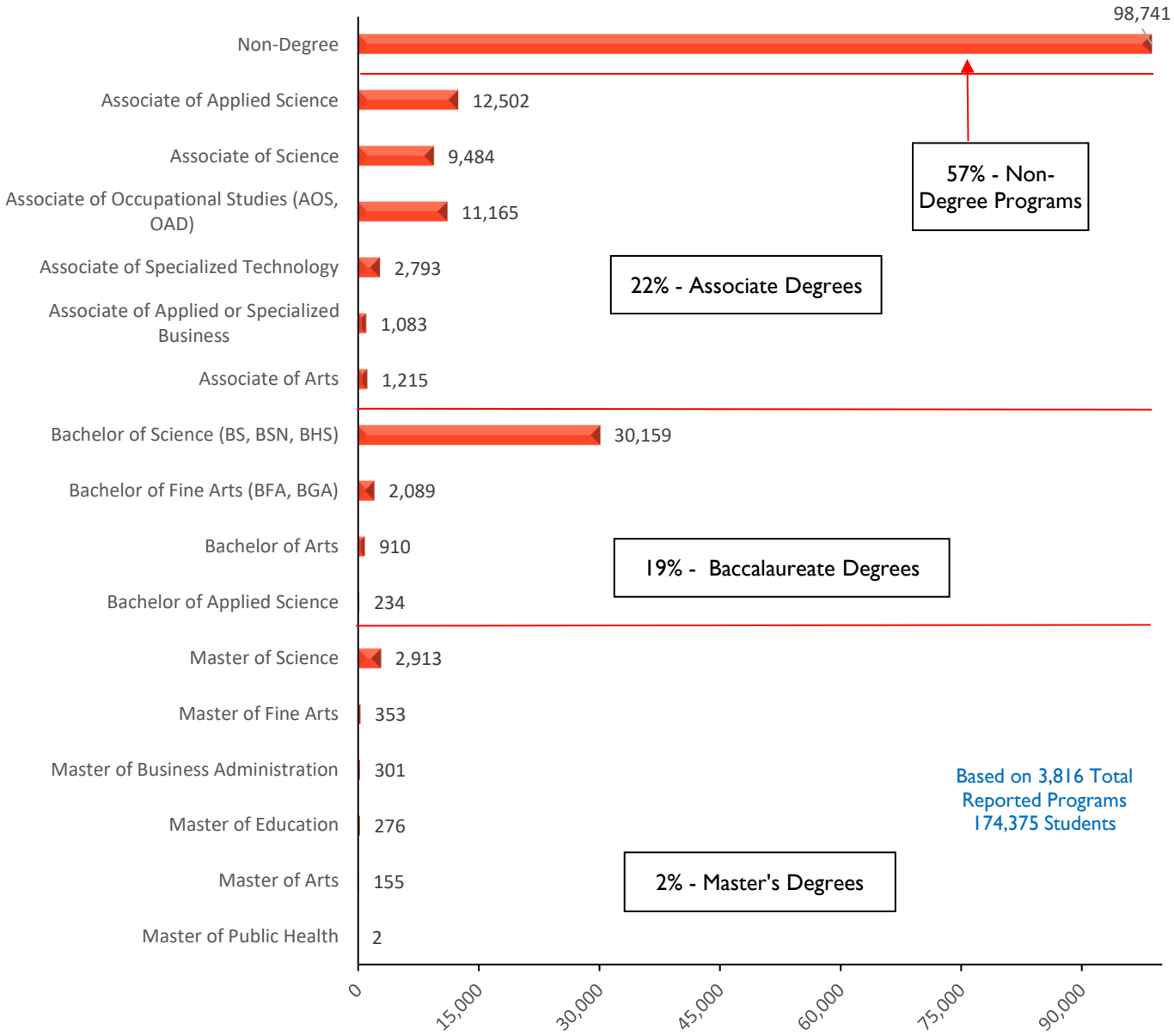
Based On 632 Annual Reports

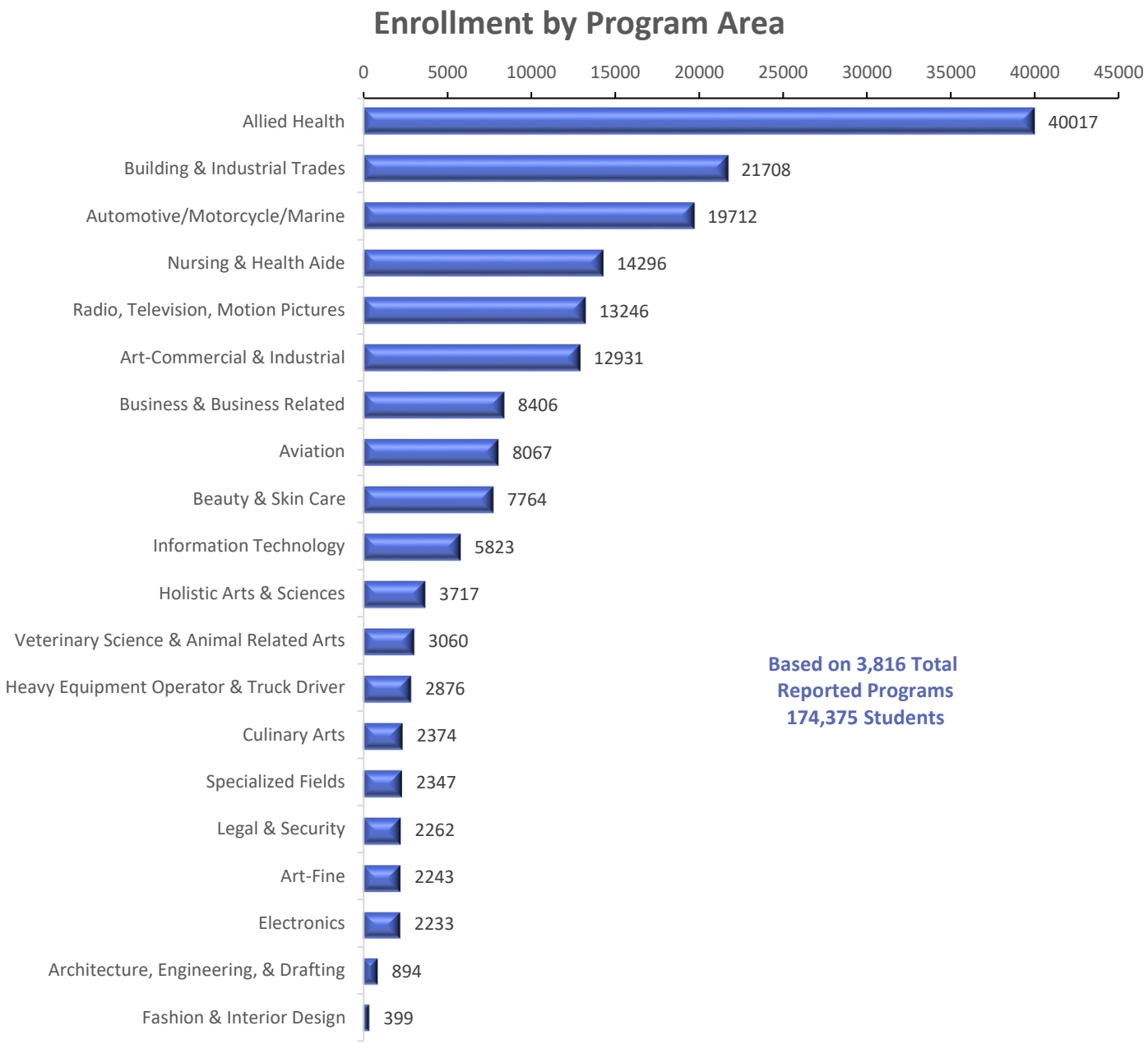
Distribution of Degree Programs By Credential



Based on 1,363 Total Reported Degree Programs w/ Enrollments ≥ 1

Distribution of Student Enrollment By Program Credential




Enrollment by Program Area
0
5000
10000
15000
20000
25000
30000
35000
40000
45000
Allied Health
40017
Building & Industrial Trades
21708
Automotive/Motorcycle/Marine
19712
Nursing & Health Aide
14296
Radio, Television, Motion Pictures
13246
Art-Commercial & Industrial
12931
Business & Business Related
8406
Aviation
8067
Beauty & Skin Care
7764
Information Technology
5823
Holistic Arts & Sciences
3717
Veterinary Science & Animal Related Arts
3060
Heavy Equipment Operator & Truck Driver
2876
Culinary Arts
2374
Specialized Fields
2347
Legal & Security
2262
Art-Fine
2243
Electronics
2233
Architecture, Engineering, & Drafting
894
Fashion & Interior Design
399
Based on 3,816 Total Reported Programs
174,375 Students

Student Achievement Outcomes

Background Regarding the ACCSC Student Achievement Standard

The Commission first promulgated the quantitative student achievement standards in 1998 based upon several studies conducted by the Center on Education and Training for Employment at the Ohio State University. During 2002, the Commission engaged in a comprehensive study of the student achievement requirements promulgated in 1998 and the associated processes of data collection and verification. The Commission continues to review comparative data and make adjustments to the methodology for the analysis of student achievement outcomes in order to ensure sound data collection and analysis.

As part of its ongoing commitment to assessing student achievement in its accredited schools and the tools used to do so, during the 2015 Annual Report year, the Commission conducted an 11-year longitudinal study of the graduation and employment rates report from 2005 to 2015 in the ACCSC Annual Report. The Commission noted that longitudinal data showed little variation from ACCSC's benchmark review using three-year rolling increments. Thus establishing the stability, predictability, and reliability of the rates used in establishing ACCSC's benchmark rates.

Also, as part of its systematic program of review, the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems reviewed ACCSC's student achievement standards, practices, and the longitudinal study and found that "[t]aken together, these features provide considerable confidence in the soundness and appropriateness of ACCSC's general approach to establishing quantitative performance criteria on selected student outcomes measures."

Previously, the Commission re-calculated student achievement benchmark rates every three years using a rolling average. Because the longitudinal data and study show no significant variation from the current benchmarks (with one exception), the Commission established the results of the 11-year longitudinal study as the basis for its new student achievement rates. The one exception is in programs 24 months in length or longer. This group of programs exhibits the largest variability and range of graduation rate outcomes. Once that variability was controlled for, the rate stabilized at 40%, which the Commission believes is an appropriate trigger for further monitoring in these longer programs. The established rates are semi-permanent meaning that while the Commission will continue to study and assess the reported rates of student achievement regularly, the Commission does not intend to adjust the rates unless the data suggest that an adjustment is warranted. A review of the most recent three-year data (2018-2020) found the graduation benchmarks continue to be consistent with the longitudinal study.

A review of the most recent three-year data (2018-2020) found the graduation benchmarks continue to be consistent with the longitudinal study.

With regard to the employment rate, the Commission's 11-year longitudinal data and study yielded a 70% benchmark, which the Commission adopted. The employment rate for all programs was previously 70% and was only lowered due to the impact of the economic recession. The data show that employment rates overall have risen and thus found resetting the employment rate benchmark at 70% to be appropriate.

While graduation and employment rates play an integral role in an institution's on-going programmatic and institutional assessment plan, an additional area that demonstrates student learning outcomes includes pass rates on licensing/certification examinations required for employment. The Commission has collected licensure/certification examination pass rate data through the Annual Report over the 11-year period and now requires schools to demonstrate a minimum 70% pass rate on licensure/certification examinations for those programs where a governmental entity requires students to pass the examination as a condition of employment.

The Commission continues to refine protocols intended to give both schools and the Commission a framework for the review and assessment of student achievement rates and to provide a framework for assessing rates that are above benchmarks and above average as well as below benchmark rates.

