



# 2024 Fall Enrollment

Iowa Community Colleges



Department of Education

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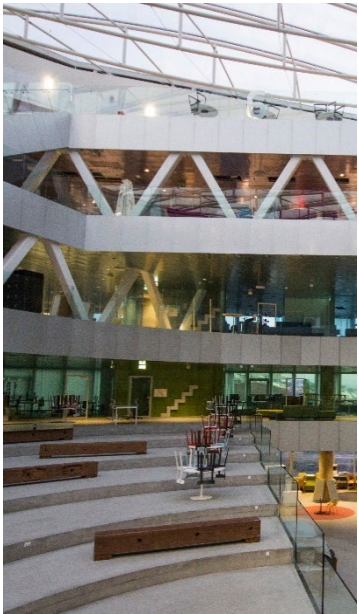
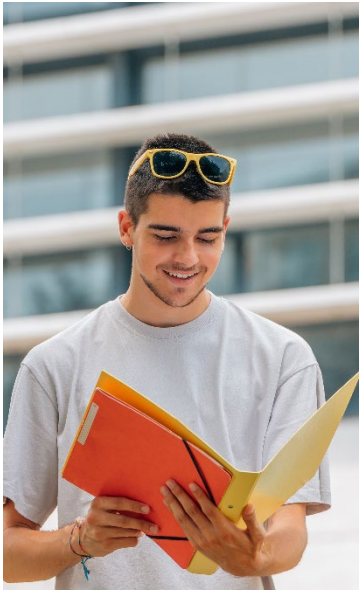
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# Executive Summary

The Iowa Department of Education (Department) collects enrollment information from all 15 community colleges. This report summarizes several aspects of community college enrollment.

- Total Fall 2024 enrollment increased 1.4 percent over Fall 2023, while part-time and full-time student enrollment increased by 1.5% and 1.3%, respectively.
- Part-time enrollment stayed greater than full-time enrollment with a record high of 66.7 percent of total fall enrollment.
- The share of enrollment of nontraditional college-age students in total enrollment increased by 0.2 percent.
- Joint enrollment increased 2.3 percent which is less than the increase last year, 7.9 percent.
- Career and Technical Education (CTE) enrollment decreased 0.2 percent.
- Online enrollment increased 4.9 percent and online credit hours increased 5.8 percent. Online enrollment as a percentage of total enrollment increased to 50.8 percent, which is 1.7 percent higher than in Fall 2023. Notably, during the fall of AY 2019, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic the percentage of total enrollment was significantly lower (38.2 percent).
- The proportion of economically disadvantaged students increased from 20.3 percent to 23.9 percent. The percentage of students with disabilities increased from 3.2 percent to 3.4 of the total student population.
- Compared to last fall, the proportion of enrolled minority students increased by 0.8 percent, to 25.7 percent. These numbers are a return to pre-pandemic percentages in the fall of AY 2019. This overall increase was reflected in all sub-categories. Pacific Islanders and students declaring multiple races had the biggest rates of increase, 13.9 percent and 11.4 percent, respectively. Number of Hispanic students increased by 3.7 percent while American Indians increased by 4.3 percent. In addition, numbers of Black students and Asian students increased by 7.5 percent and 2.7 percent, respectively.
- In Iowa, female enrollment increased by 2.4 percent while male enrollment decreased by 0.4 percent.
- Similar to last year, students with no program of study comprised the largest group (39.3 percent) of total enrollment, followed by students in college parallel programs (30.8 percent).
- Percentages of new enrollments (20.6 percent of all), and new enrollments immediately after high school completion (“immediate enrollees”, 8.8 percent of all), demonstrate continuous recovery from declining numbers over of falls 2021 and 2022, though it is 0.6 percent lower than last fall 2023. Nationwide, new postsecondary enrollments went down by over 5.0 percent [5]. Percentages of males among immediate enrollees (47.2) are higher than in general enrollment (43.1). Meanwhile, percentages of racial/ethnic minority students immediately enrolling (24.7) is a bit lower than those for general enrollment (25.7).



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# Students

The U.S. economy is still on its recovery path from COVID-19 pandemic [1]. While the improvements in local economic conditions have been significant, the residual effects of this short-term crisis still persist. According to the recent research, both of these macroeconomic forces impact the enrollment in community colleges. On one hand, positive changes in local economic conditions are expected to decrease the enrollment [2], on the other hand, an ongoing recovery from the recent pandemic is expected to increase enrollment [3]. As a result, Iowa community college enrollment is keeping its upward trend, as seen in national postsecondary enrollments [5]. In fall 2024, 86,582 students enrolled, a 1.4 percent increase from last fall. While still behind pre-pandemic levels (88,375 in fall 2019), this is the third fall with a continuous increase in community college enrollments.

Overall, there was a year-to-year decrease in fall enrollment between 2010 and 2021. The 2020 decrease is the largest in the last eight years, which is due to COVID-19 (Figure 1).



