

Trends

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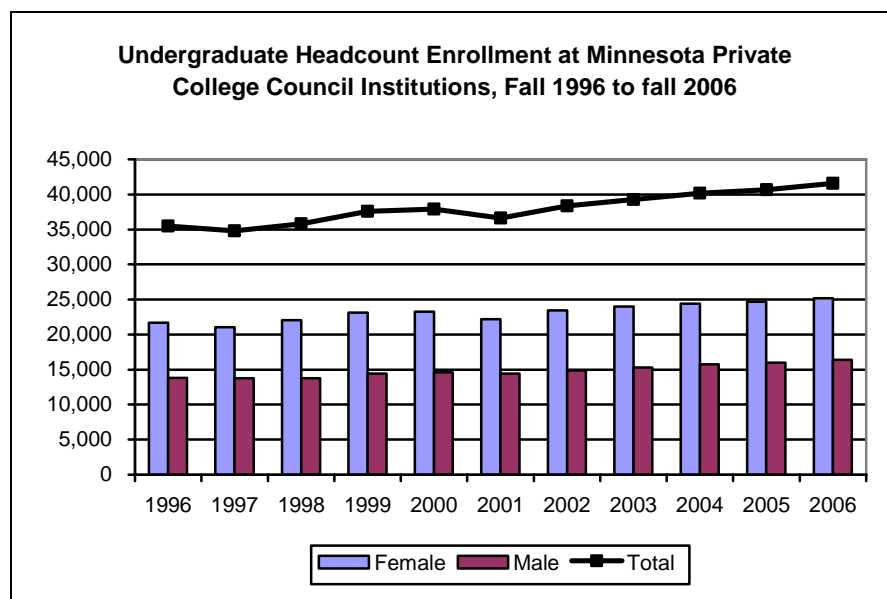
A Research Newsletter Prepared by Enrollment, Planning and Public Affairs

Undergraduate Enrollment Grows at Minnesota's Private Colleges

A report just released by the Minnesota Private College Council indicates that undergraduate enrollment at private colleges in the state rose by 2.2% this year over last year. Undergraduate headcount enrollment at the seventeen member institutions of the Minnesota Private College Council totaled 41,598 in fall 2006. Enrollment has grown by nearly 10% since 2000. The College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University together enrolled almost 10% of all private college undergraduates in the state last fall.

Undergraduate Enrollment Trends

Total undergraduate headcount enrollment at Minnesota's private colleges has grown by more than 17% in the last decade. All but one of the Minnesota Private College Council member institutions enrolls more students today than it did in fall 1996, and five have grown by more than 30%. At the College of Saint Benedict, enrollment increased by 5% between fall 1996 and fall 2006. At Saint John's, undergraduate enrollment has grown by nearly 14%.



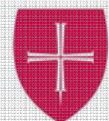
Enrollment has been most stable (has changed the least) at the seven private colleges classified as liberal arts institutions – a group that includes Saint Benedict, Saint John's, Carleton College, Concordia College, Gustavus Adolphus College, Macalester College, and St. Olaf College. Since fall 1996, undergraduate enrollment at those institutions has risen by less than four percent. In total, liberal arts colleges accounted for only 8% of the total growth in undergraduate enrollment at Minnesota's private colleges in the last ten years. In fall 2006, 40% of all private college students in the state were enrolled at liberal arts institutions, compared to 46% in fall 1996.

Gender. Women made up fully 60% of all private college students in Minnesota in fall 2006, a proportion that has changed little in the last decade. Women have comprised more than six in ten private college students since fall 1994, and more than half of total undergraduate enrollment since at least the mid-1980s.

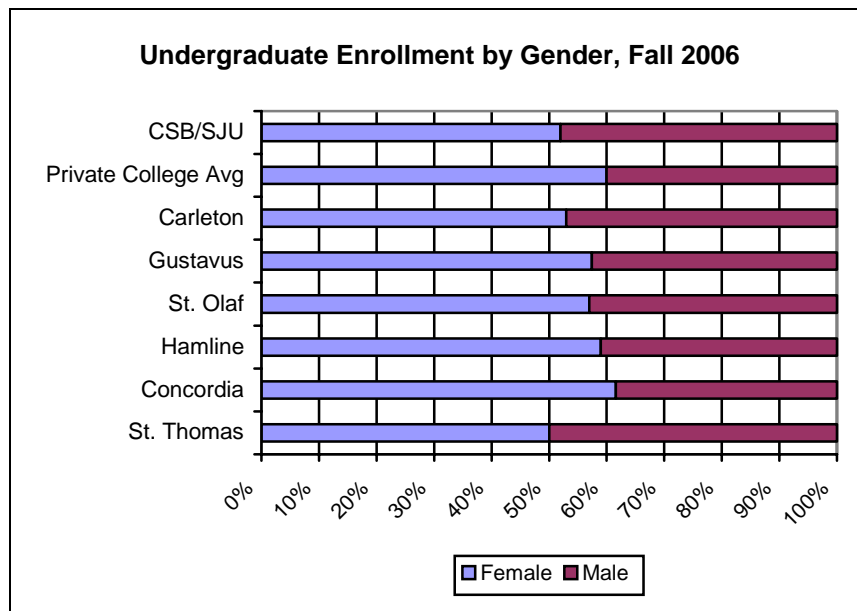
Minnesota's private colleges enroll one-third of all undergraduates in the state and nearly 40% of all new entering students.