ESTABLISHED BENCHMARK GRADUATION RATES

Program Length in Months	Average Rates of Graduation Demonstrates Acceptable Student Achievement	Standard Deviation	Established Benchmark Graduation Rates
1-3	92%	8%	84%
4-6	84%	11%	73%
7-9	72%	12%	60%
10-12	69%	14%	55%
13-15	64%	14%	50%
16-18	62%	15%	47%
19-23	61%	18%	43%
24+	53%	13%	40%

ESTABLISHED BENCHMARK EMPLOYMENT RATE

Program Length in Months	Average Rate of Employment Demonstrates Acceptable Student Achievement	Standard Deviation	Established Benchmark Employment Rate
All Programs	78%	8%	70%

Analysis of the 2020 Annual Report Data

As the total number of schools reporting data decreased in 2020, the number of programs with reportable graduation and employment rates also decreased from the previous year (-1.5%). The majority of the decrease in number of overall programs with reportable rates is found in programs with lengths 19-23 months (-14%). The program length of 24 months and longer had the greatest increase (7%). Nominal differences over the previous year were seen in the remaining program-length categories. The overall graduation rate reported by ACCSC-accredited institutions in the 2020 Annual Report are consistent with the data reported for previous years. Since 2015, the average graduation rate for all programs, regardless of length held steady at 69%. The analysis of graduation rates continues to show that program length has a strong influence on program graduation, i.e., as length increases graduation rates decline. This correlation is consistently the most substantial and significant relationship found in the Commission's student achievement data and allows the Commission to evaluate programmatic performance within a context of program length comparability.

The reported employment rate of 76% is consistent for the three-year period and continues to be the highest reported employment rate since 2012. This is consistent with the trends noted in the longitudinal study.

For the 2020 Annual Report year the graduation rates for all program-length groupings remained stable over the past three years. In addition, a review of data for a five-year period found very little variability in reported graduation rates by program length. For the 2020 Annual Report, of particular note is the continued stability of the reported graduation rate for programs 24 months and longer. The reported graduation rate of 57% for programs 24 months and longer in length, while a slight decrease from the 2019 AR (-1%), continues to be 4% higher than the reported rate in 2016. The student achievement outcomes for longer programs are an area that the Commission continues to monitor with keen interest. To assist schools and the Commission with monitoring longer programs, the 2020 Annual Report collected retention data to help schools identify areas or particular points in a longer program where a student may drop out and allowing for early intervention to increase retention. A more detailed analysis of retention data will be conducted as comparative data become available. Analysis of the three-year data for employment rate found the reported rate of 76% is consistent for the three-year period. The rate of 76% over the three-year period continues to be the highest reported employment rate since 2012. This is consistent with the trends noted in the longitudinal study.

While graduation and employment rates play an integral role in the overall assessment of the effectiveness of an instructional program, an additional area that demonstrates student learning outcomes includes pass rates on licensing/certification examinations required for employment. The Commission collects licensure/certification examination pass rate data through the Annual Report and implemented, effective July 1, 2015, the requirement that schools demonstrate a minimum 70% pass rate on licensure/certification examinations for those programs where a governmental entity requires students to pass the examination as a condition of employment. Review of the major areas

requiring licensure for employment such as allied health, nursing, cosmetology, massage therapy, and truck driving found the average pass rate has consistently exceeded 70% for the past three years.

Overall, the student graduation and graduate employment attainment rates demonstrate that ACCSC-accredited institutions graduate a significant number of students and that a significant number of students attain training-related employment after graduation. Out of 4063 programs with reportable graduation and employment rates, 81% (n=3297) meet or exceed benchmark in the respective program length grouping and 78% (n=3160) of the programs meet or exceed the benchmark for graduate employment. The Commission encourages its institutions to avoid using the benchmark rates as a goal for graduation and employment but as an assessment starting point and goal setting baseline. Institutions should continue to set the highest attainable goals with regard to student success and the rates of graduation and employment.

Other Areas of Analysis

Employment Verification

Effective January 1, 2014, the Commission instituted a requirement that initial and renewal applicants engage an independent third-party auditor to verify at least 50% of the school's most recently reported employment data that is reviewed during the on-site evaluation process. The purpose of the requirement is a) to assess the school's compliance with *Section VII (B)(1)(b), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation* and whether the school has "verifiable" records of employment and b) to ensure that the institution's records can be relied upon in making decisions about a school's compliance with the Commission's student achievement standards and benchmarks. As stated in the *Standards of Accreditation*, the Commission places a high level of reliance on the accuracy of the information and data provided by institutions in the accreditation process and the institution has the burden of demonstrating compliance with accrediting standards. The requirement of the independent third-party audit facilitates further self-evaluation, improvements in operational procedures, and assists schools in meeting the burden of demonstrating on-going compliance with accrediting standards.

For the 2021 Fiscal Year, as of April 2021, there were 62 Virtual Visits conducted for Renewal of Accreditation or Initial Accreditation where the school had graduates prior to the on-site evaluation (a branch many not have graduates in its first Renewal of Accreditation). The summary of employment verification results are found in Table 1.

Table 1 Employment Verification Results FY2021 (through April 2021)		
Students Available for Sample	*7987*	
	Number	Percent
Students Sampled	4609	57.7%
Verified as Correct	3839	84%
Verified but Different	187	4%
Unable to Verify	522	11%
Verified as Not Correct	61	1%

Review of the results show that an independent auditor was able to verify that 88% of the students sampled were correctly classified as employed in field by the schools (Students "Verified but Different" are employed in field, but may have different job titles and/or start dates of employment from that which was recorded initially). The 11% classified as "Unable to Verify" may also be employed in field; however, the independent auditor was unable to contact the graduate or the employer after multiple attempts or the verification required additional access to a third-party provider such as the Work Number. In such instances, the school has opportunity to provide additional information to the on-site evaluation team. As only 1% of the sample reported as "Verified as Not Correct" demonstrates, it appears that ACCSC member schools continue to be diligent about on-going efforts to provide accurate employment statistics.

Student Surveys

On-site evaluation teams conduct student surveys during each on-site evaluation. The student surveys provide important information about how students feel about processes and procedures, services, faculty, and educational resources. In addition, the surveys seek to determine how students feel about their overall decision to attend the school and if they would recommend the school to a friend. Surveys are administered electronically either in the classrooms while the on-site evaluation team is on campus or via email at the time of the visit. The areas of review include the following: Admissions; Financial Aid; Academic Progress; Student Services; Faculty; Library/Learning Resource System; Facilities; Training and Equipment; and Distance Education (if applicable). For schools offering programs via hybrid distance education or programs offered 100% online, the survey includes questions about the admissions process and information about distance education requirements and expectations, as well as faculty interaction.

Over the timeframe of review, 802 surveys were administered with 67,293 responses. All areas of evaluation consistently found that the majority of the respondents were very satisfied with each area of review. Due to the pandemic, beginning in the Summer of 2020 on-site evaluations moved to a virtual evaluation, with a limited number of evaluations conducted. However, the year-over-year results are consistent, as noted in Table 2 below.

Average results for the period 2016 through 2020 show that 93% of the students felt good about their decision to attend the school and 90% would recommend the school to a friend. In addition, those same average results show that more than 90% of respondents expressed satisfaction in every other area of the survey, with the exception of training and equipment which yielded an 88% satisfaction rate.

With regards to distance education, overall the students expressed satisfaction with the admissions process, information provided, and the faculty. It is noted that there was a slight drop in 2020; however, as many students were suddenly required to move to an online environment due to the pandemic, that may have impacted the results. ACCSC will continue to monitor student satisfaction in this area. The results of the student surveys show that ACCSC member schools embrace the Hallmarks of Quality and strive to provide students a pathway of educational achievement.

Table 2 Percentages of Students Expressing Satisfaction with School Services in Selected Areas						
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Average
Admissions	95%	95%	94%	94%	95%	95%
Financial Aid	93%	92%	92%	93%	94%	93%
Academic Progress	93%	95%	94%	94%	94%	94%
Student Services	91%	93%	92%	92%	91%	92%
Faculty	93%	94%	94%	94%	94%	94%
Library/LRS	89%	92%	91%	90%	89%	90%
Facilities	92%	95%	93%	93%	93%	93%
Training/Equipment	86%	91%	88%	88%	89%	88%
Distance Education	*Not Available*	92%	88%	91%	88%	90%
Feel Good about Attending	93%	94%	93%	93%	93%	93%
Recommend to a Friend	89%	92%	90%	90%	90%	90%

Community Service

ACCSC member schools recognize the importance of engaging with the local community through service initiatives. Each year member schools report the number of hours that faculty, staff, and students devote to Community Service projects and activities organized by the school as part of the Annual Report. As noted in Table 3 below, ACCSC member schools support the local community through volunteer hours. Over the five-year period, more than 60% of member schools participated in 1,075,864 hours of community service. Even during the pandemic, 63% of the schools participated in over 170,000 hours of community service.

Table 3 Community Service Hours			
Annual Report Year	Number of Schools Reporting Hours	Percent of Total Schools Reporting	Number of Hours Reported
2016	403	62%	199,254
2017	373	60%	208,766
2018	432	64%	205,799
2019	447	68%	288,308
2020	398	63%	173,737

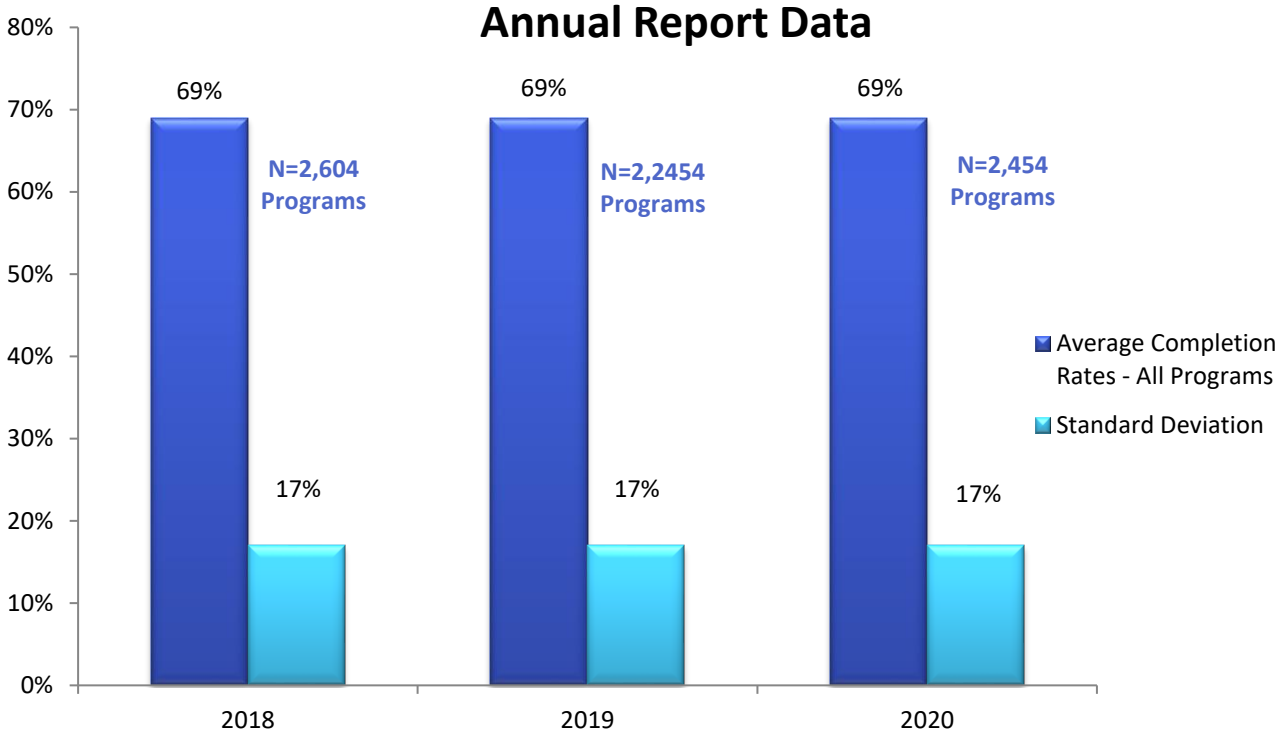
At the Professional Development Conference, ACCSC recognizes institutions that have made outstanding contributions to their local communities. In selecting a winner for this award, the Commission considers several compelling aspects, such as the scope of community service initiatives; the impact of the service initiatives on the school's education programs; the level of commitment of a school to its community; and a demonstration of how the initiative touched the personal lives of school personnel, students, or community members.