Enrollment  
**86,582**  
students



**1.4%**  
increase  
from last fall

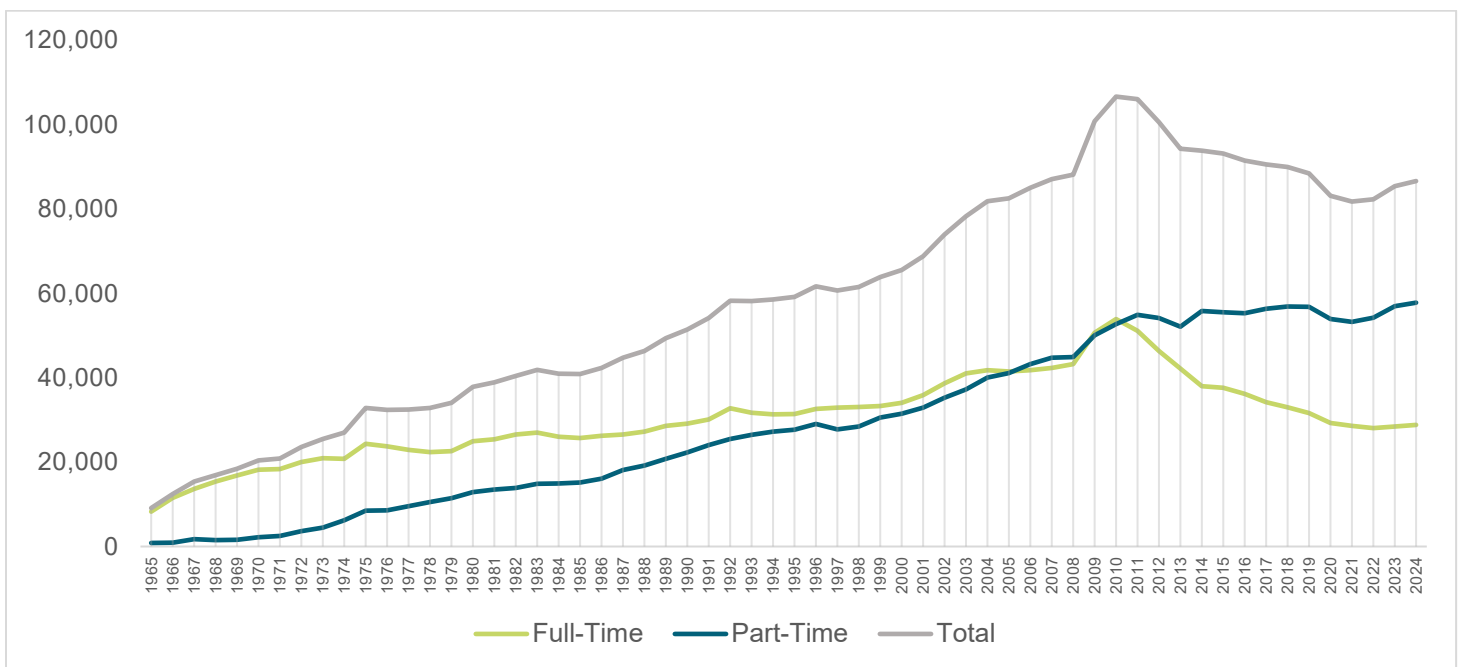


Enrollment increased  
at **9** colleges  
and decreased at 6



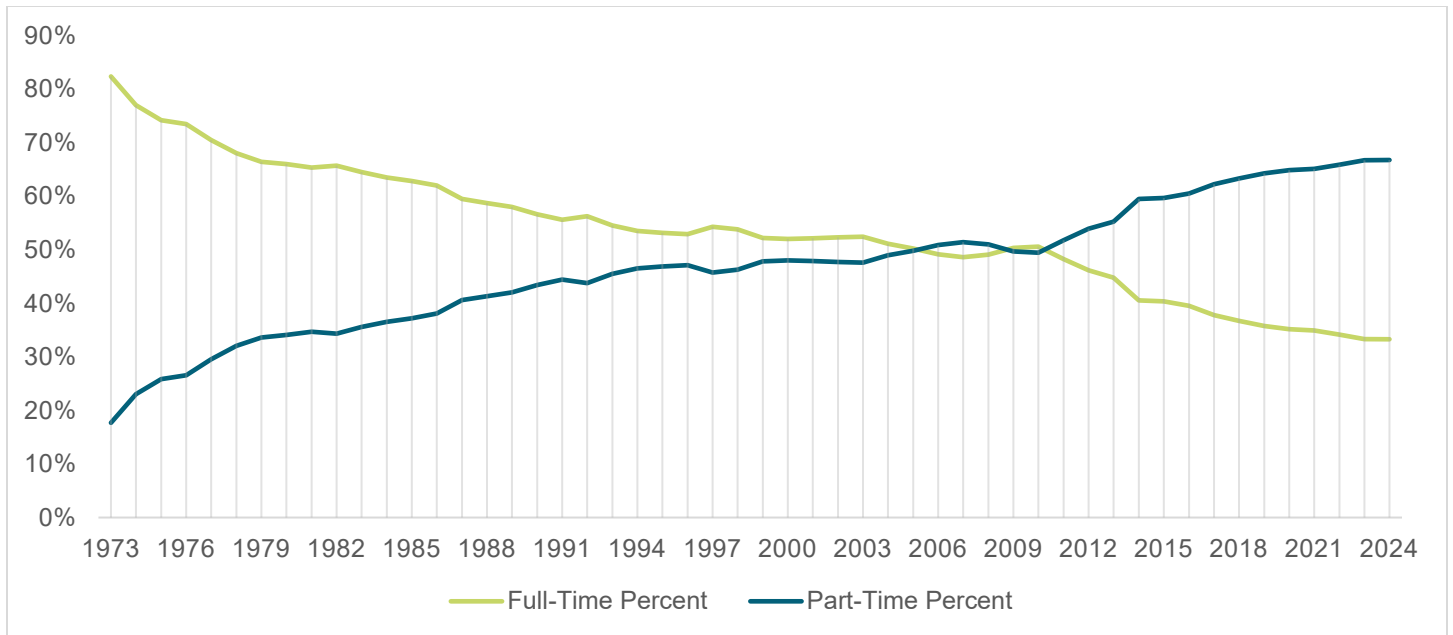
**33.3%** of  
students enrolled  
full time

**Figure 1. Fall Enrollment by Status: 1965-2024**



The proportion of full-time and part-time students did not change significantly compared to last fall. The number of full-time students (i.e., students who enrolled in more than 12 credit hours) as a percentage of total fall enrollment has steadily declined from 82.3 percent in 1973 to 33.3 percent in 2024 (Figure 2). This fall, 28,808 of students enrolled full-time, compared to 28,436 students (33.3 percent) last fall.

**Figure 2. Historical Enrollment of Full-time Students and Part-time Students as a Percent of Total Enrollment: 1973-2024**



While the percentage of full-time students has been decreasing since 1973, the percentage of part-time student has increased steadily over the years. In fall 2024, 57,774 students were enrolled as part-time students, which accounted for 66.7 percent of total enrollment, compared to 56,926 part-time students (66.7 percent of total enrollment) last fall. In terms of change from last fall, part-time enrollment and full-time enrollment increased by 1.5 percent and 1.3 percent, respectively. Table 1 shows the full-time, part-time and total enrollment of each community college. This fall, the enrollment increased at nine colleges, and decreased at six colleges (Table 1).



# Student Demographics

In fall 2024, 56.9 percent of students enrolled were female, 42.7 percent were male, and 390 students did not report gender. Females have outnumbered males nationally in higher education since 1980. In terms of change, male enrollment in Iowa community colleges decreased 0.4 percent while female enrollment increased 2.4 percent.

## Fall Enrollment Highlights



**56.9%**  
of students  
are female



Median age  
of students  
**19**

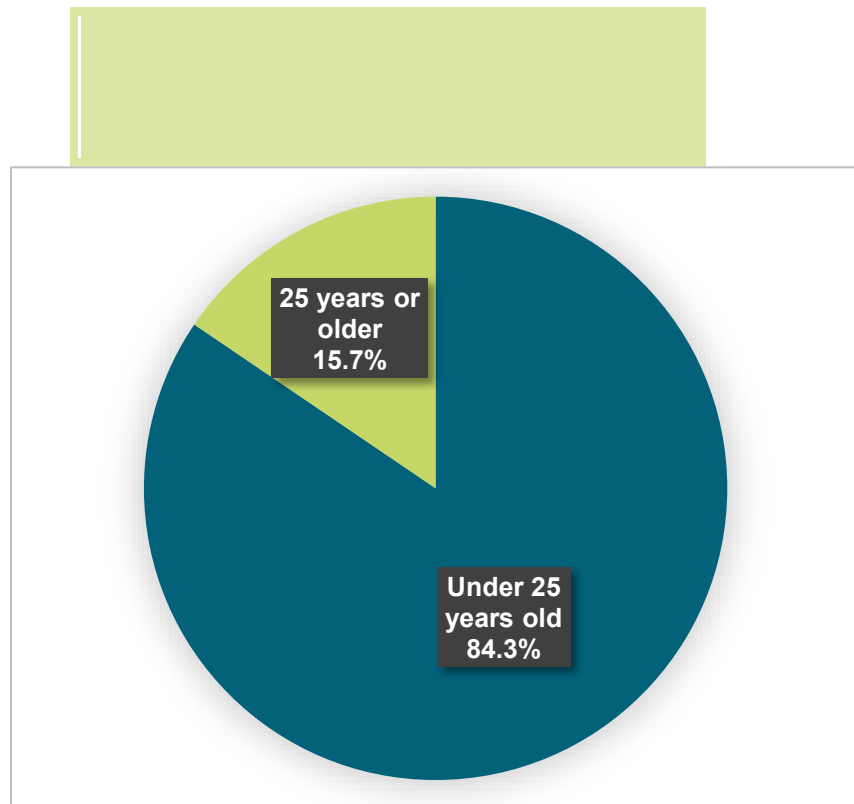


**25.7%**  
of students  
are minorities

This fall, the average student age is 21 years old, the same as last fall. However, the median age increased from 18 to 19 years old. Students under 18 (44.6 percent) and between 18 and 22 (36.2 percent) are the two largest age groups that Iowa's community colleges serve, followed by students age between 23 and 26 (6.0 percent), and between 31 and 39 (5.5 percent). Other age groups in total comprised less than 10 percent of fall enrollment this year.

