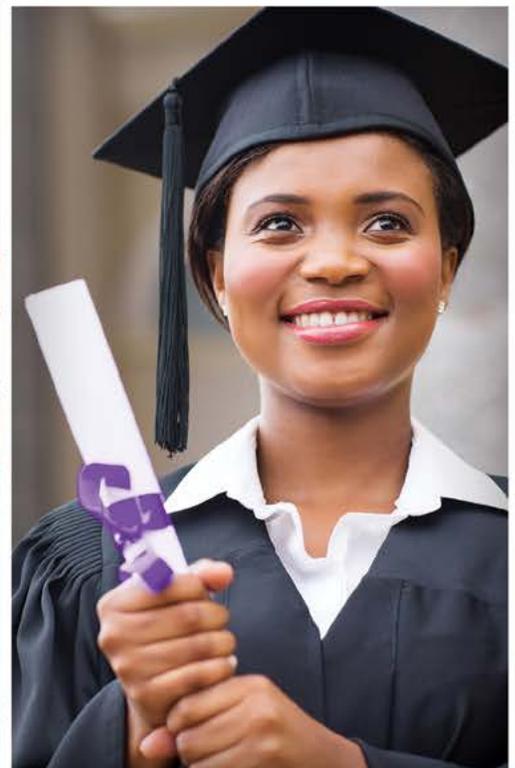


# THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE GRANT DISTANCE EDUCATION PILOT PROGRAM ANNUAL REPORT

An Analysis of the 2014-15 Award Year



# OVERVIEW

Distance education continues to experience tremendous growth across Pennsylvania and the nation as a major access point and delivery tool for higher education. Today, nearly 70 percent of degree-granting institutions in the United States offer some type of distance education.<sup>1</sup> Nationally, more than 4.5 million degree/certificate-seeking undergraduates took at least one online course in 2014, and over 137,000 of those students were enrolled at a Pennsylvania institution.<sup>2</sup>

Although distance education has been growing rapidly, the Pennsylvania State Grant Program – the state’s primary need-based student financial aid program – does not award grants to students who take more than 50 percent of their term credits online or who are enrolled in programs that are structured to be more than 50 percent online. To study the effects of extending State Grant eligibility to these students, the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) introduced a five-year State Grant Distance Education Pilot Program (SGDEPP) in 2013.

The Pennsylvania General Assembly enacted SGDEPP through Act 59 of 2013, for purposes of providing State Grant awards to online students at participating institutions while gathering vital data concerning the number of Pennsylvania residents receiving postsecondary education through online learning. PHEAA funds the program with \$10 million each year from its business earnings.<sup>3</sup>

This annual report provides statistics from SGDEPP’s second year, which includes the 2014-15 Academic Year and 2015 Summer Term. This information comes from mandatory reporting received from the 66 participating SGDEPP institutions.<sup>4</sup> The data collected from the participating institutions will be used to assess the feasibility of supporting distance education with appropriated State Grant Program funding after the pilot ends.

## KEY FINDINGS

### 2014-15 Award Year

- More than 5,900 unique recipients received SGDEPP awards totaling \$8.52 million in the 2014-15 award year.
- The program provided grants to recipients in more than 270 different programs of study.
- The “typical” SGDEPP recipient was an independent, 29-year-old female enrolled part time.
- The average cumulative grade point average for SGDEPP recipients was 2.98.
- Approximately 67 percent of SGDEPP recipients were enrolled 100 percent online, while the remaining recipients took a combination of online and classroom courses.
- SGDEPP recipients completed 91 percent of all attempted course credits.

PHEAA thanks SGDEPP schools for reporting the data used in this report. Their commitment enables PHEAA to take a closer look at distance education in Pennsylvania.