The 2021 Excellence in Community Service award winner is Concorde Career College located in Aurora, CO. The school's faculty and staff are given time off to engage in community service activities with their students. Activities extend over many areas, including monthly service opportunities at Children's Hospital, serving meals at rescue shelters, and assisting with local Special Olympics events. As an allied health school, Concorde Career College was uniquely positioned to assist with COVID-19 vaccination distribution, providing a large space for vaccination clinics with students assisting in the entire process at the school and other community clinics.

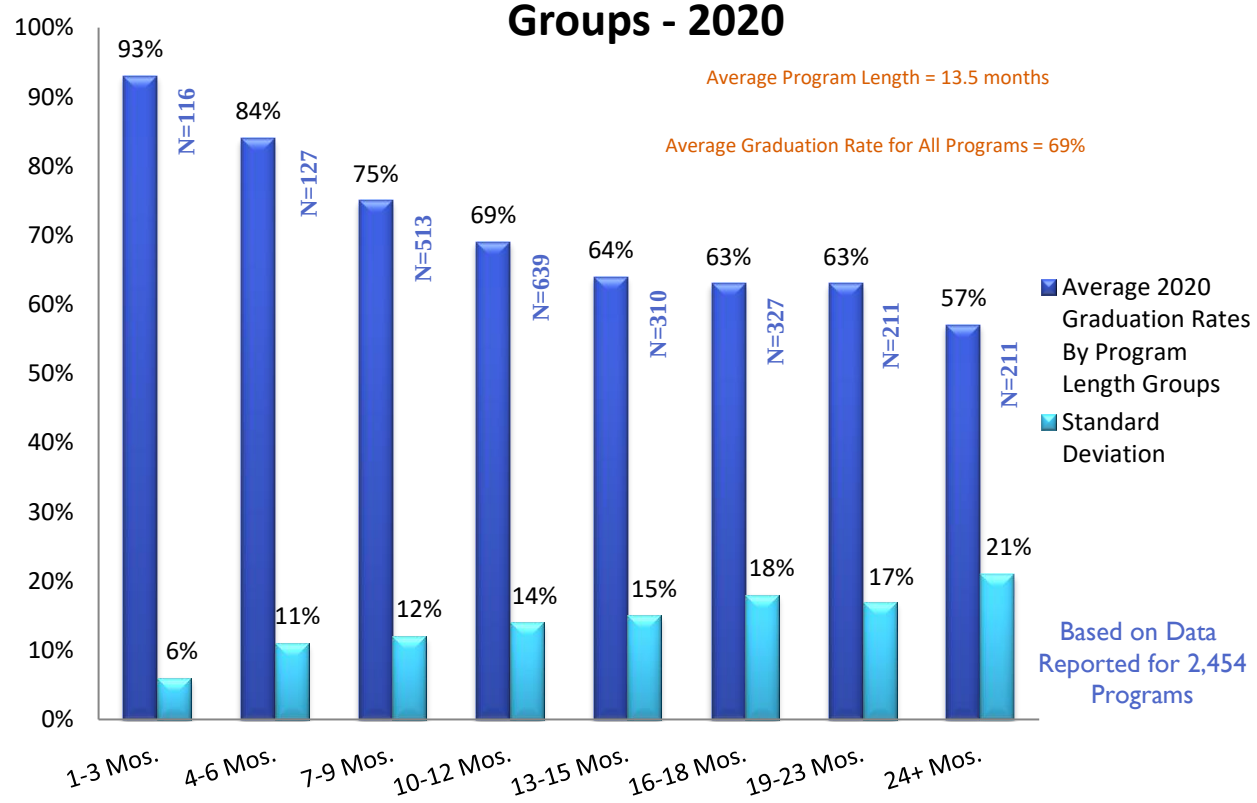
The 2021 Excellence in Community Service award winner is Concorde Career College located in Aurora, Colorado

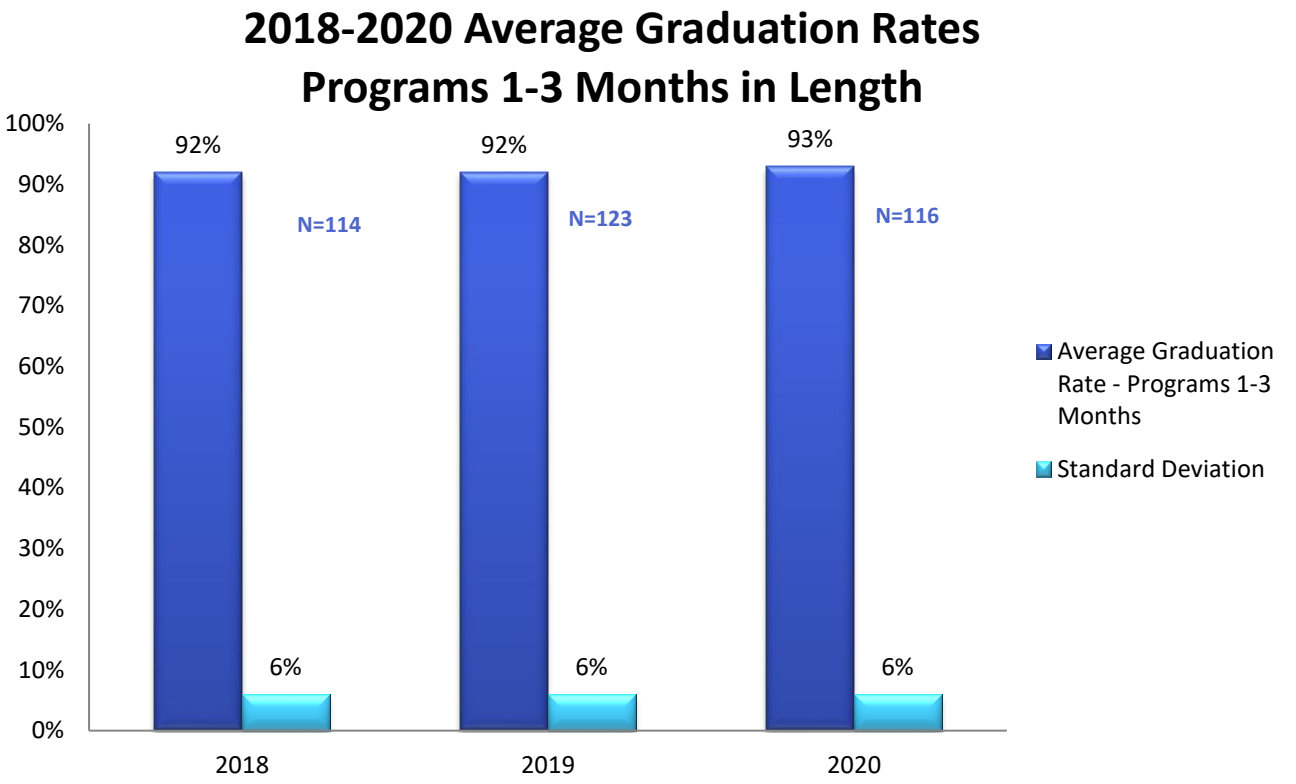
Student Achievement

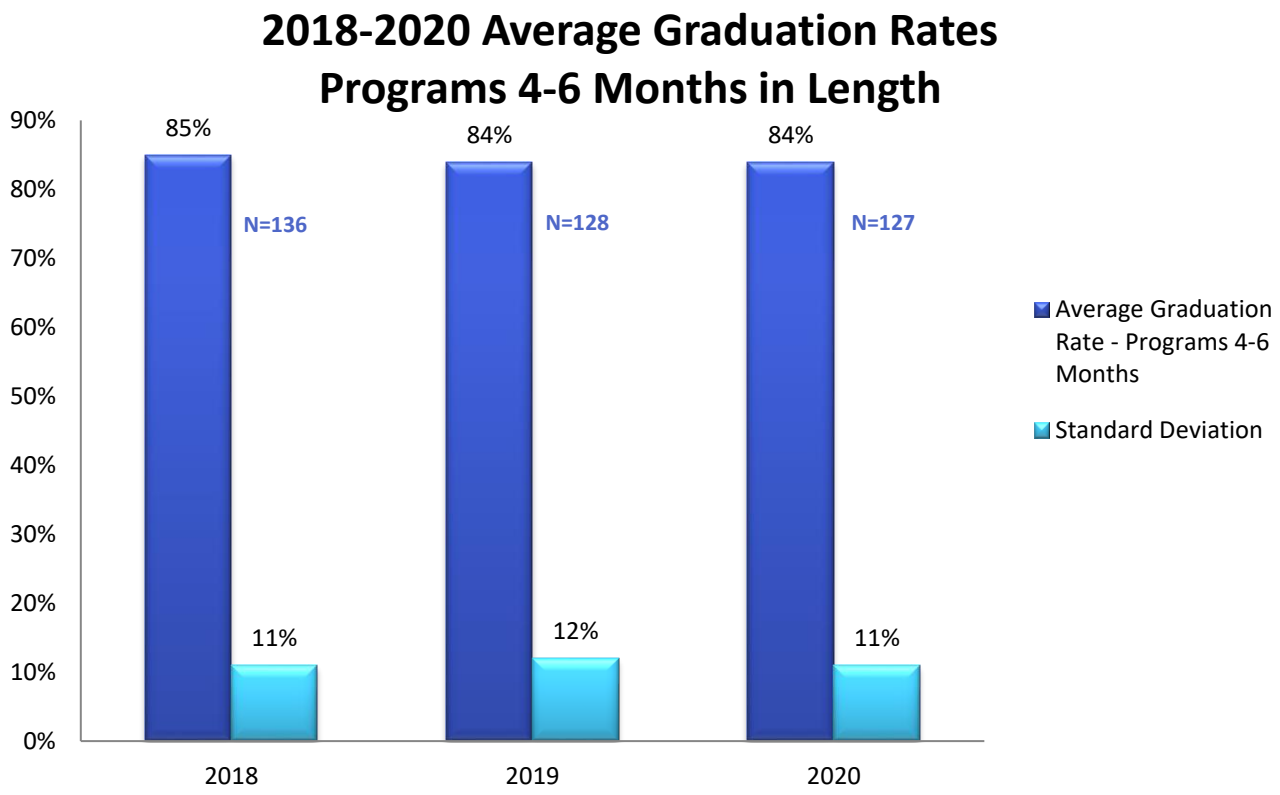
2018-2020 Average Graduation Rates - All Programs Annual Report Data