Prepared by Jon McGee,
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COLLEGE OF
Saint Benedict



Saint John's
UNIVERSITY



Race and Ethnicity. American students of color made up more than 11% of all private college students in Minnesota in fall 2006. Last fall, private colleges in the state enrolled 4,400 students of color, the highest total ever and a gain of more than 65% since fall 1996. The racial and ethnic composition of private college student bodies varies significantly, particularly by geographic location of the college. Among the eight colleges located in the Twin Cities metro area, students of color on average comprise almost 15% of total undergraduate enrollment. However, at the nine private colleges located outside of the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area, non-white students typically make up just 8% of all undergraduate students.

International Students. At most private colleges in the state, international students make up only a very small percentage of all students. In fall 2006, international students made up less than 2% of all undergraduate students at 10 of the 17 member colleges of the Minnesota Private College Council. Though students from foreign countries make up only a fraction of all private college students, their enrollment numbers have increased by 44% since fall 1996.

The College of Saint Benedict and Saint John’s University enroll a significantly higher percentage of international students than private colleges as a group and in relation to our key competitors. International students made up 4.7% of total undergraduate enrollment at CSB/SJU last fall, compared to an average of 2.6% among all private colleges and 1% at Gustavus, 1.1% at St. Olaf, and 1% at St. Thomas. Last fall, only Macalester College enrolled more international students than CSB/SJU. Most notably, CSB/SJU enrolled more new international students than any other private college in the state.

New Entering Student Enrollment. In fall 2006, Minnesota’s private colleges enrolled 8,948 first-time new entering students, a gain of 1.5% over the prior year and 19% since fall 1996. Private colleges in the state today enroll 38% of all new entering students in Minnesota – more than either the University of Minnesota or MnSCU. Private colleges are particularly good at attracting students from outside of the state. Last fall, the state’s private colleges enrolled 80% of all new international students and 42% of all new non-Minnesota U.S. students.

It appears that most private colleges in Minnesota have worked in recent years to re-balance male and female enrollment. That clearly has resulted in more assertive efforts by those colleges to enroll young men. Those efforts have yielded results: all of the increase in new student enrollment at private colleges this year occurred among men. Enrollment of new entering male students rose by more than 7%, while enrollment of new female students fell by 2.5%. Male student enrollment has been increasing at faster rate than female enrollment since 1996. Over the last decade, new male enrollment at Minnesota’s private colleges rose by 25%, compared to a gain of 15% in new female enrollment.

On the Horizon

Over the last decade, new student enrollment at Minnesota's private colleges has by and large mirrored trends in the number of high school graduates and ACT test-takers in the state. Between 1996 and 2006, the number of new entering students at the state's private colleges increased by 19%. Over the same time period, the number of high school graduates in the state rose by 18% and the number of ACT test-takers increased by 26%. We will continue to track two trends related to high school graduates and ACT test-takers:

- The run-up in high school graduates in the state (and the five-state Upper Midwest region) has ended. In Minnesota, the number of high school graduates will remain largely unchanged between 2006 and 2010 – though the racial and ethnic characteristics (and the socioeconomic characteristics and college participation patterns) of the state's high school graduates will change significantly as the young population continues to diversify. New college student populations will change in size and characteristic as the pool of high school graduates changes.
- The number of female ACT test-takers in Minnesota has declined by 5% since 2003, while the number of male test-takers has increased by 1.3%. Why the change has occurred – and whether it will continue – is not clear. Typically, three-quarters of all female high school graduates and two-thirds of all male graduates take the ACT college entrance exam (less than ten percent of all Minnesota high school graduates take the SAT exam). The trend in ACT test-taking patterns is notable since entrance exams are a strong signal of interest in attending a four-year college (and still are required for admission to the vast majority of colleges in the state and nation).

For additional information, please contact Jon McGee at 5287 (jmcgee@csbsju.edu). Past issues of the *Trends* research newsletter are available at <http://www.csbsju.edu/institutionalresearch/trends/>.