

OUS Enrollment 2009 Legislative Session

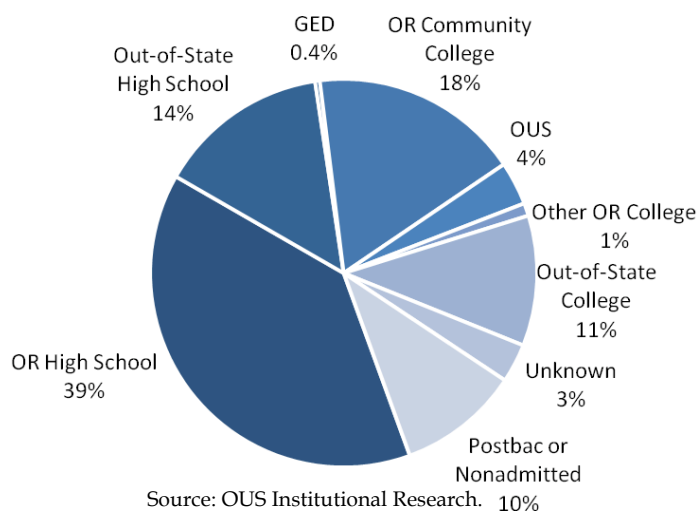
Overview

Enrollment in the Oregon University System grew sharply in fall 2008 to a record 86,546 students, an increase over fall 2007 of 5.2%, or almost 4,300 students. Following several years of comparatively shallow growth, the increase was the largest percentage jump since 2002. The record enrollment was distributed across the system; all campuses saw an increase, and six of the seven campuses, plus the branch campus in Bend, reached all-time highs. There were increases at nearly every student level, and undergraduate and graduate populations alike grew by about 5%. The increase in undergraduates is especially notable, since it promises to swell overall OUS enrollment for the next several years. Not only do undergraduates account for four-fifths of the OUS student population, and more than four-fifths of this year's growth, but a significant percentage of the undergraduate growth—about one-third—occurred at the freshman level. In fact, the fall 2008 class of 11,575 entering freshmen was the largest ever, eclipsing by 7.7% the previous record of 10,748 freshmen who entered in fall 2007. At the same time, the number of new undergraduates transferring into the university system also grew, from 6,775 in fall 2007 to 7,381 in fall 2008, an 8.9% increase. Together, these two groups will place sustained demand on the university system's capacity for undergraduate instruction as they progress toward a degree.

Influences on Enrollment

- **State funding.** A marked increase in funding for higher education by the 2007 Legislature spurred enrollment as students gained confidence in Oregon's commitment to their educational aspirations.
- **Financial aid.** With support from the Governor and the Legislature, the state doubled need-based aid to undergraduates through the Oregon Opportunity Grant and adopted a Shared Responsibility Model for determining financial aid, whereby students accept responsibility for meeting a portion of college costs through work, savings, loans, and scholarships; the state, after allowing for federal grants, has committed to contributing the difference. Within OUS, the number of students receiving OOG awards increased from 8,476 in fall 2007 to 15,433 in fall 2008, total awards grew from \$13.4 million to \$33.8 million, and the average award rose from \$1,584 to \$2,192.
- **More high school graduates.** Oregon's high schools are producing more graduates as the baby boom echo grows up. In 2008, the graduating class was more than 20% larger than 10 years earlier. At the same time, high school graduates increasingly regard postsecondary education as the path to prosperity. More high school graduates, coupled with a higher college participation rate, means that Oregon's universities are seeing more incoming students.
- **New transfers.** After declining in recent years, the population of new transfer students resumed its growth in fall 2008, up 8.9% over the previous year and up 28% over 10 years. With increases in state funding, tuition at OUS campuses is competitive with peer universities', making OUS attractive to transfer students. Just as important, enrollment has rebounded at Oregon community colleges after dropping precipitously earlier in this decade. Oregon's community colleges contribute about half of the new transfers who enter OUS in the fall.
- **Graduate student growth.** Graduate enrollment increased in fall 2008, especially at the master's level and among nonadmitted graduates (up 10.9% over last year), as Oregonians pursue course work to strengthen

Source of OUS Undergraduates, Fall 2008



their professional credentials in response to a weakening economy.