Disaggregated by traditional (under 25 years) and nontraditional college age (25 years and older) groups, enrollment percentages were 84.3 and 15.7 percent, respectively (Figure 3). Last fall, there was a 0.5 percent increase in the under 25 years age group. Figure 4 displays the change of Iowa community college data in terms of enrollment by age group from 2023 to 2024. Compared to 2023, the portion of students that are between 18 and 20 years old is smaller than the other ages groups.

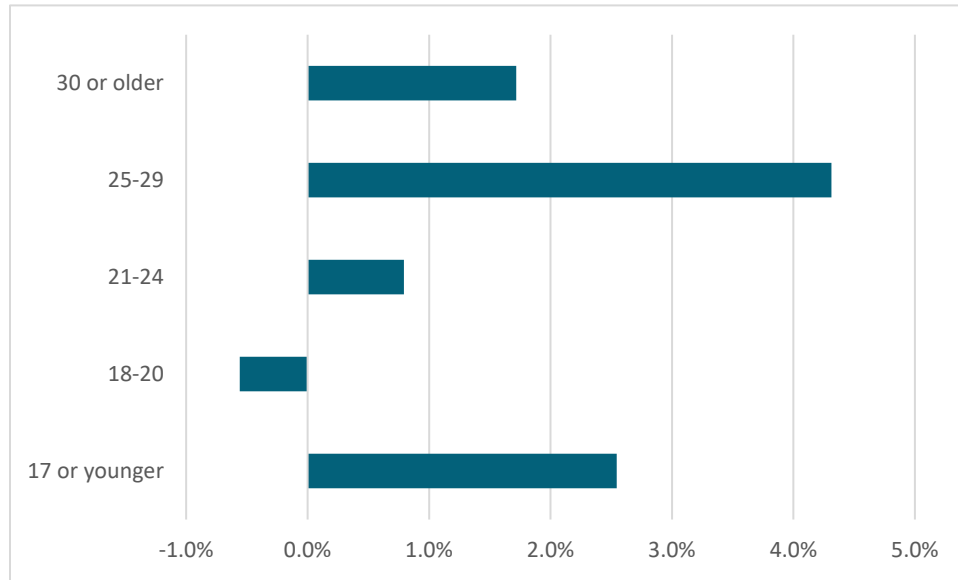
Around 91 percent of students enrolled in Iowa's community colleges this fall were Iowans. Residents from other states accounted for 7.4 percent of enrolled students, and foreign nationals comprised 1.3 percent (Figure 5). Compared to last year, the number of enrolled Iowans increased 0.1 percent, and the number of foreign students stayed the same,



while the number of out-of-state students decreased 0.1 percent.

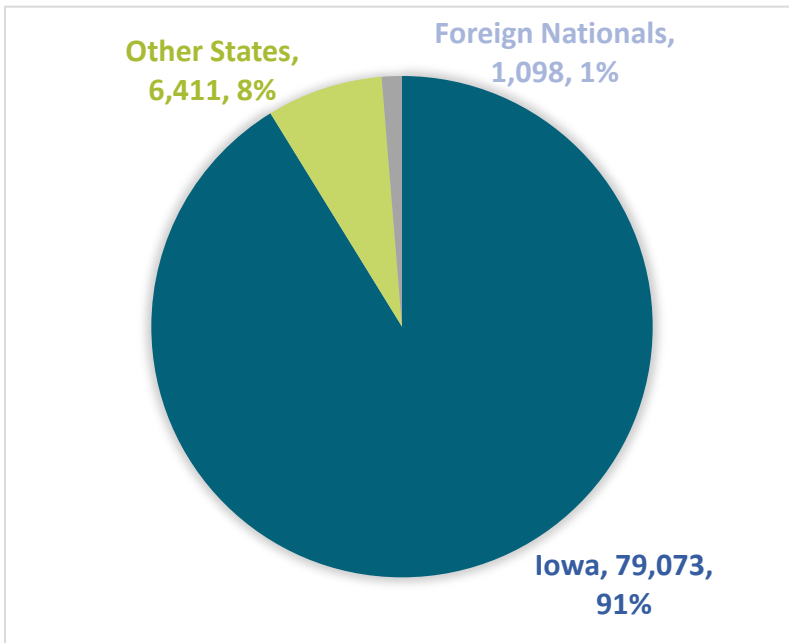
**Figure 4. Enrollment Distribution by Age Group**

This fall, among the 80,957 students who reported their race and ethnicity, 25.7 percent were minorities, 0.8 percent higher than last fall. Hispanics were the second largest racial/ethnic group (10.9 percent), followed by African-Americans (8.2 percent) and Asians (2.7 percent). 3.1 percent indicated they were part of multiple racial and ethnic groups. American Indians and Pacific Islanders, respectively, constituted 0.5 percent and 0.2 percent. Figure 6 displays the change in enrollment by race/ethnicity from 2023 to 2024. It shows that Iowa community colleges had increase in enrollment in all race/ethnicity groups with the biggest increase in multiracial students by 11.4%.



This fall also saw year-over-year changes in some traditionally underserved student populations: single parents represented 2.6 percent of total enrollment (3.3 percent last year); economically disadvantaged students increased to 23.9 percent from 20.3 percent and students with disabilities increased by 0.2 percent to 3.4 percent.