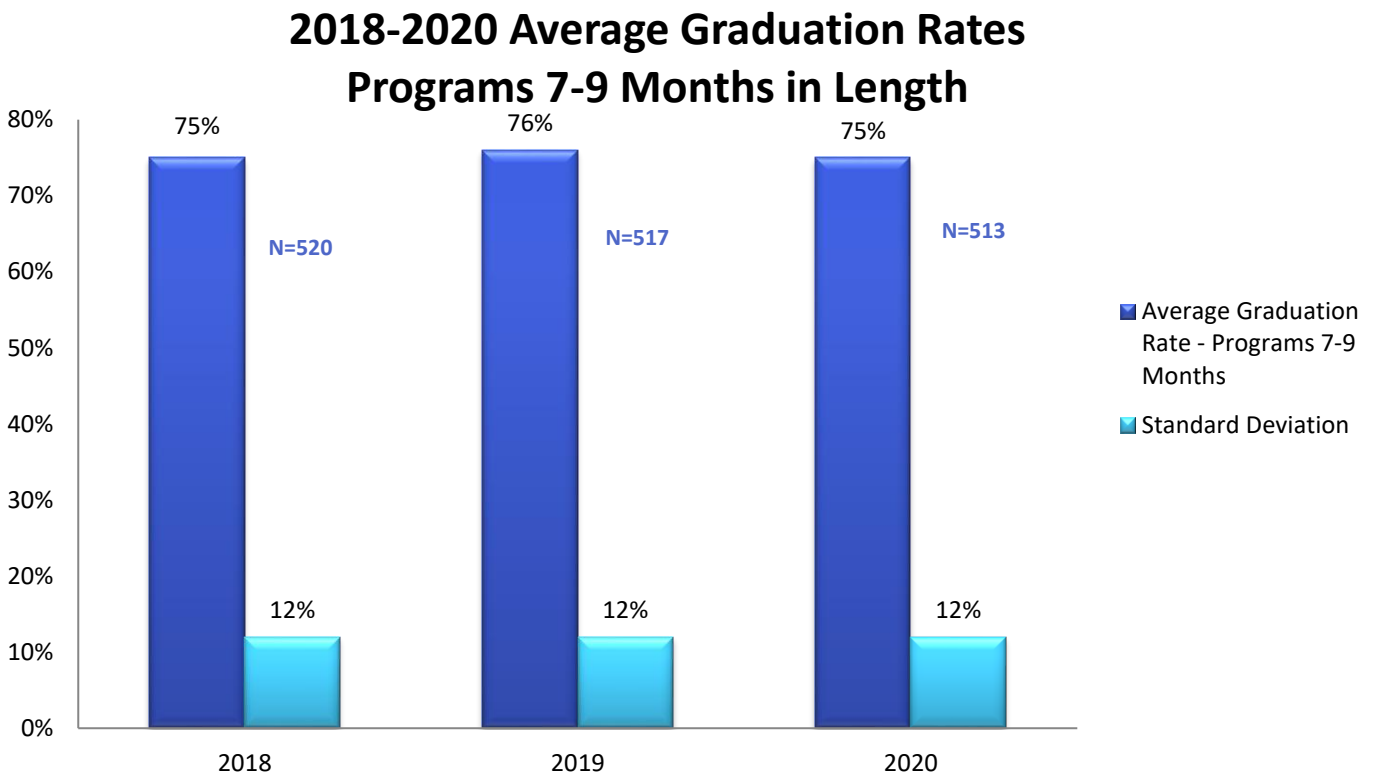


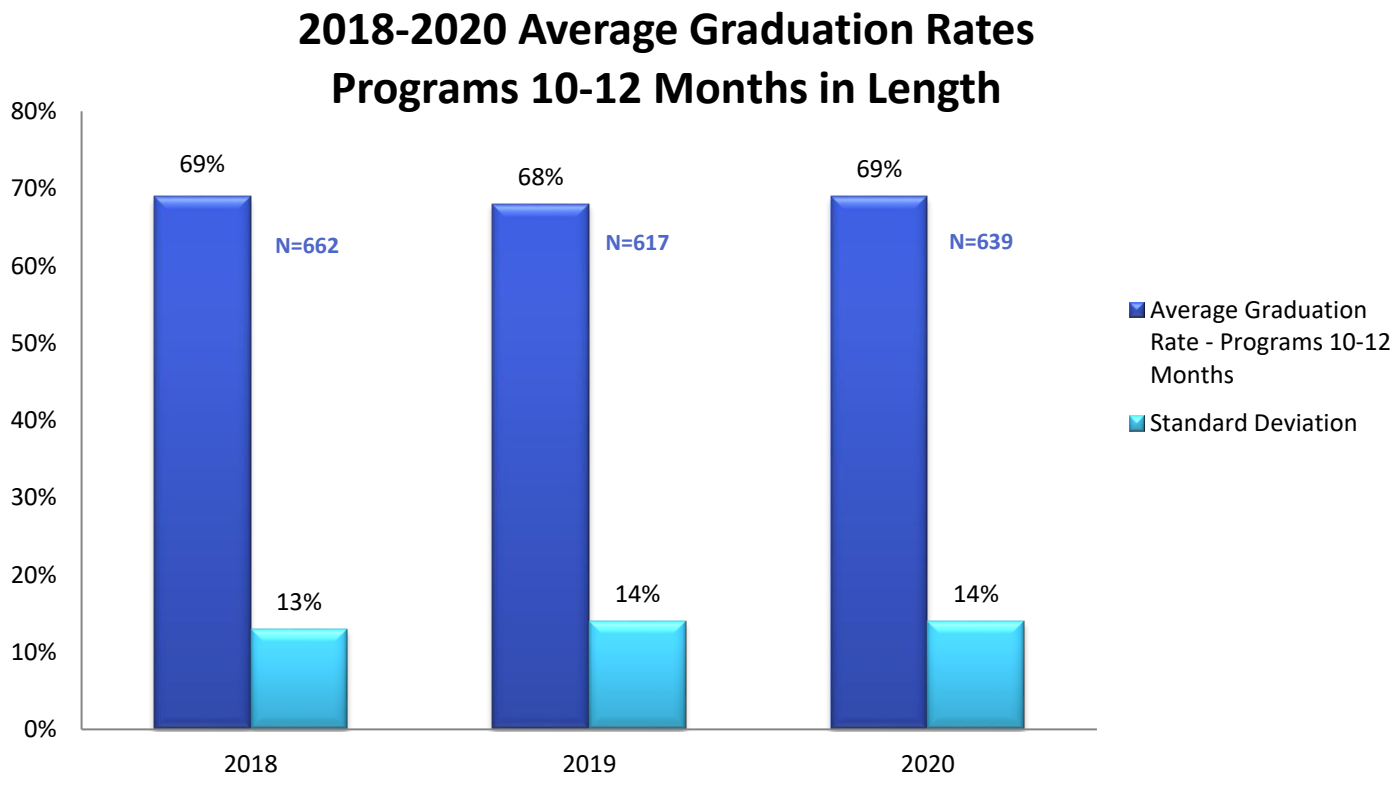
Average Graduation Rates By Program Length Groups - 2020

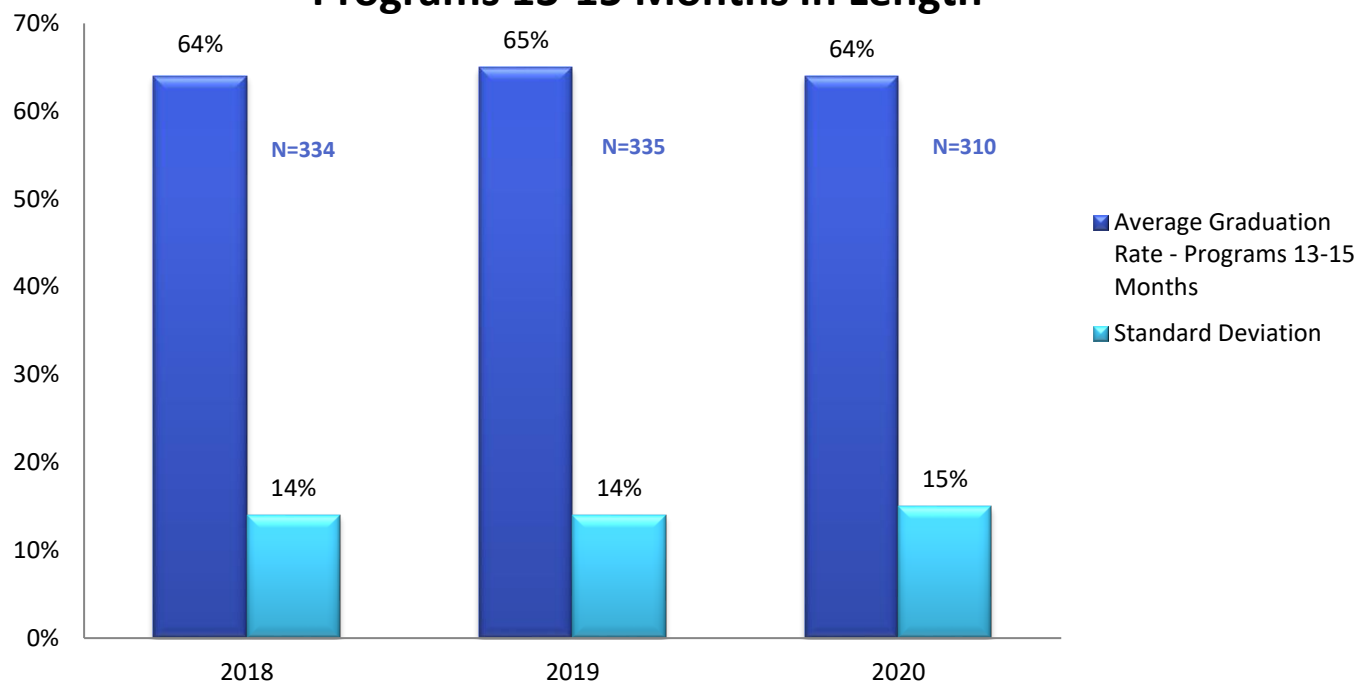


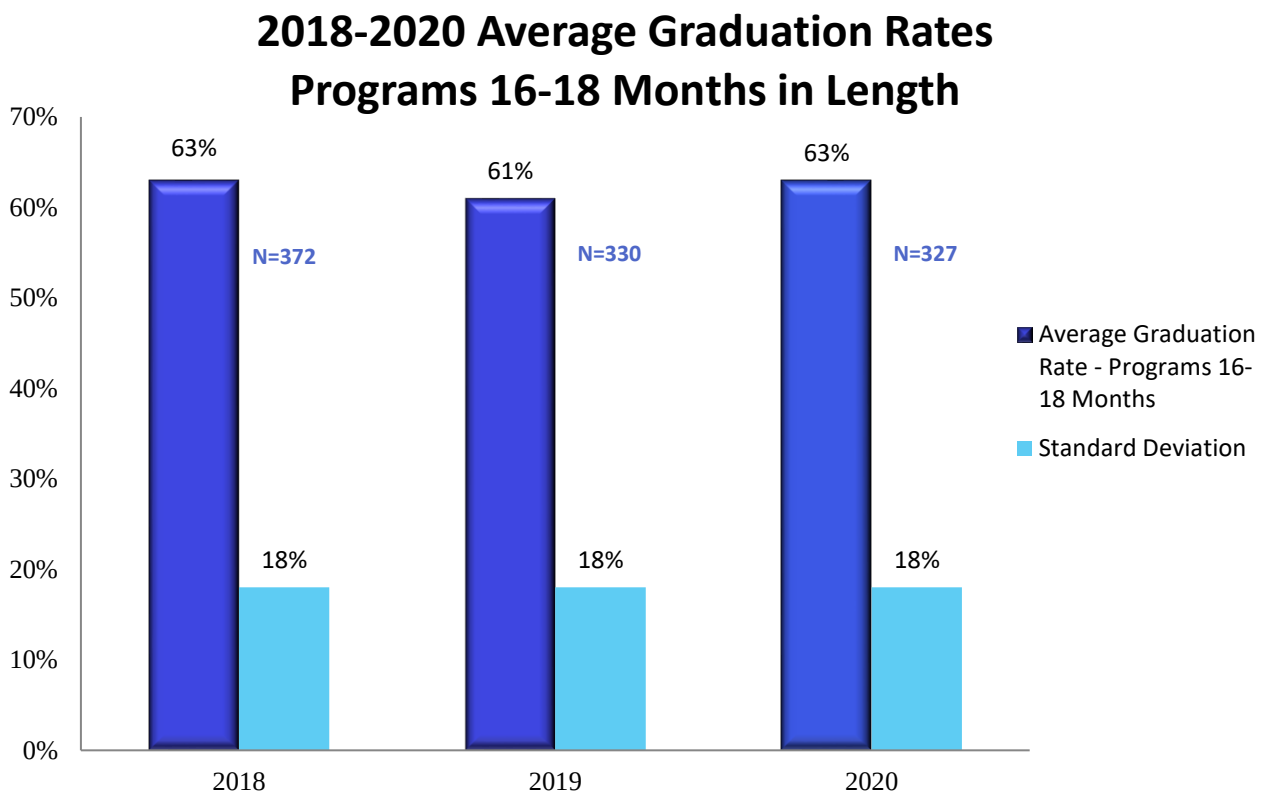

2018-2020 Average Graduation Rates
Programs 1-3 Months in Length
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
92%
92%
93%
N=114
N=123
N=116
6%
6%
6%
2018
2019
2020
Average Graduation Rate - Programs 1-3 Months
Standard Deviation


2018-2020 Average Graduation Rates
Programs 4-6 Months in Length
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
85%
84%
84%
N=136
N=128
N=127
11%
12%
11%
2018
2019
2020
Average Graduation Rate - Programs 4-6 Months
Standard Deviation