This report includes data as of February 25, 2016.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROGRAM PARTICIPATION.....	2
CREDITS, COURSES, & COSTS.....	4
RECIPIENT PROFILE.....	8
OUTCOME MEASURES.....	10
LOOKING AHEAD .....	14
NOTES .....	16

# PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

In the program's second year, 81 institutions – including branch campuses – applied and were approved to participate in SGDEPP. Of these approved institutions, only 66 schools had recipients for whom reporting was required. Overall, more than 5,900 unique recipients received SGDEPP awards totaling \$8.52 million in the 2014-15 award year (academic year and summer). In comparison, nearly 4,500 unique recipients at 62 schools received SGDEPP awards totaling \$6.89 million in the 2013-14 award year.

- In the 2014-15 Academic Year, 5,047 SGDEPP recipients across 60 different institutions received more than \$7.31 million in awards.
- In the 2015 Summer Term, 1,270 SGDEPP recipients across 51 different institutions received nearly \$1.21 million in awards.

In this report, SGDEPP institutions were divided into six different sectors: Four-Year Private colleges and universities, Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) universities, State-Related universities, Two-Year Private colleges, Community Colleges, and Business, Trade, and Technical schools. After this page of the Program Participation section, award recipients from Business, Trade, and Technical schools were excluded from the analysis due to the sector's small sample size. Therefore, only 5,897 unique recipients were analyzed in the report's subsequent sections.

It should be noted that the 2014-15 Pennsylvania State Grant Program awarded more than \$395.45 million in grants to 154,974 students across 275 in-state institutions.<sup>5</sup> Thus, in terms of the total award dollars and recipient counts, SGDEPP is much smaller in scale. In fact, the total dollar value awarded through SGDEPP is less than one-fortieth of the amount awarded through the State Grant Program.

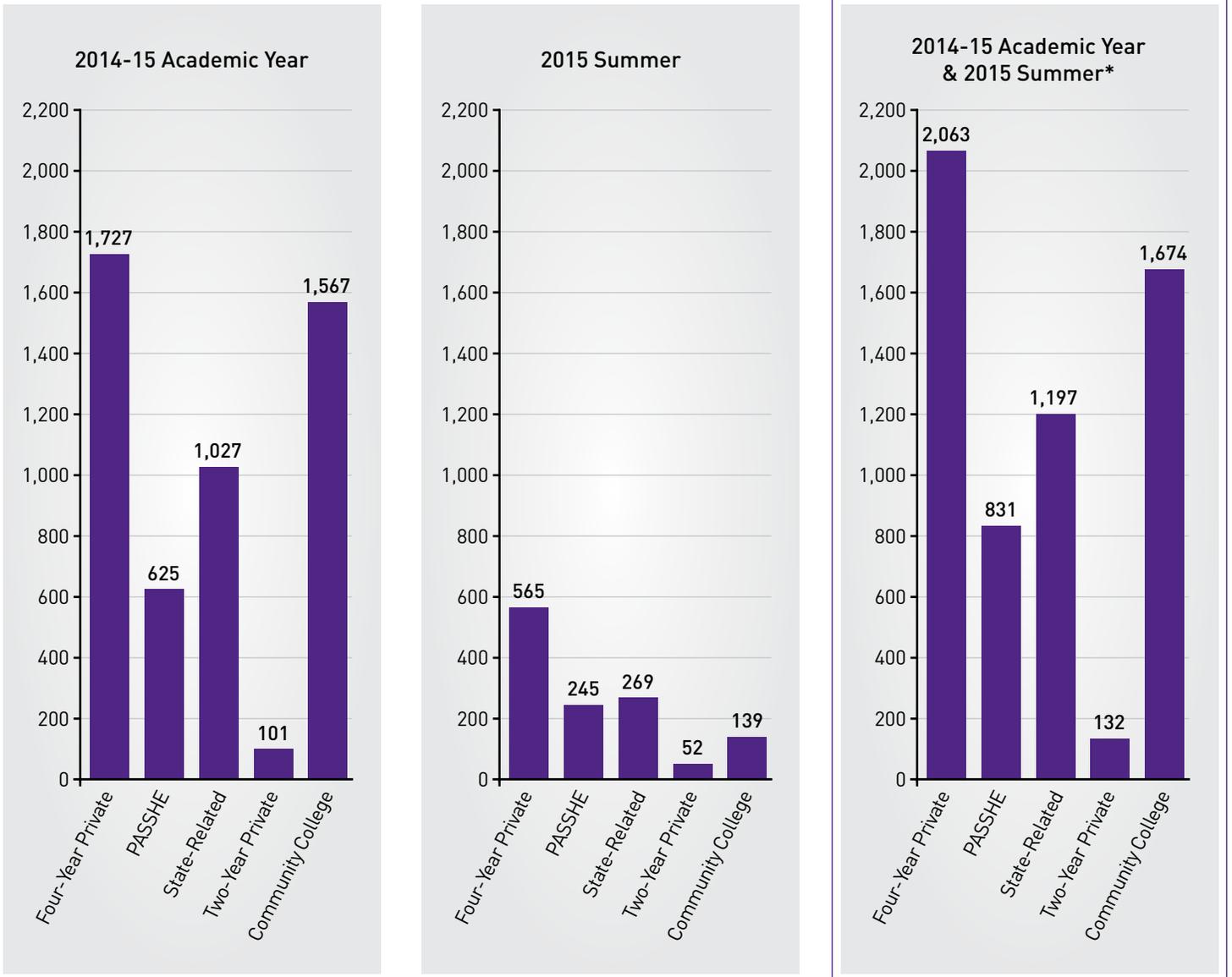
## SGDEPP SCHOOL PARTICIPATION BY PHEAA SECTOR\*