**Figure 5. Fall 2024 Enrollment by Residency**

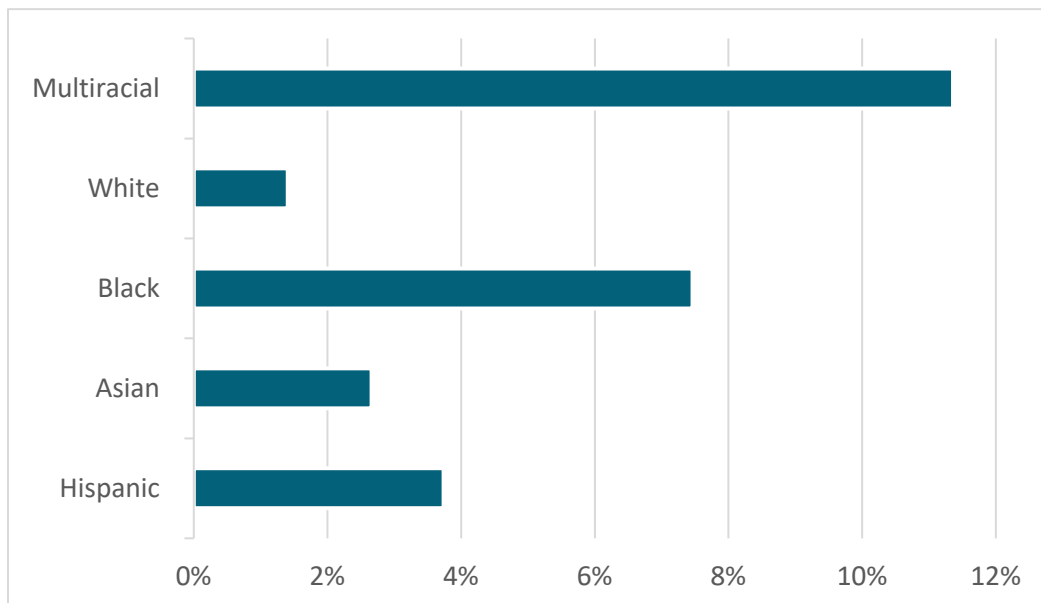




**Table 1. Fall 2024 Enrollment by College**

Community College	Total	Full-time #	Full-time %	Part-time #	Part-time %	Change from Last Year
Northeast Iowa	4,622	918	19.9%	3,704	80.1%	5.4%
North Iowa Area	2,662	1,196	44.9%	1,466	55.1%	7.7%
Iowa Lakes	2,027	849	41.9%	1,178	58.1%	-2.6%
Northwest Iowa	1,871	634	33.9%	1,237	66.1%	5.6%
Iowa Central	4,975	2,695	54.2%	2,280	45.8%	0.8%
Iowa Valley	2,565	1,228	47.9%	1,337	52.1%	-0.3%
Hawkeye	5,120	1,835	35.8%	3,285	64.2%	6.8%
Eastern Iowa	7,426	1,979	26.6%	5,447	73.4%	4.2%
Kirkwood	12,765	4,138	32.4%	8,627	67.6%	0.8%
Des Moines Area	23,697	5,770	24.3%	17,927	75.7%	-3.0%
Western Iowa Tech	5,486	1,813	33.0%	3,673	67.0%	8.1%
Iowa Western	5,588	2,285	40.9%	3,303	59.1%	-0.8%
Southwestern	1,566	582	37.2%	984	62.8%	-4.1%
Indian Hills	3,184	1,620	50.9%	1,564	49.1%	-1.6%
Southeastern	3,028	1,266	41.8%	1,762	58.2%	18.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>86,582</b>	<b>28,808</b>	<b>33.3%</b>	<b>57,774</b>	<b>66.7%</b>	<b>1.4%</b>

**Figure 6. Percent Change in Enrollments from Fall 2023 to Fall 2024 by Race and Ethnicity**



# Academics

While total Iowa community college enrollment increased by 1.4 percent this fall, registered credit hours went up at higher rate of 1.8 percent. Students registered for 721,586 credit hours, compared to 709,013 credit hours last fall. On average, students enrolled in 8.3 credit hours in the fall semester, which is the same as last fall. Figure 7 displays the change of total credit hours, and the average credit hours registered per student over the last five years. It is noteworthy that although total credit hour enrollment has increased, the average credit hours per student has remained relatively unchanged.

Table 2 summarizes fall registered credit hours by college. Full-time students registered for 400,633 credit hours, accounting for 55.5 percent of total credit hours registered. This is a slight decrease from last fall, when full-time students comprised 56.0 percent of total registration hours. This fall, the average course load for full-time students was 13.9 credit hours, compared to 14.1 credit hours last fall.

## Student Academic Highlights

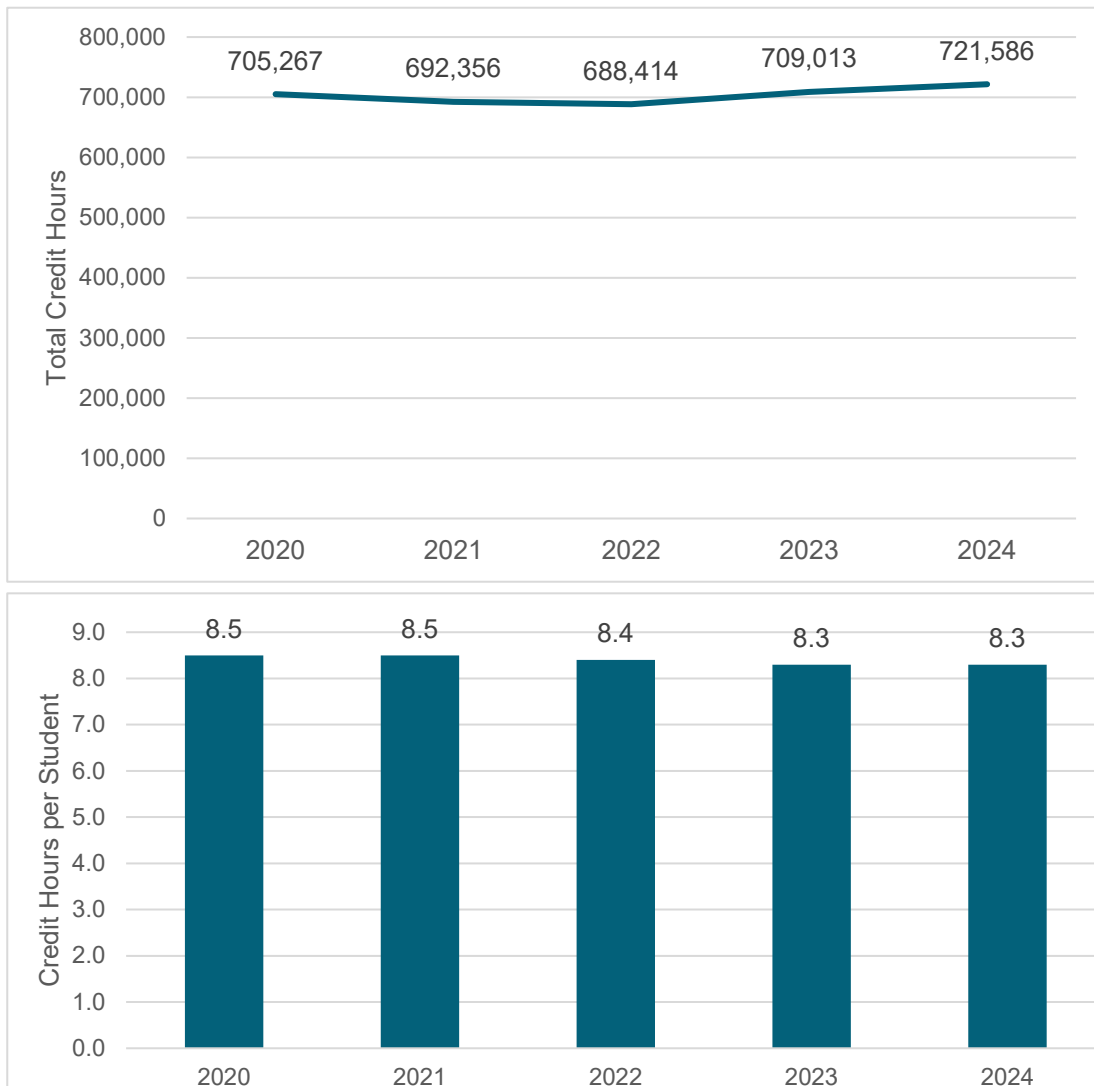


**8.3**  
Average number of credit hours



Total Credit Hours up **1.8%** since last year

**Figure 7. Total Credit Hours (Top) and Average Credit Hours Registered: 2020-2024**



Meanwhile, part-time students registered for 320,954 credit hours this fall, accounting for 44.5 percent of total credit hours, a 0.5 percent increase from last fall. The average course load for part-time students decreased slightly from 5.8 last fall to 5.6 credit hours this fall.