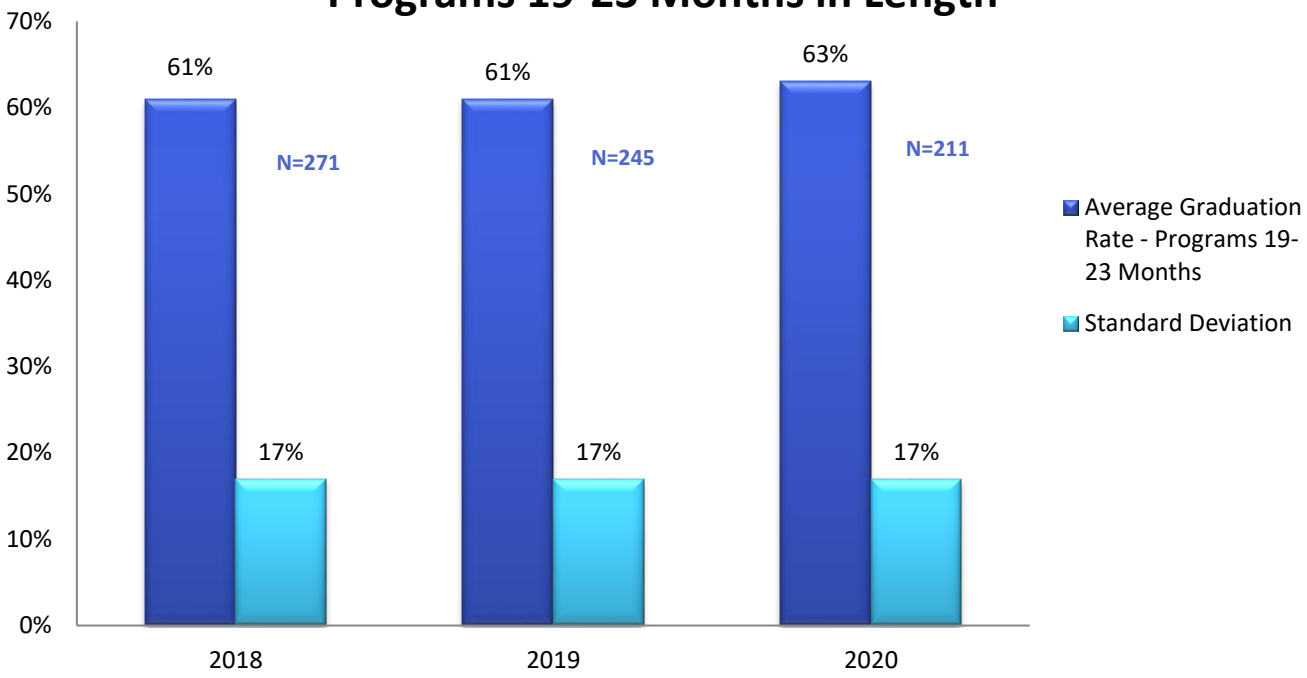

2018-2020 Average Graduation Rates
Programs 7-9 Months in Length
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
75%
76%
75%
N=520
N=517
N=513
12%
12%
12%
2018
2019
2020
Average Graduation Rate - Programs 7-9 Months
Standard Deviation


2018-2020 Average Graduation Rates
Programs 10-12 Months in Length
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
69%
68%
69%
N=662
N=617
N=639
13%
14%
14%
2018
2019
2020
Average Graduation Rate - Programs 10-12 Months
Standard Deviation

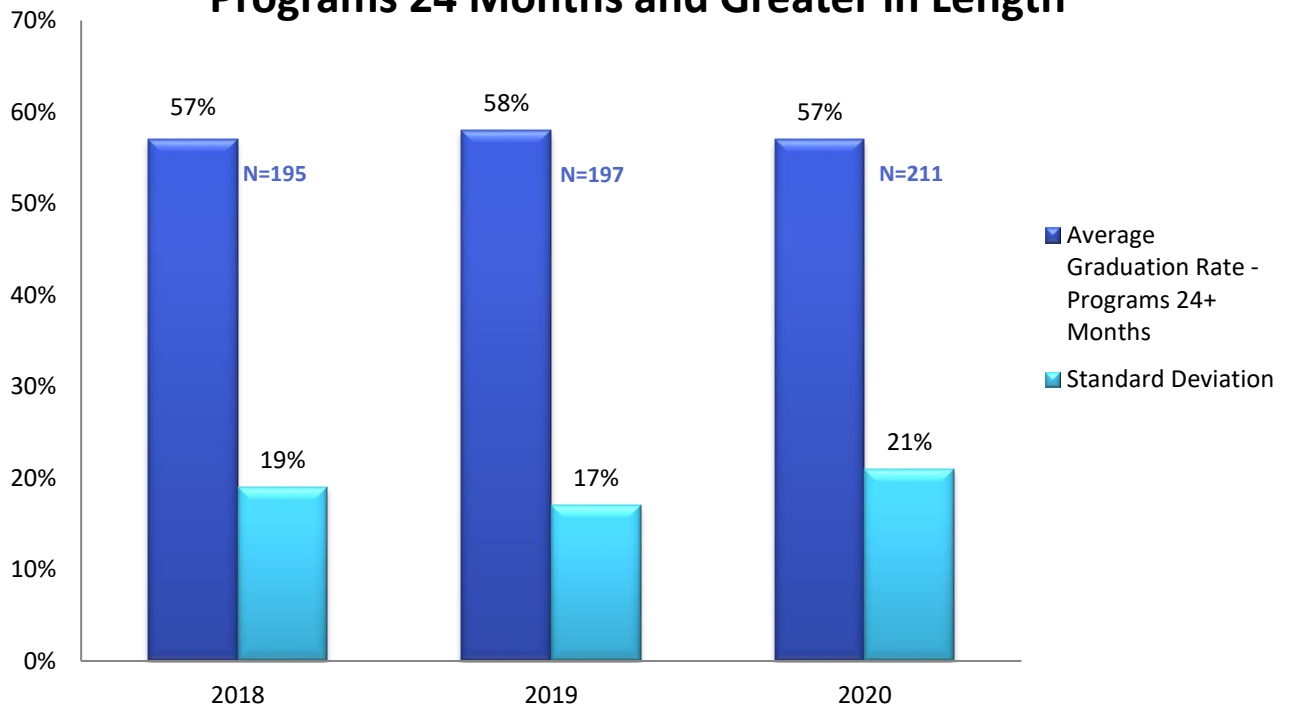

2018-2020 Average Graduation Rates
Programs 13-15 Months in Length
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
64%
65%
64%
N=334
N=335
N=310
14%
14%
15%
2018
2019
2020
Average Graduation Rate - Programs 13-15 Months
Standard Deviation

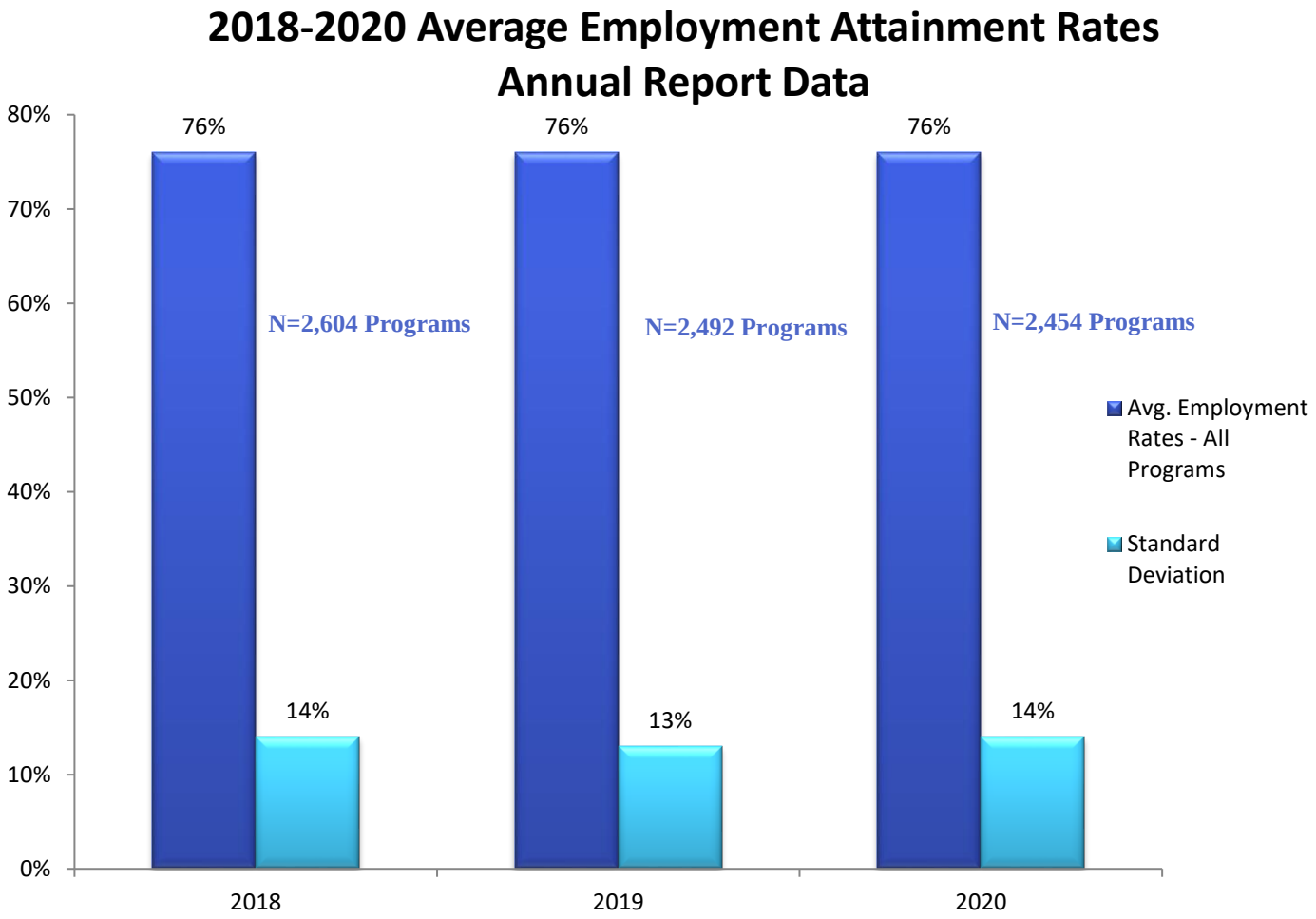

2018-2020 Average Graduation Rates
Programs 16-18 Months in Length
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
63%
61%
63%
N=372
N=330
N=327
18%
18%
18%
2018
2019
2020
Average Graduation Rate - Programs 16-18 Months
Standard Deviation