		2014-15 Academic Year			2015 Summer		2014-15 Academic Year & 2015 Summer	
	Sector	Approved Schools	Schools with Recipients	Award Value	Schools with Recipients	Award Value	Schools with Recipients	Award Value
Four-Year	Private	29	26	\$2,860,012	24	\$545,279	28	\$3,405,291
	PASSHE	11	9	\$1,053,898	9	\$233,669	9	\$1,287,567
	State-Related	22	12	\$2,066,116	10	\$302,549	16	\$2,368,665
Two-Year	Private	5	3	\$220,637	1	\$57,653	3	\$278,290
	Community College	12	8	\$1,100,030	6	\$66,012	8	\$1,166,042
	Business, Trade, & Technical	2	2	\$12,640	1	\$1,707	2	\$14,347
<b>All Sectors</b>		<b>81</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>\$7,313,333</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>\$1,206,869</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>\$8,520,202</b>

\* Throughout the report, school counts include branch campuses.

- Four-Year Private institutions and State-Related universities had the highest number of participating schools in the program's second year.
- SGDEPP recipients at four-year institutions received 82.88 percent of all 2014-15 SGDEPP award dollars, while recipients at two-year institutions received 17.12 percent.
- The highest percentages of 2014-15 SGDEPP award dollars went to recipients at Four-Year Private and State-Related schools with 39.97 percent and 27.80 percent, respectively.

## SGDEPP RECIPIENTS BY PHEAA SECTOR



\* The overall award year values represent unduplicated recipient counts. It is possible for students to receive a SGDEPP award in both the academic year and summer.

- Four-Year Private institutions and Community Colleges had the most 2014-15 SGDEPP recipients with 2,063 and 1,674, respectively.
- Community Colleges averaged 209 recipients per participating school – the highest average among all sectors. PASSHE institutions had the second highest average with 92 recipients per participating school.
- Four-Year Private institutions had the most students who received a SGDEPP award during both the academic year and summer with 229 recipients, while Two-Year Private institutions had the fewest such students with 21 recipients.