**Table 2. Summary of Fall 2024 Credit Hours by College**

College	Total	Credit Hours Contributed by Full-Time Students #	Credit Hours Contributed by Full-Time Students %	Credit Hours Contributed by Part-Time Students #	Credit Hours Contributed by Part-Time Students %	Average Course Load for Full-Time Students	Average Course Load for Part-Time Students
Northeast Iowa	32,580	13,079	40.1	19,501	59.9	14.2	5.3
North Iowa Area	25,005	16,998	68.0	8,007	32.0	14.2	5.5
Iowa Lakes	18,713	12,661	67.7	6,052	32.3	14.9	5.1
Northwest Iowa	16,327	9,650	59.1	6,677	40.9	15.2	5.4
Iowa Central	51,647	38,210	74.0	13,437	26.0	14.2	5.9
Iowa Valley	25,515	18,395	72.1	7,120	27.9	15.0	5.3
Hawkeye	43,937	26,298	59.9	17,639	40.1	14.3	5.4
Eastern Iowa	58,719	26,615	45.3	32,104	54.7	13.4	5.9
Kirkwood	108,881	57,189	52.5	51,692	47.5	13.8	6.0
Des Moines Area	174,234	79,696	45.7	94,538	54.3	13.8	5.3
Western Iowa Tech	47,201	25,914	54.9	21,287	45.1	14.3	5.8
Iowa Western	52,724	32,333	61.3	20,392	38.7	14.1	6.2
Southwestern	14,181	8,438	59.5	5,743	40.5	14.5	5.8
Indian Hills	24,214	17,031	70.3	7,183	29.7	10.5	4.6
Southeastern	27,711	18,128	65.4	9,583	34.6	14.3	5.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>721,586</b>	<b>400,633</b>	<b>55.5</b>	<b>320,954</b>	<b>44.5</b>	<b>13.9</b>	<b>5.6</b>

# Program Type

Programs offered by community colleges are generally categorized as “college parallel” (or general and transfer arts and sciences), CTE or general studies (Associate of General Studies, AGS). College parallel programs prepare students for matriculation into four-year colleges or universities, while CTE programs prepare students for the workforce. AGS allows students to receive a two-year degree with a custom-selected set of courses not leading to a specific occupation or direct transfer. Students who declared two or more different types of programs were reported as a separate group. Students who were not eligible, or were not willing to declare their programs of study for a variety of reasons (e.g., high school students taking college credits as joint enrollment), were identified as a group with no program of study (noted as “No POS” in Figure 8).

## Program Type Highlights



**30.8%**  
students in college parallel programs



**6.6%**  
decrease in college parallel students

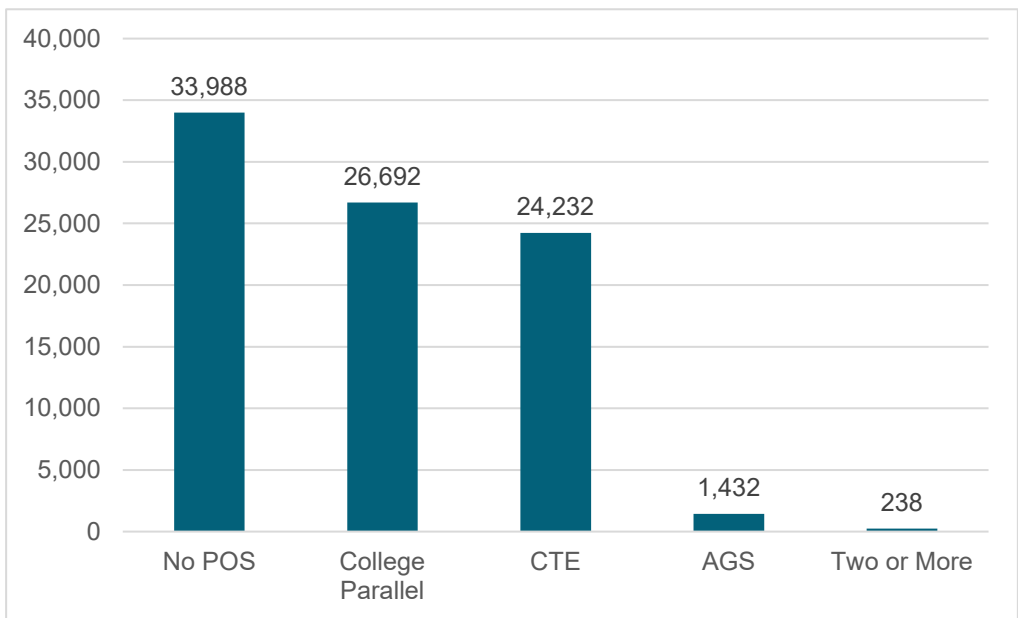


**39.3%**  
did not declare program of study



**0.2%**  
decrease in CTE enrollment

## Figure 8. Fall 2024 Enrollment by Program Type



As shown in Figure 8, students with no program of study comprised the largest group, with 33,988 students, accounting for 39.3 percent of total enrollment. The next largest group of students declared college parallel programs (26,692, accounting for 30.8 percent), followed by students in CTE programs (24,232, or 28.0 percent). This fall, 1,432 students enrolled in AGS programs (1.7 percent), and 238 students declared two or more different types of programs.

As compared to last year, number of students with no program of study increased by 9.5 percent, students in CTE programs decreased 0.2 percent and students with two or more programs increased from 98 to 238. The number of students in college parallel decreased by 6.6 while students in AGS programs increased by 2.9 percent.

# Transfer Major Programs

In December 2017, the Iowa Association of Community College Presidents unanimously approved a Department proposal to establish a process to permit community colleges to adopt transfer majors. This process has now been authorized through Iowa Administrative Code 281 21.3. Transfer majors are designed to guide students to take program-specific coursework within their associate of arts (AA) or associate of science (AS) degrees that will transfer seamlessly into related majors at four-year institutions with the goal of:

- improving communication and transfer efficiency among institutions;
- providing students with a defined pathway toward their academic goals;
- supporting a more data-informed assessment/articulation process;
- avoiding excessive credits and decreasing time to degree completion and
- making postsecondary education more affordable, thus reducing student debt.

## Student Academic Highlights



**5,691**

students enrolled in transfer major programs



**1,205**

students in business

This fall, there are 28 potential transfer major disciplines available to community college students, depending on which colleges are offering them. In the fall 2024 enrollment data, there are 5,679 enrolled transfer major students across 27 of these disciplines (Figure 9), and across Iowa’s 15 colleges (Figure 10). The most popular transfer major disciplines for these students include: business, with 1,205 enrollments (21.2 percent); psychology, with 931 enrollments (16.4 percent); elementary education and training, with 704 enrollments (12.4 percent) and criminal justice with 381 enrollments (6.7 percent). These four disciplines represent 56.6 percent of fall 2024 transfer major enrollments.