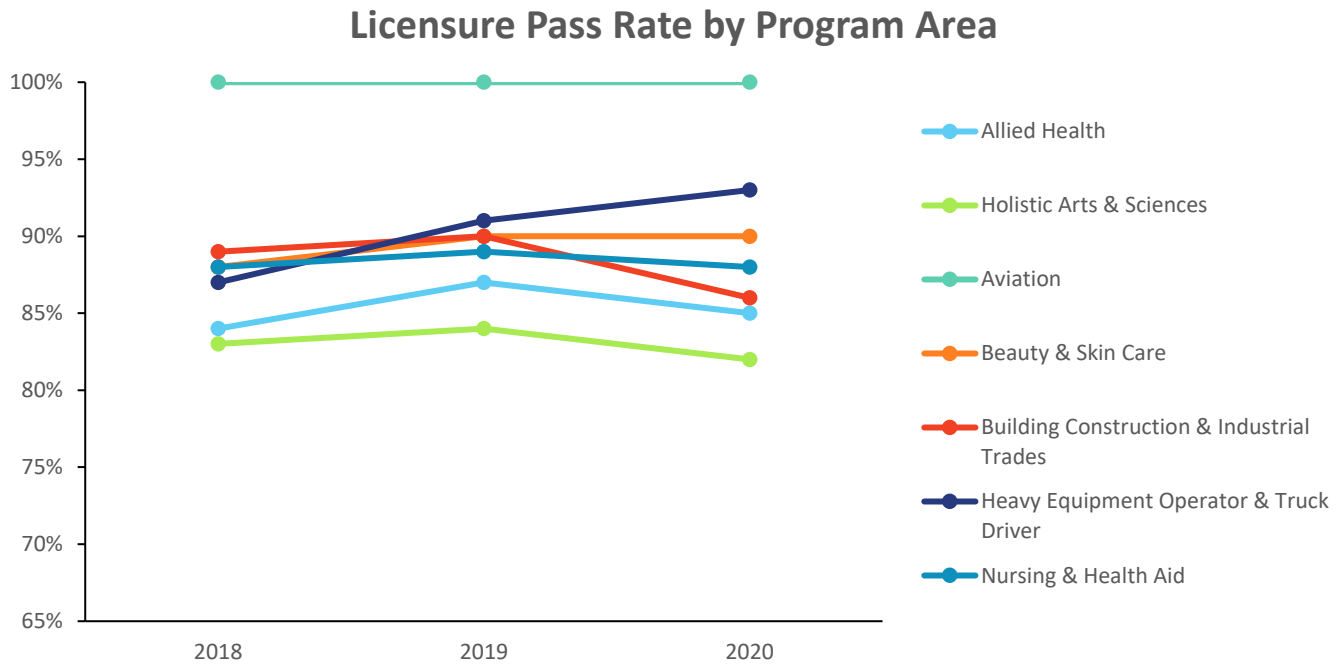
2018-2020 Average Graduation Rates
Programs 19-23 Months in Length



2018-2020 Average Graduation Rates
Programs 24 Months and Greater in Length

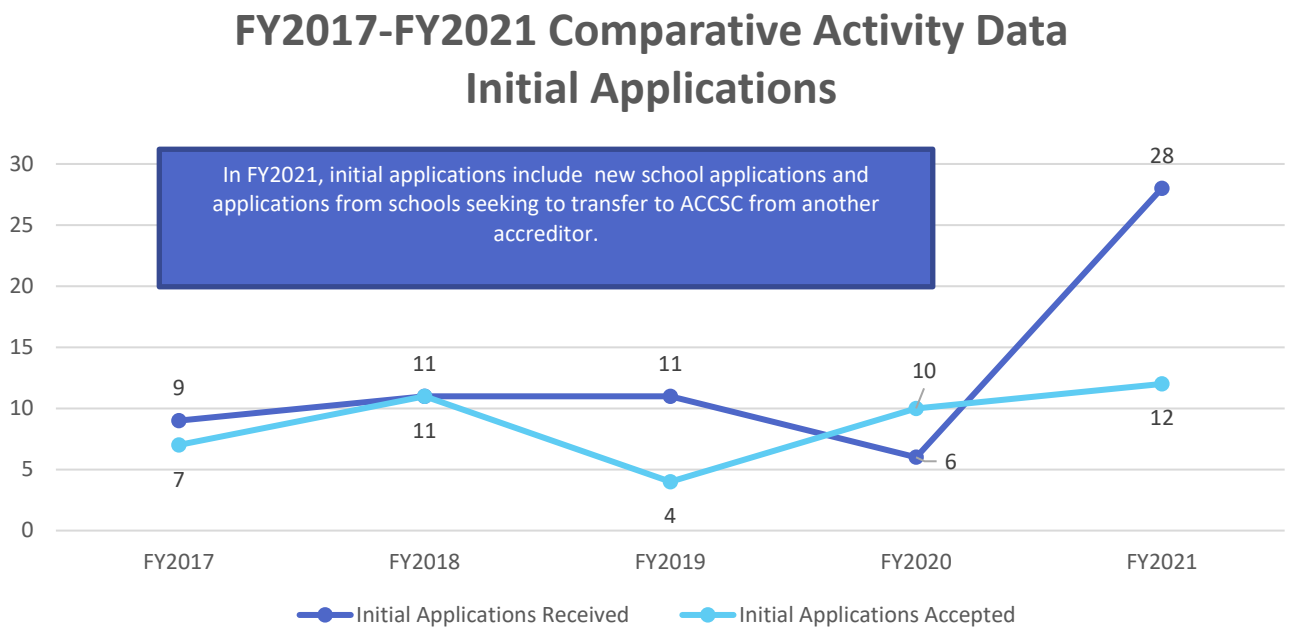


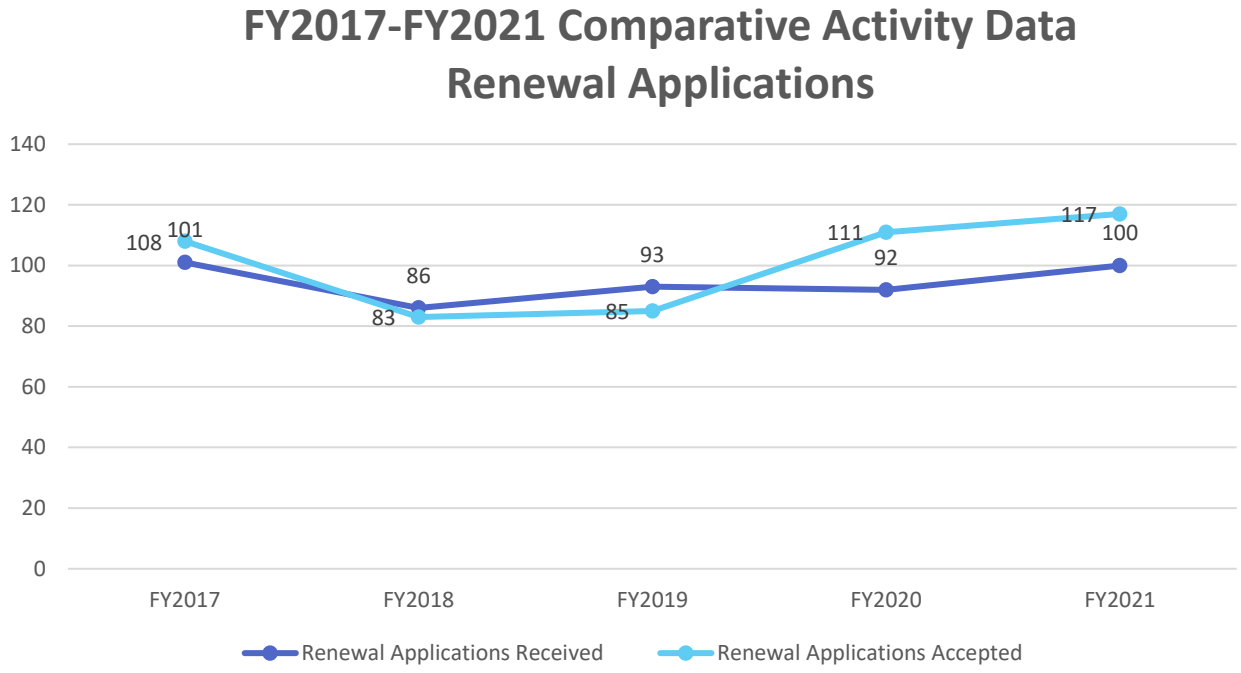

2018-2020 Average Employment Attainment Rates
Annual Report Data
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
76%
76%
76%
N=2,604 Programs
N=2,492 Programs
N=2,454 Programs
14%
13%
14%
2018
2019
2020
Avg. Employment Rates - All Programs
Standard Deviation


Licensure Pass Rate by Program Area
100%
95%
90%
85%
80%
75%
70%
65%
2018
2019
2020
Allied Health
Holistic Arts & Sciences
Aviation
Beauty & Skin Care
Building Construction & Industrial Trades
Heavy Equipment Operator & Truck Driver
Nursing & Health Aid

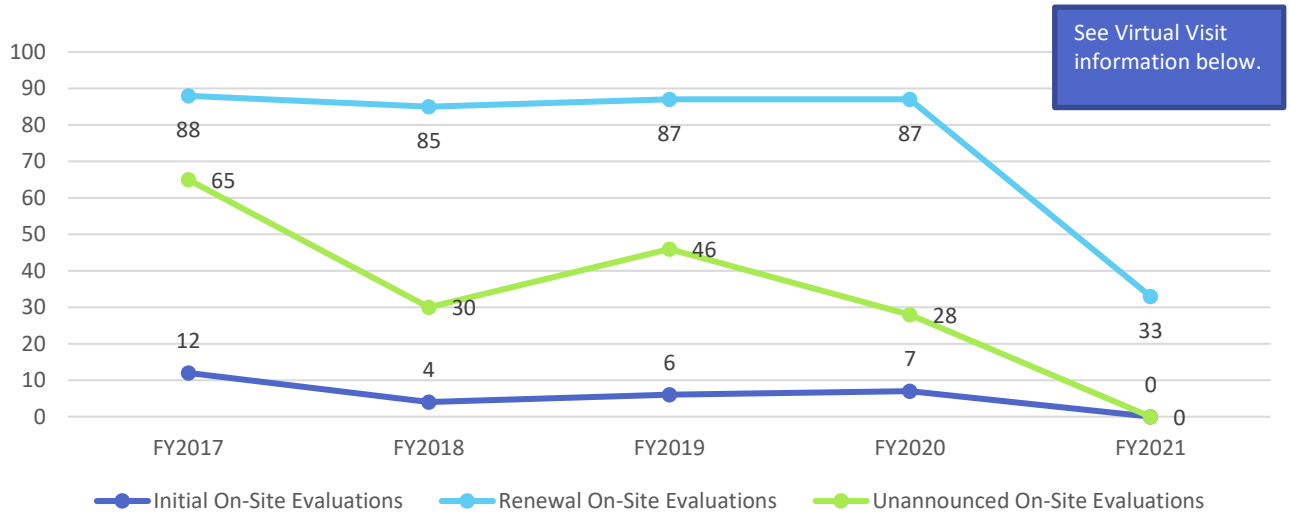
Annual Comparative ACCSC Activity Data
FY 2017-FY2021