# CREDITS, COURSES, & COSTS

Under SGDEPP, award recipients must be students who take more than 50 percent of their credits online during the individual term in which an award is received or who are enrolled in a program of study that is structured to be more than 50 percent online. SGDEPP institutions are required to report student-level data on the number of course credits attempted and earned for each participant, as well as how many credits were attempted online or in the classroom.<sup>6</sup>

In the 2014-15 award year, the majority of SGDEPP recipients were enrolled exclusively online. In fact, 3,931 or 66.66 percent of the 5,897 SGDEPP recipients were enrolled 100 percent online, while the remaining recipients took a combination of online and classroom courses. Similarly, 67.35 percent of 2013-14 SGDEPP recipients were enrolled 100 percent online. As a point of reference, approximately one in every eight undergraduates enrolled at U.S. colleges and universities during Fall 2014 studied exclusively online.<sup>7</sup>

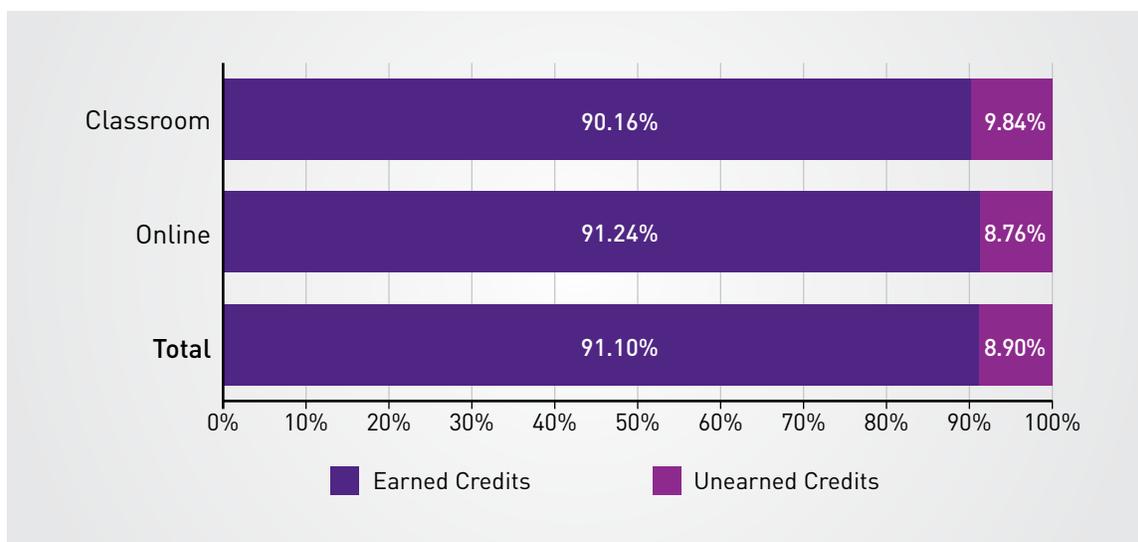
## Credits Attempted

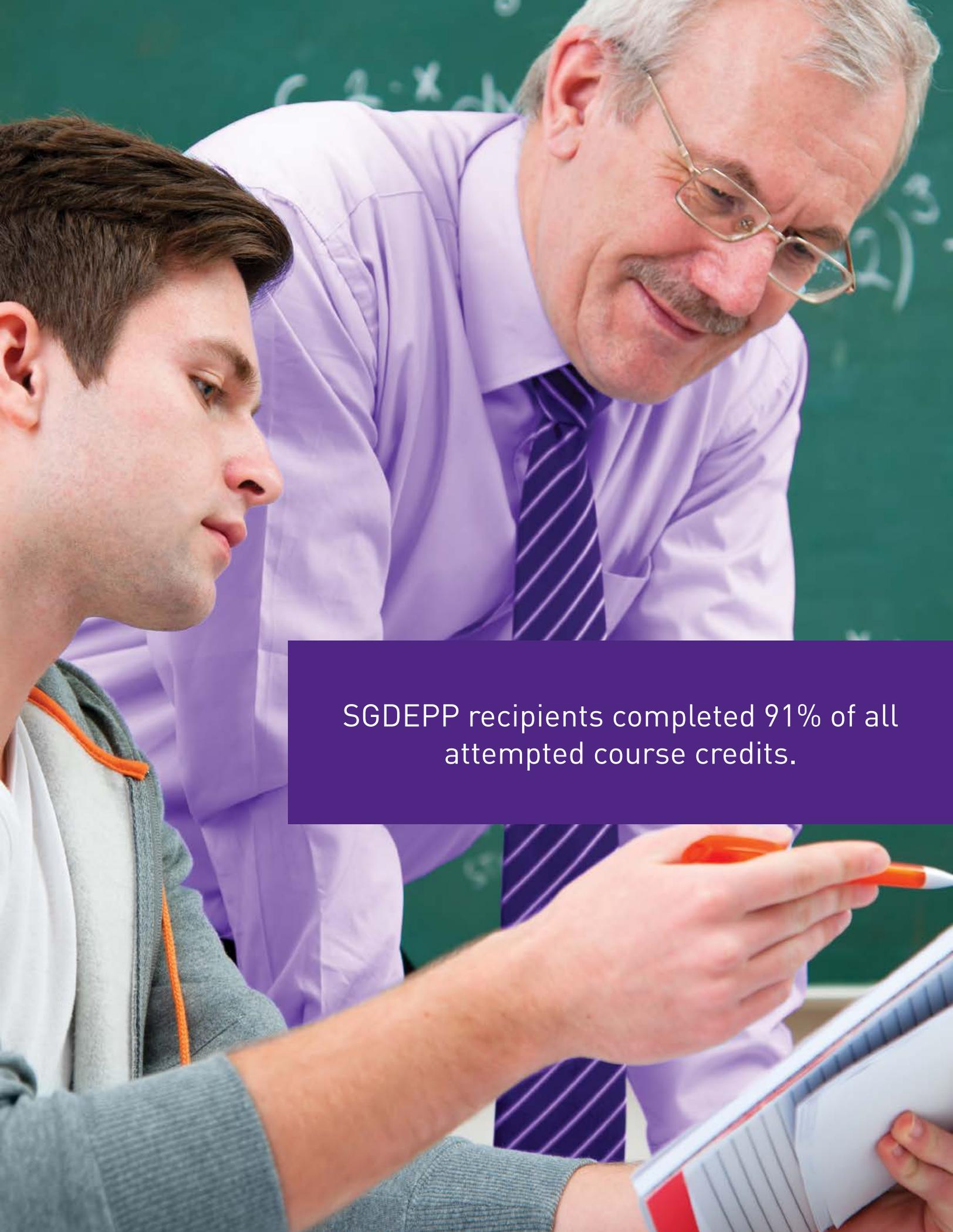
- Overall, SGDEPP recipients attempted 95,972 individual credits in the 2014-15 award year. They attempted 82,930 or 86.41 percent of these credits online.
- On average, each SGDEPP recipient attempted a total of 16.27 credits during the entire award year, taking 2.21 in the classroom and 14.06 online.

## Credits Earned

- Of the 5,897 SGDEPP recipients, approximately 80 percent of recipients completed 100 percent of their attempted credits.
- Collectively, at the credit level, SGDEPP recipients completed 91.10 percent of all 95,972 attempted credits. In comparison, 2013-14 SGDEPP recipients completed 91.49 percent of all attempted credits in the pilot program's first year.
- SGDEPP recipients completed 91.24 percent of attempted online credits, compared to 90.16 percent of attempted classroom credits.

SGDEPP RECIPIENTS' CREDIT COMPLETION RATE BY ATTEMPTED CREDIT TYPE  
2014-15 AWARD YEAR





SGDEPP recipients completed 91% of all attempted course credits.