**Figure 9. Distribution of Transfer Major Students by Discipline**

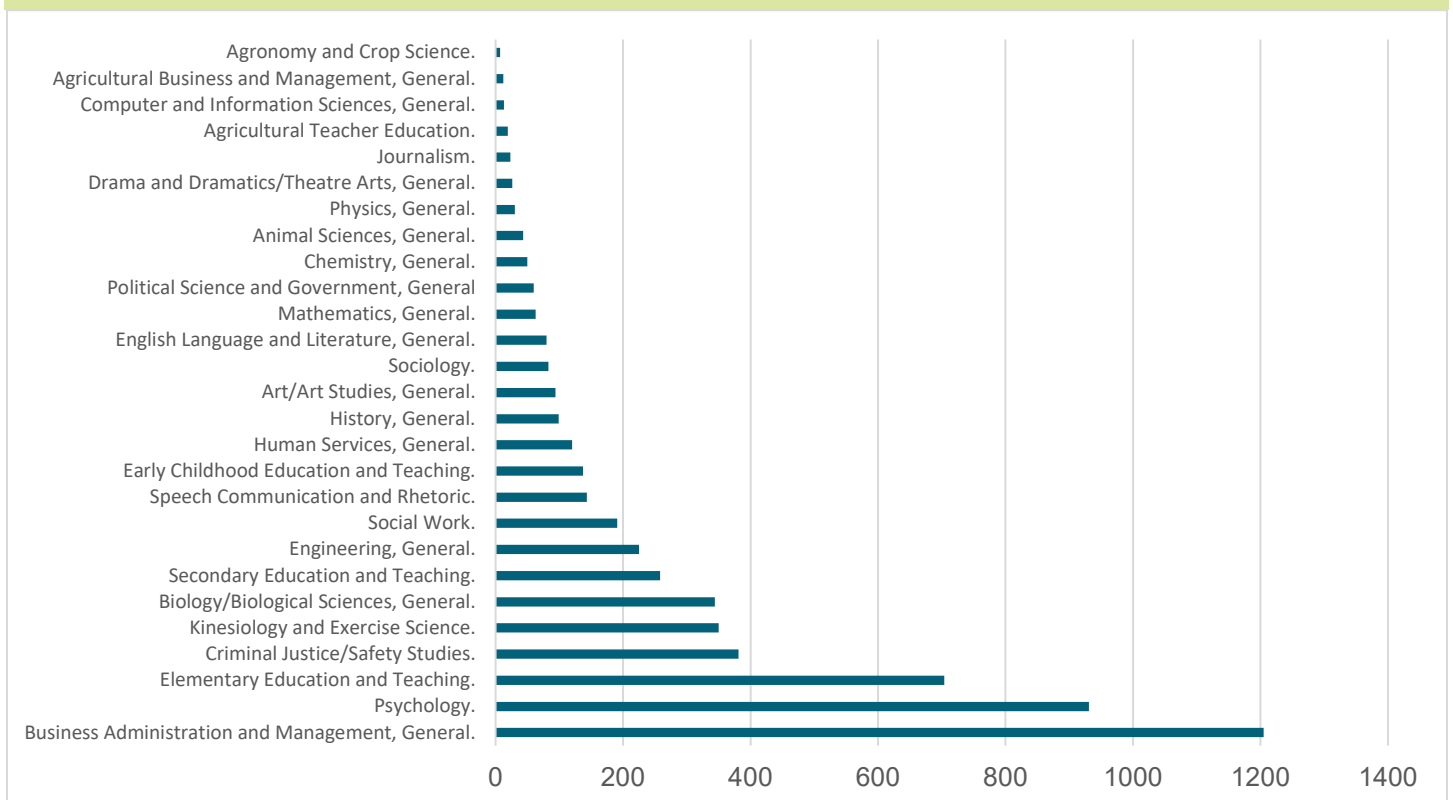
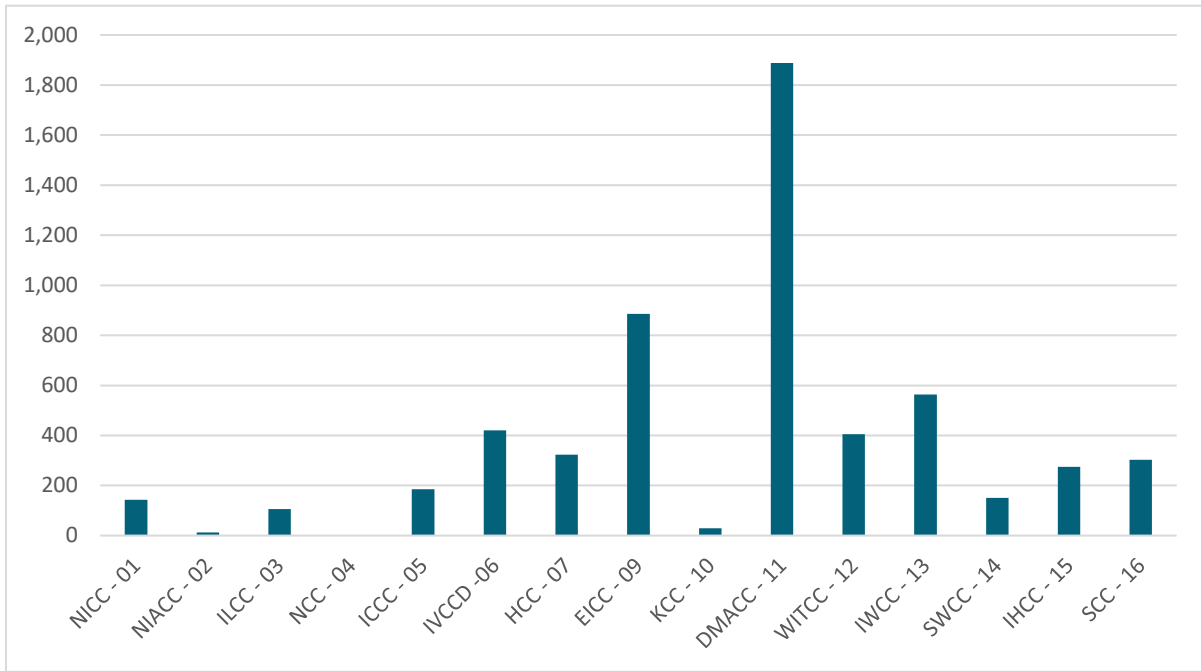


Figure 10. Distribution of Transfer Major Students by College



# CTE and Career Clusters

Enrollment in CTE programs decreased 0.2 percent compared to fall 2023, comprising 28.0 percent of all enrollments (down by 0.4 percent from fall 2023). While total enrollment intensity (measured as number of students) decreased this fall by 0.2 percent, intensity of CTE enrollment (measured in credit hours of taken courses) increased by 0.3 percent.

The programs’ demographic composition has slightly changed compared to fall 2023 as well. This fall, males comprise 47.0 percent of CTE enrollments, 0.3 percent lower than last fall. CTE enrollment of racial and ethnic minority students increased from 27.8 percent to 29.0 percent.

The Department reports CTE programs by the 16 National Career Clusters Framework, which aligns academic programs with occupational fields. Information on career clusters can be found at <https://careertech.org/what-we-do/career-clusters/>.