Accreditation Activities

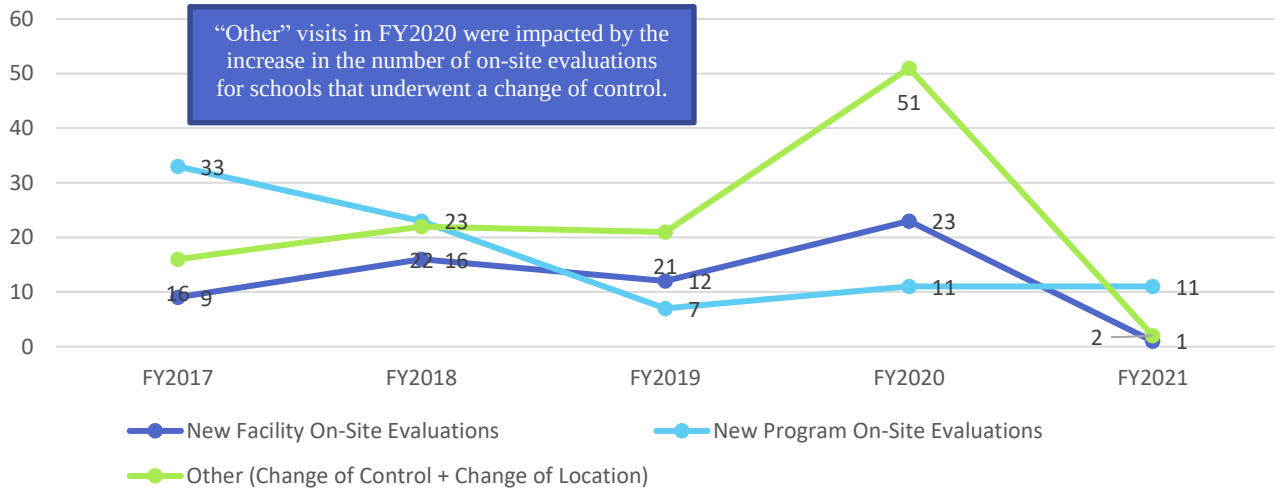


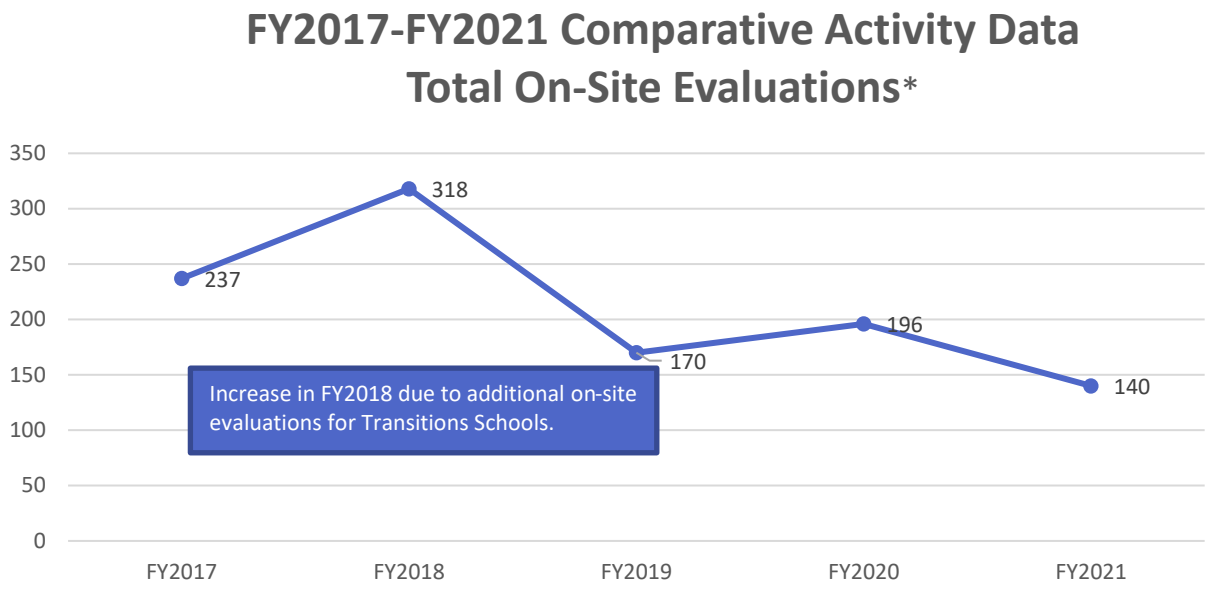


FY2017-FY2021 Comparative Activity Data
Accreditaton On-Site Evaluations



FY2017-FY2021 Comparative Activity Data
Substantive Change On-Site Evaluations





*Includes Virtual Visits as noted below.

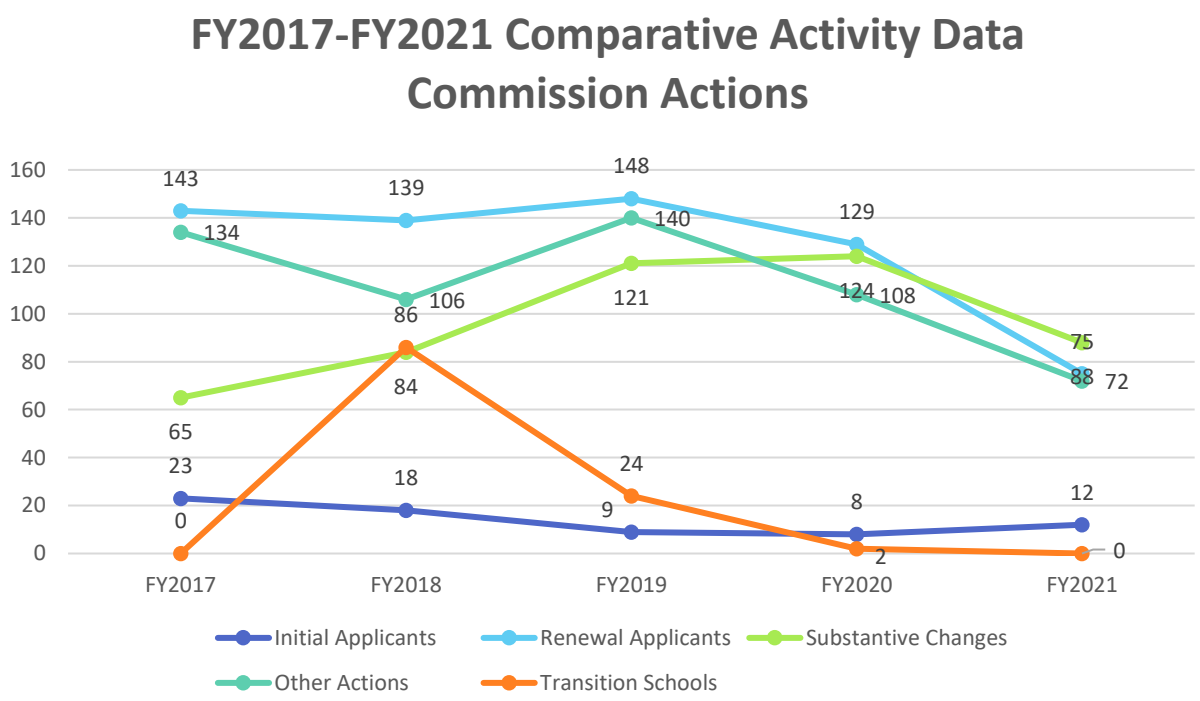
Virtual Visit Activities

Due to restrictions on travel because of the pandemic, all on-site evaluations were cancelled effective March 15, 2020. As such, the Commission approved the process to conduct virtual on-site evaluations with plans to conduct corresponding on-site evaluations once travel is again feasible. As there are no comparative data to date, a table representing the number of virtual visits that occurred FY2021 is provided below.

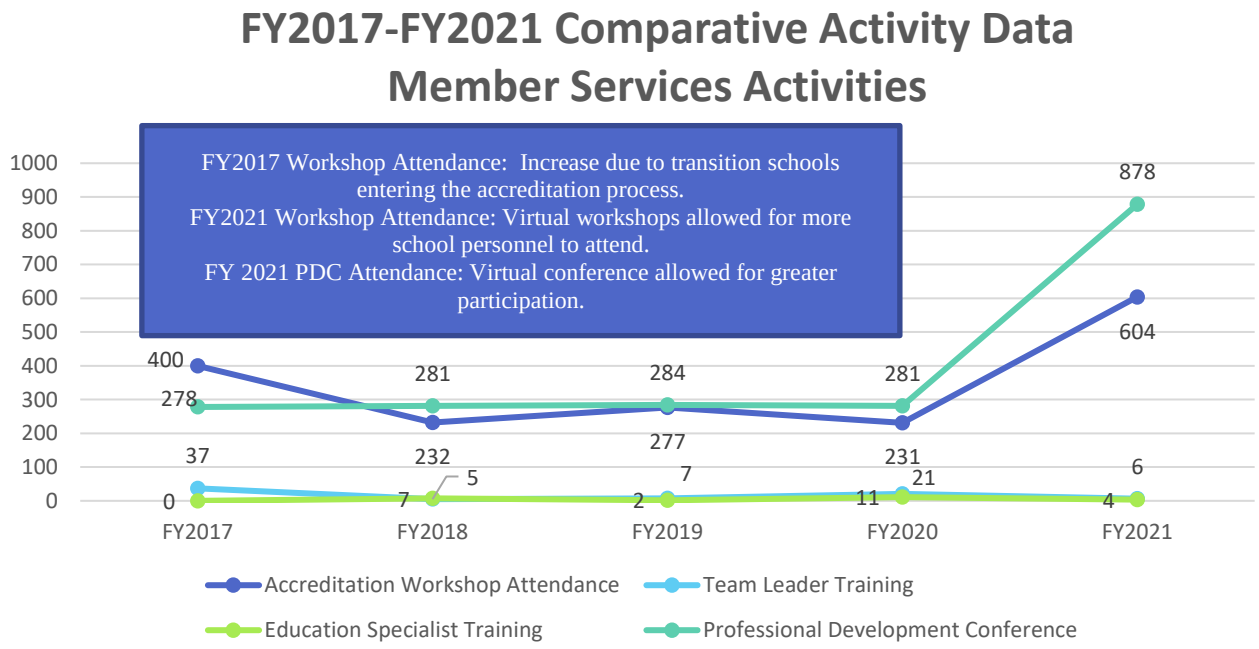
Virtual Visits	FY2021 Q1	FY2021 Q2	FY2021 Q3	FY2021 Q4	FY2021 Year-to-Date
Virtual Visits					
Orientation			4	0	4
Initial	0	0	1	0	1
Renewal	7	17	32	33	89
Substantive Change	1	2	7	36	46

In conjunction with Virtual Visits, the Accreditation Department provided training for 111 Team Leaders and Education Specialists since July 2020.