2008 OUS Enrollment Summary

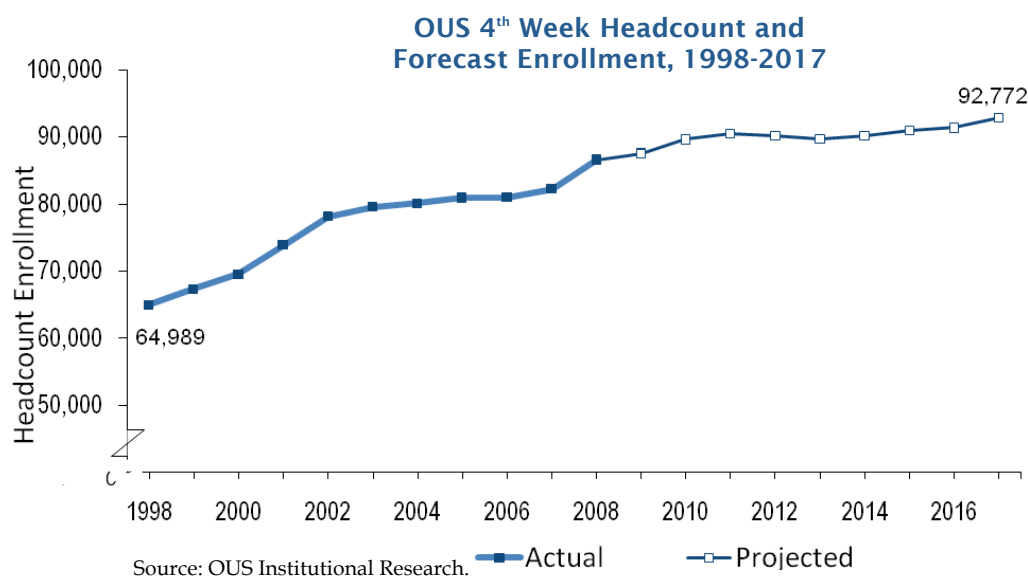
Over the past 10 years, the university system has grown at about double the national rate, adding 21,557 students since 1998, an increase of 33.2%. Most of the growth – more than 90% – has occurred among undergraduates, whose numbers have increased by 38%, compared to 14.8% for graduates. As testament to Oregon’s attractiveness to out-of-state students, the population of nonresident undergraduates grew by 49% over the 10 years. The heftier tuition they pay helped make OUS more affordable to resident undergraduates, whose numbers grew by a very substantial 35% over the same period.

The university system enrolled 71,022 undergraduates in fall 2008, 5.4% more than the 67,403 who enrolled in fall 2007. Graduate enrollment also was up. OUS enrolls far fewer graduate students than undergraduate students, so the absolute increase was much smaller – 678 more graduates versus 3,619 more undergraduates, for a total graduate population of 15,524 – but at 4.6% growth, the percentage gain was similarly robust. Doctoral students were the only graduate category whose numbers stayed flat, although the population has increased by 13% since 1998. Enrolling and nurturing these advanced-degree seekers is vital to the research enterprise at OUS universities and to their ability to attract top faculty.

OUS also has seen an increase in students of color. Three-quarters of the university system’s students are Oregon residents. African Americans, Asian/Pacific Islanders, Latinos, and Native Americans have grown as a percentage of Oregon’s high school graduates, so the demographic make-up of the university system has changed. In fall 2008, OUS’s 12,860 students of color constituted 14.9% of the student body, representing an increase of 1,007 students, or 8.5%, from the year before.

Historical and Projected Enrollment

OUS enrollment shows a steady upward trend. An increasing number of students enroll from the Portland area, either attending locally at Portland State University or at a sister institution elsewhere in the state. In 1998, Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington Counties sent 15,007 admitted undergraduates to OUS, 40% of the total admitted undergraduates from Oregon; by 2008, the number had climbed to 24,791, 49% of the total. OUS anticipates continued strong demand, as most growth in high-wage jobs in Oregon and in the nation is projected to occur in areas requiring at least a bachelor’s degree.¹



Enrollment projections incorporate a number of factors:

1. Term-to-term and year-to-year retention rates at OUS campuses.
2. Anticipated enrollment increases or decreases from academic program and admissions policy changes.
3. Historical enrollment patterns of transfer and returning students.
4. Final fall enrollment.
5. Applications and admissions for the upcoming fall term.
6. Projections of Oregon high school graduates.

¹ Oregon Employment Department; *Worksource Oregon 2008*, Oregon Wage Information.