## Three Largest Career Clusters

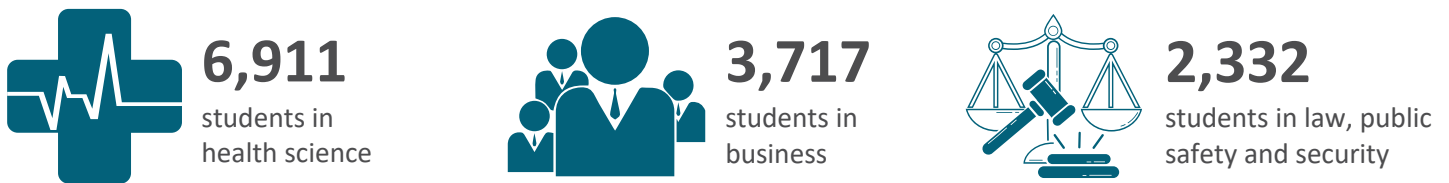
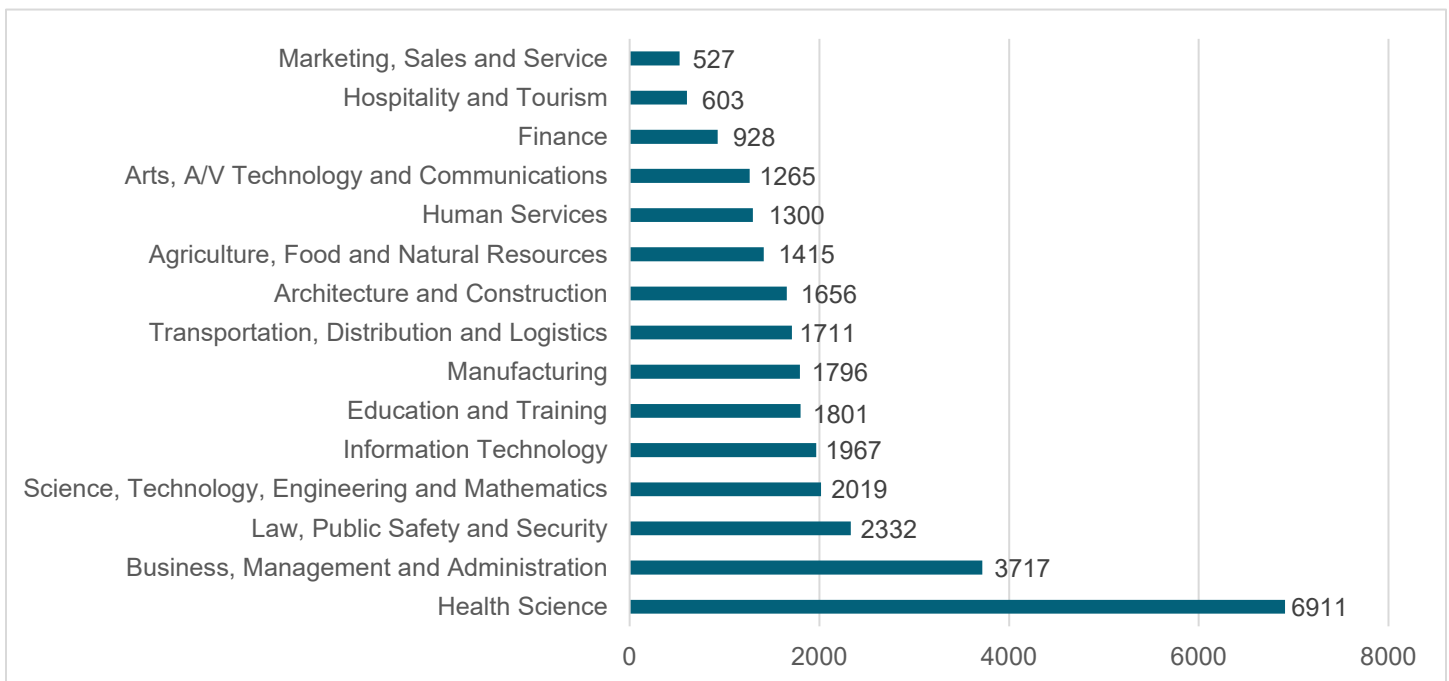


Figure 11 displays the distribution of CTE enrollment by career clusters. Historically, the cluster categories with the largest enrollments have been health science; manufacturing; and business, management and administration. The second fall in a row, however, the top three cluster categories with the largest enrollment are health science (6,911 students, a 0.7 percent increase from last fall), business, management and administration (3,717 students, a 4.8 percent increase) and law, public safety and security (2,332 students, a 5.7 percent decrease). Significant increases also appeared in science, technology, engineering and Mathematics (11.5 percent) and in transportation, distribution and logistics (7.3 percent).

## Figure 11. Fall 2024 CTE Enrollment by Career Cluster



# Online Enrollment

Online enrollment at Iowa’s community colleges is broken down into two categories: online classes and blended classes. An online class is defined as instruction delivered completely on the internet. In a blended class, at least half of the instruction is delivered via the internet, and the remainder of the class is delivered in a face-to-face context.

## Online Enrollment Highlights



**4.9%**  
increase in  
online  
enrollment



**43,969**  
students enrolled  
in at least one  
online course



**5.8%**  
increase in  
credit hours for  
online classes

Table 3 summarizes the number of students enrolled in online and blended classes, and the number of credit hours attributed to online and blended classes. In fall 2024, 43,969 students enrolled in at least one online course (a 4.9 percent increase from last year), and 12,909 students enrolled in at least one blended course (a 6.1 percent increase from last year). Online course students registered for 249,998 credit hours. Compared to 236,281 credit hours last fall, this volume represents a 5.8 percent increase. This fall, students registered for 55,913 credit hours in blended classes, compared to 54,332 credit hours last fall, representing a 2.9 percent increase.

**Table 3. Fall 2024 Online and Blended Hours and Enrollment by College**

Community College	Online Course Hours	Online Course Headcount	Online Course % Change in Credit Hours	Blended Course Hours	Blended Course Headcount	Blended Course % Change in Credit Hours
Northeast Iowa	11,698	2,079	8.3%	1,319	374	-10.3%
North Iowa Area	8,811	1,742	13.5%	3,837	874	6.9%
Iowa Lakes	6,684	1,256	1.4%	65	21	-72.5%
Northwest Iowa	7,355	1,212	5.5%	366	100	76.8%
Iowa Central	12,976	2,095	4.7%	1,304	255	-14.3%
Iowa Valley	8,537	1,637	5.5%	2,401	520	-12.9%
Hawkeye	12,046	2,402	7.8%	7,579	1,680	-11.4%



Community College	Online Course Hours	Online Course Headcount	Online Course % Change in Credit Hours	Blended Course Hours	Blended Course Headcount	Blended Course % Change in Credit Hours
Eastern Iowa	24,601	3,785	7.4%	1,328	282	-34.5%
Kirkwood	33,792	6,064	4.4%	12,601	2,819	54.8%
Des Moines Area	57,500	10,414	1.7%	18,640	4,131	-3.9%
Western Iowa Tech	20,851	3,433	20.7%	2,636	871	-8.7%
Iowa Western	22,483	3,633	0.3%	1,366	338	-15.4%
Southwestern	5,596	991	-0.4%	346	96	129.1%
Indian Hills	5,749	1,350	-1.0%	629	229	3.0%
Southeastern	11,590	1,876	18.2%	1,497	319	26.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>249,998</b>	<b>43,969</b>	<b>5.8%</b>	<b>55,913</b>	<b>12,909</b>	<b>2.9%</b>



# Joint Enrollment

Iowa's community colleges offer joint enrollment opportunities to high school students. Such students may earn high school credit and college credit simultaneously, which is applicable toward a one- or two-year award, or to transfer to a four-year institution. There are three ways joint enrollment is provided to Iowa students: 1) postsecondary enrollment option (PSEO), which is rare, and only used in the absence of a contractual agreement between high schools and community colleges; 2) contractual agreements between high schools and community colleges and 3) direct payment of tuition. Students may choose to participate in more than one joint enrollment program during an academic year.

This fall, 40,882 high school students (unduplicated headcount) participated in at least one joint enrollment course, compared to 39,946 participants last fall, which represents a 2.3 percent increase. Students participating in joint enrollment programs accounted for 46.4 percent of total enrollment, and 29.8 percent of all credit hours.