## Programs of Study

Eligible SGDEPP programs of study must meet the same program guidelines regarding length of program and credential awarded currently applicable to the traditional State Grant Program. In short, programs of study must be at least two academic years in length and offered over a period of at least 15 months (no less than 60 weeks of instruction).<sup>8</sup> All eligible programs must lead to a recognized certificate, diploma, or degree.<sup>9</sup>

- SGDEPP provided grants to recipients enrolled in 272 unique programs of study during the 2014-15 award year. Of those 272 programs of study, 192 or 70.59 percent had less than 10 recipients. The number of unique programs of study represented in the pilot program increased from 254 programs during the 2013-14 award year.
- The top 10 programs of study by number of recipients are listed in the table immediately below. Together, these programs represented 56.52 percent of all SGDEPP recipients. In comparison, a recent nationwide survey of online college students found the top 10 undergraduate majors reported by respondents were Business Administration; Nursing; Computer Science and Engineering; Information Technology; Engineering; Sociology; Networks, Computer Networking; Elementary Education; Social Work; and Criminal Justice.<sup>10</sup>

### TOP 10 PROGRAMS OF STUDY BY NUMBER OF SGDEPP RECIPIENTS 2014-15 AWARD YEAR

Program of Study	Recipients	% of Total Recipients
Business Administration and Management	766	12.99%
Liberal Arts and Sciences/Liberal Studies	572	9.70%
Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse	413	7.00%
Business/Commerce, General	329	5.58%
General Studies	318	5.39%
Criminal Justice/Safety Studies	287	4.87%
Psychology, General	202	3.43%
Accounting	192	3.26%
Health Care Administration/Management	134	2.27%
Information Science/Studies	120	2.03%

Among programs of study with 25 or more SGDEPP recipients:

- American/U.S. Law/Legal Studies/Jurisprudence and Graphic Design had the highest credit completion rates at 99.04 percent and 98.10 percent, respectively.
- General Studies had the lowest credit completion rate with 81.67 percent of all attempted credits earned.

### TOP 5 PROGRAMS OF STUDY BY SGDEPP RECIPIENTS' ANNUAL CREDIT COMPLETION RATE\* 2014-15 AWARD YEAR

Program of Study	Recipients	% of Classroom Credits Earned	% of Online Credits Earned	% of All Annual Credits Earned
American/U.S. Law/Legal Studies/Jurisprudence	27	100.00%	99.04%	99.04%
Graphic Design	40	100.00%	97.88%	98.10%
Information Technology	41	100.00%	97.24%	97.69%
Health Services/Allied Health/Health Sciences, General	60	91.60%	98.90%	96.97%
Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse	413	93.88%	97.00%	96.59%