Commission Activities

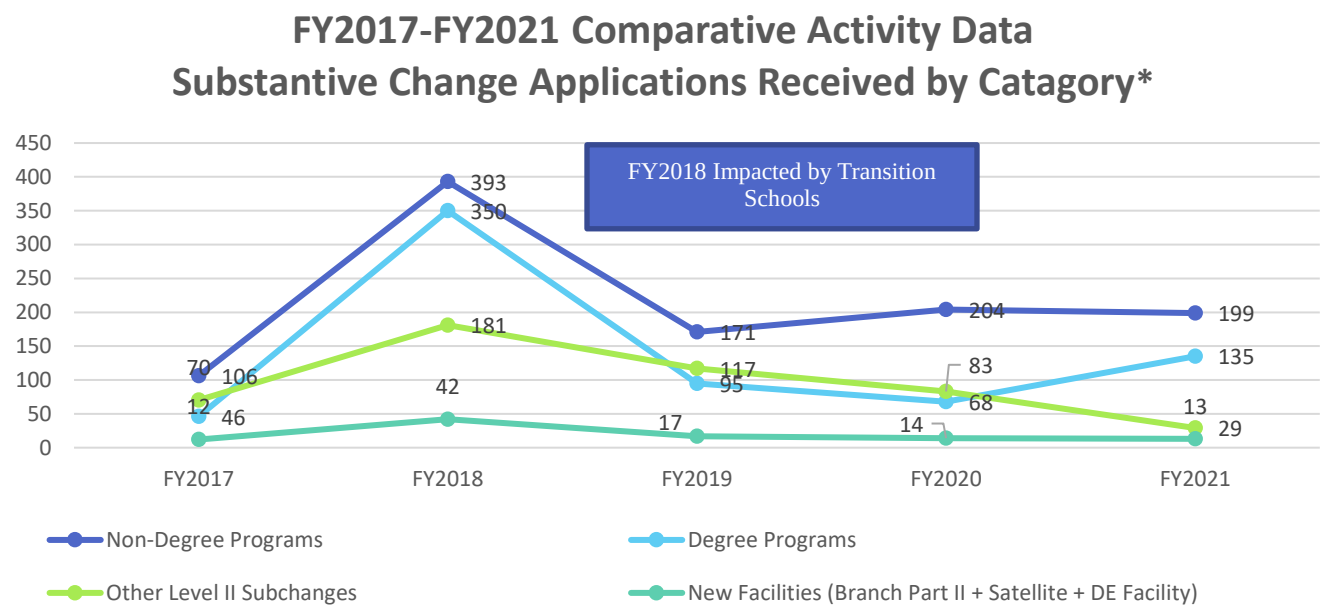


Member Services Activities

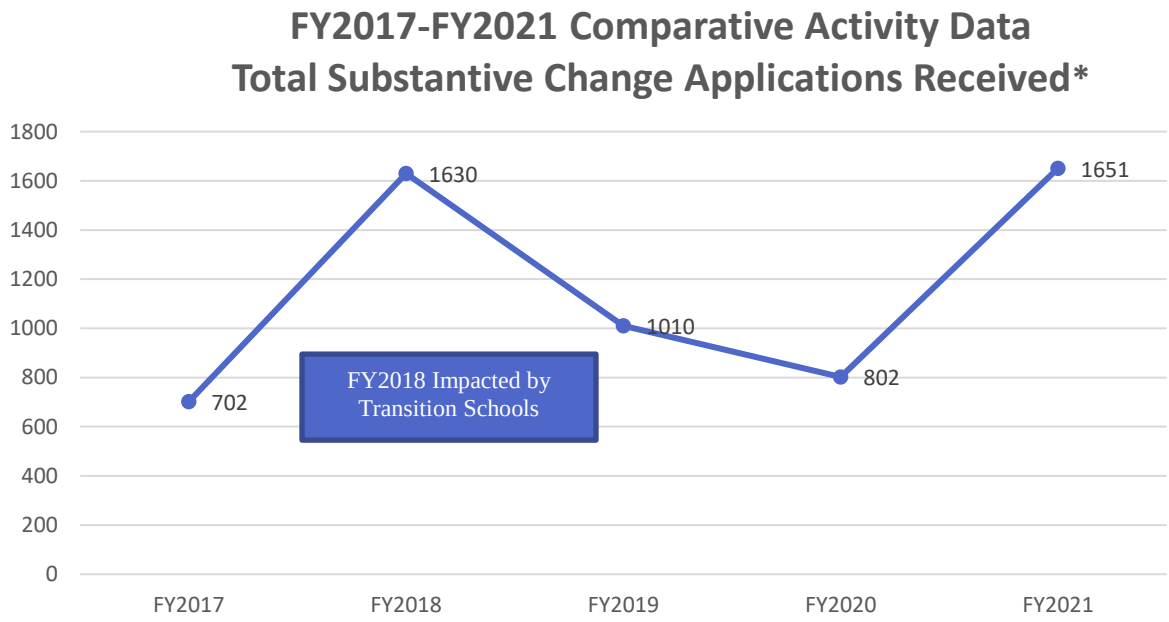


Institutional Review and Development Activities

Institutional Development

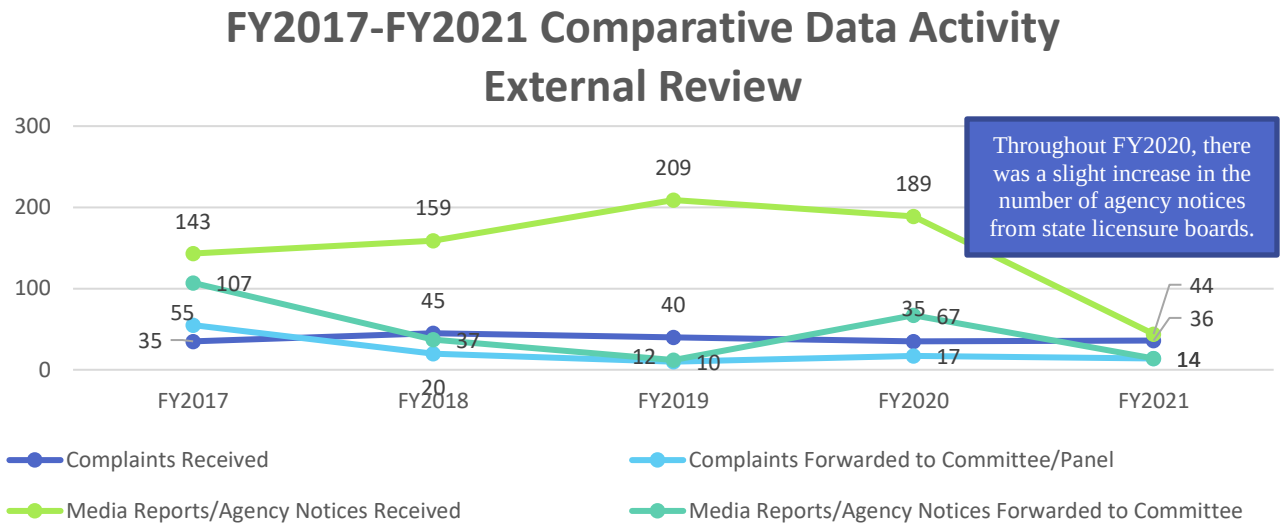


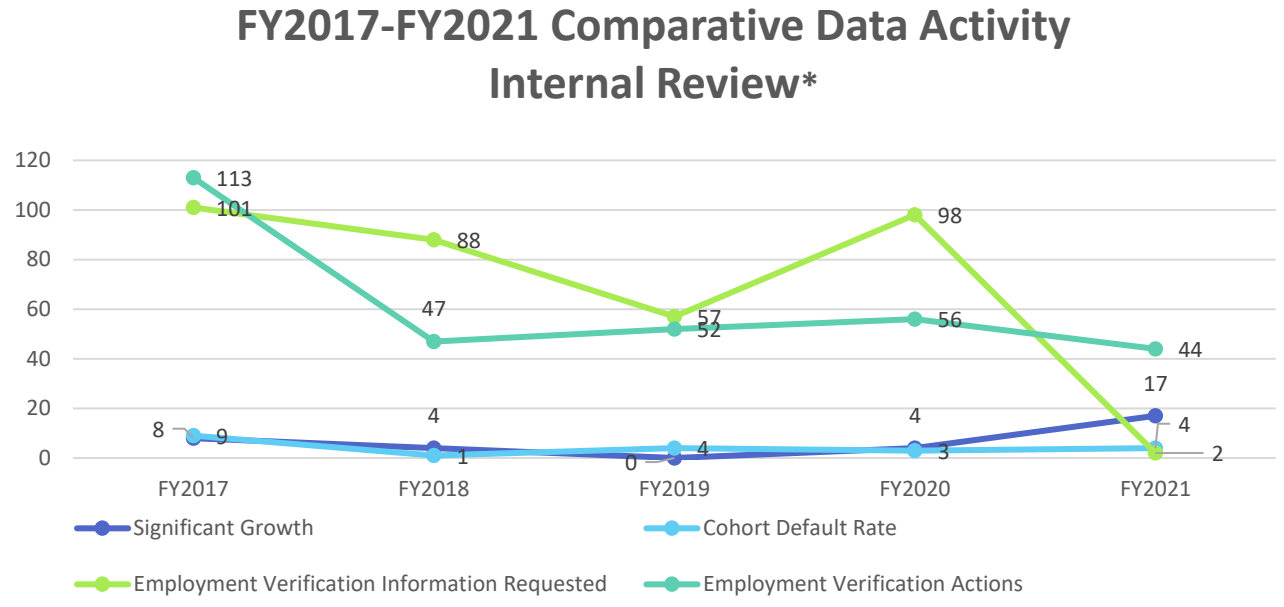
* As of July 1, 2020, the U.S. Department of Education regulations changed, allowing the Commission to assign senior staff review of more substantive change applications, thus reducing the number of Level II Subchanges requiring Commission review.



*FY2021 numbers impacted by the increase in the number of Applications for Initial Distance Education (356) and Applications for Expansion of Distance Education (252) as schools modified delivery modes to accommodate instruction due to the pandemic and planning for change post-pandemic.

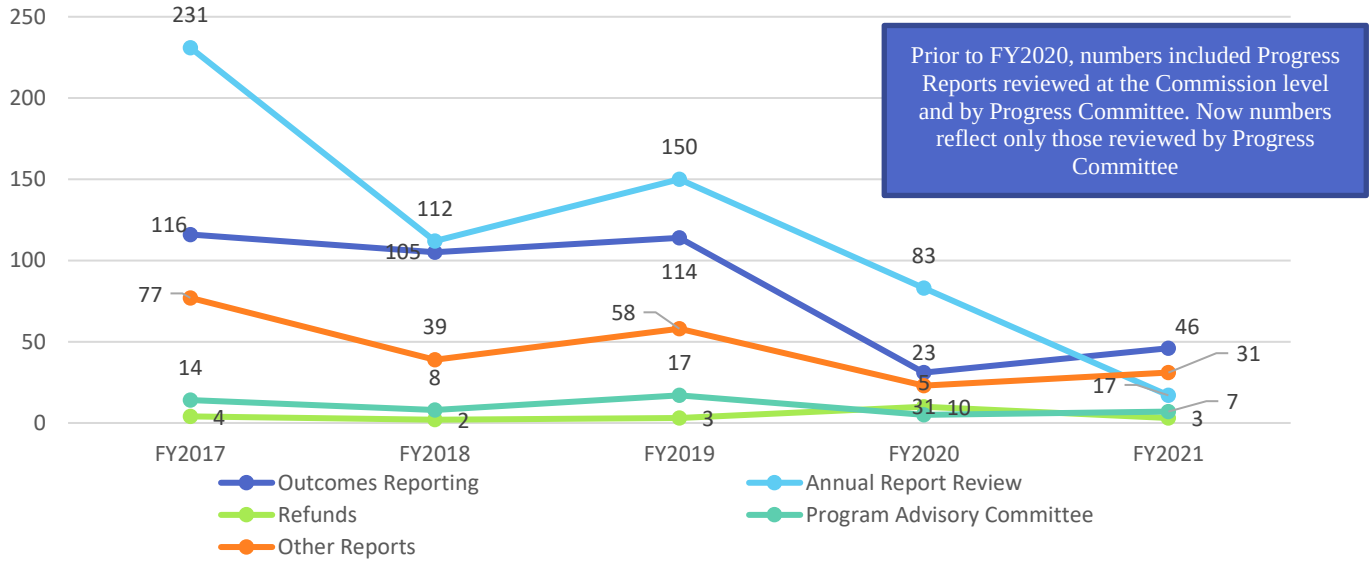
Institutional Review



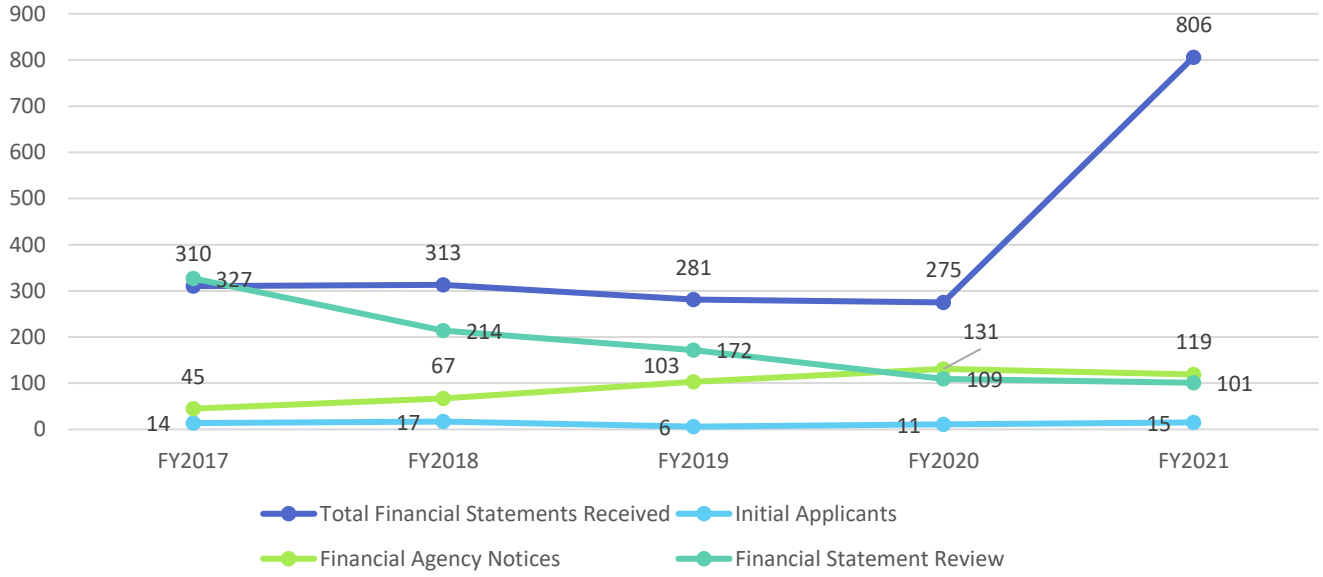


*The variation of Employment Verification Requests are due to the timeframe for review of the random employment verification sample conducted each year. Due to the pandemic, the random employment verification process was suspended in FY2021. It will be resumed in FY2022.

FY2017-FY2021 Comparative Data Activity
Progress Committee



FY2017-FY2021 Comparative Data Activity
Financial Review*



*The FY2021 number of Total Financial Statements Received is higher as schools who received extensions for statements originally due June 30, 2020 and December 31, 2020 due to the pandemic submitted audits later in the fiscal year.

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