## Joint Enrollment Highlights



**40,882**  
students  
(unduplicated)  
participated



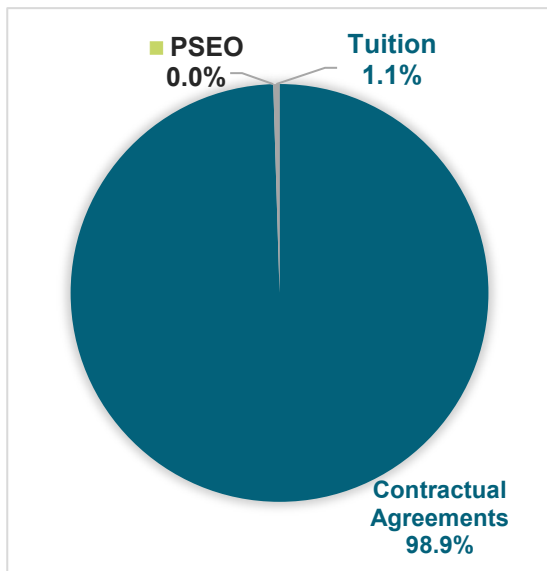
**2.3%**  
increase from  
2023



**46.4%**  
of total  
enrollment



**29.8%**  
of total credit  
hours



High school students participating in joint enrollment programs this fall registered for 215,003 credit hours, compared to 213,930 credit hours last fall, a 0.5 percent increase. The number of credit hours attributed to joint enrollment programs this fall accounted for 29.8 percent of total registered credit hours, compared to 30.2 percent last fall. On average, students enrolled in 5.4 credit hours, compared to 5.3 last fall.

In terms of joint enrollment type, 98.9 percent of high school students participated in joint enrollment through contractual agreements (Figure 12), 1.1 percent through direct payment of tuition and no student participated in jointed enrollment through PSEO. These percentages present a slight increase (by 0.6 percent) of directly paying students, and a slight decrease (0.6 percent) of contractual agreement students, compared to last fall. No enrollment in PSEO is expected, as the rules for types of joint enrollment changed as of academic year 2017-2018 [4].

# Immediate Enrollment

Every fall, Iowa community colleges enroll a large number of new, non-high school students. This fall, such students comprised 20.6 percent of total enrollment (0.5 percent less than last year), with 36.0 percent of them having previous joint enrolled experience (up 0.6 percent from last year). A sizable portion of the first-time, non-high school community college population is comprised of students directly out of high school. According to long-term, annually stable patterns, this cohort of “immediate enrollees” comprises one-quarter to one-third of all Iowa high school graduating classes, and around one-tenth of Iowa community colleges’ total fall enrollment. This year, first-time, non-high school students accounted for 8.8 percent of total fall 2024 enrollment, a 0.6 percent decrease from last fall.

## Immediate Enrollment Highlights



**20.6%**  
of fall enrollees are new students



**8.8%** of all students are immediate enrollees



**60.1%** of immediate enrollees participated in joint enrollment in high school

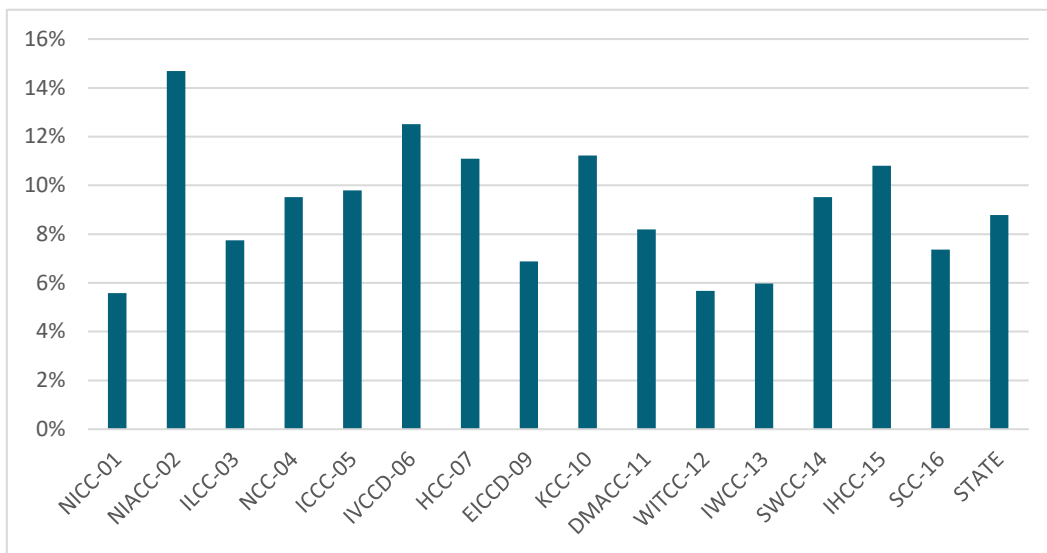


**47.2%** males among immediate enrollees



**24.7%** of immediate enrollees are racial minorities

**Figure 13. Fall 2024 Share of Immediate Enrollees in Iowa Community Colleges**

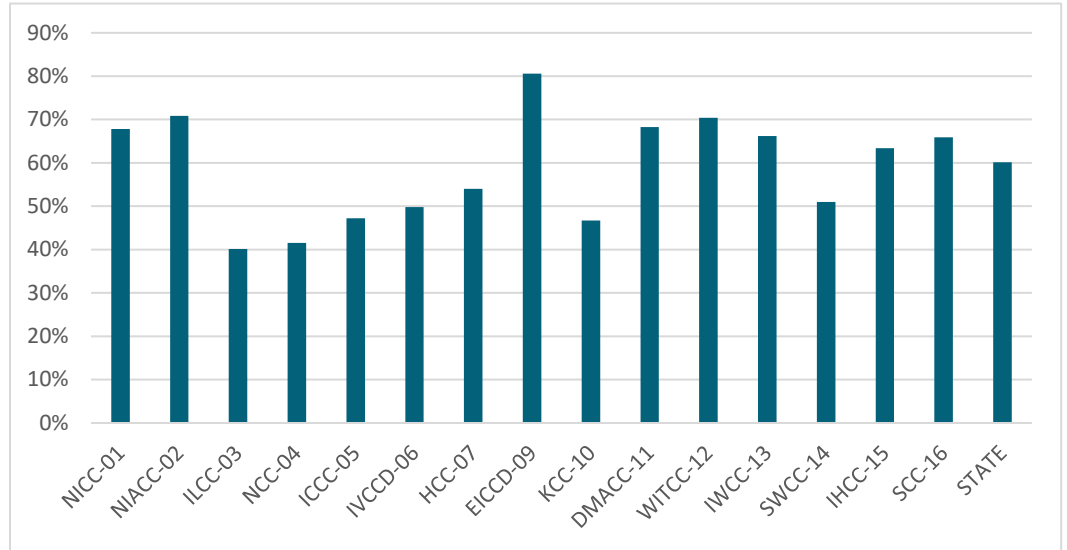


Every fall, the Department uses a state identification number to match Iowa high school students to community college enrollees. This fall, the matching procedure identified 7,605 students who entered Iowa community colleges directly after graduating from their Iowa high schools. Distributed by community college, these students represent a range of 5.6 percent to 14.7 percent of total fall enrollment (Figure 13).

Over 60.1 percent of immediate enrollees (4,572) took some college-level courses through joint enrollment opportunities while in an Iowa high school. This is a 3.3 percent increase from last fall. Distributed by college, those percentages range from 40.1 to 80.6 (Figure 14).

With the exception of age, the demographics of immediate enrollees is similar to all fall 2024 enrollees. However, males comprise a higher proportion of immediate enrollees, at 47.2 percent (a decrease of 1.7 percent over fall 2023). The percentage of racial minority immediate enrollees is somewhat lower, at 24.7 percent (a 0.3 percent increase from last fall). Most of the immediate enrollees (96.3 percent) are between 18 and 20 years old; 3.5 percent are under 18 and 0.2 percent are over 20 years old.

**Figure 14. Percentage of Immediate Enrollees with Prior Joint Enrollment Experience by Community College**



## References

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