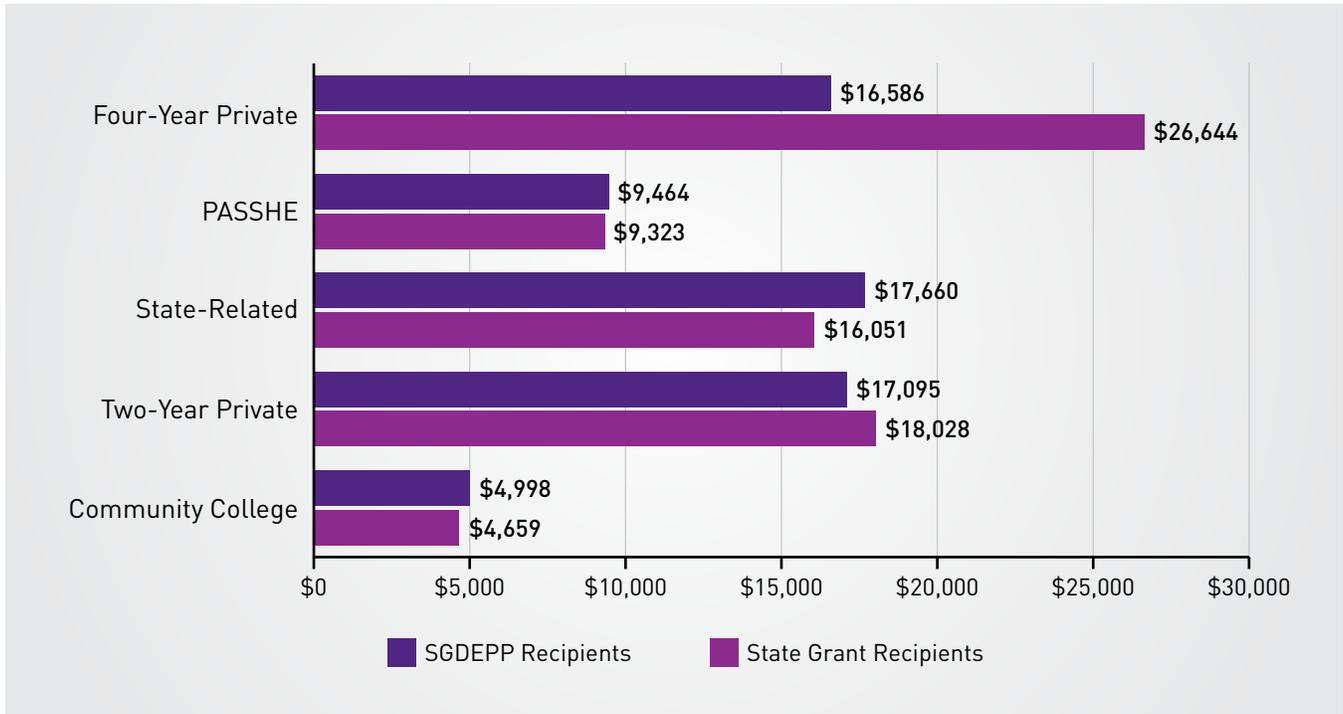
\* For programs of study with 25 or more SGDEPP recipients. Due to data anomalies, the data in this table are as of March 22, 2016.

## Tuition & Fees

Institutions that participate in the State Grant Program and SGDEPP are required to report tuition and fees, which are used in the award calculation process. A comparison of the full-time, full-year tuition and fees used in the 2014-15 awarding process reveals differences between SGDEPP recipients and State Grant recipients at the SGDEPP schools.

- The average 2014-15 tuition and fees at PASSHE universities, State-Related institutions, and Community Colleges were higher for SGDEPP recipients than for State Grant recipients.
- The average 2014-15 tuition and fees at Four-Year Private and Two-Year Private institutions were lower for SGDEPP recipients than for State Grant recipients. Most notably, the average tuition and fees for SGDEPP recipients at Four-Year Private schools were \$16,586, compared to \$26,644 for State Grant recipients.

### SGDEPP & STATE GRANT RECIPIENTS' AVERAGE TUITION & FEES BY PHEAA SECTOR\* 2014-15 AWARD YEAR



\* The comparable State Grant recipients' average tuition and fees are based only on State Grant recipients who attended the 2014-15 SGDEPP schools. All tuition and fees are based on full-time, full-year students.

# RECIPIENT PROFILE

Recent national surveys of distance education undergraduates reveal that, while not a homogeneous group, online undergraduates tend to be predominately female and older than campus-based students. According to the surveys, approximately 70 percent were female, the average age was about 32 years, and 60 percent were enrolled full time.<sup>11</sup> SGDEPP recipients for the 2014-15 award year bear some similarities to, as well as differences from, these national findings.

In terms of similarities, 74.11 percent of SGDEPP recipients were female, and the average age of recipients was 29 years. Unlike the national findings, however, only 39.85 percent of SGDEPP recipients were enrolled full time.

Compared to the 2014-15 State Grant population at participating SGDEPP schools, similarities and differences also exist. Among these State Grant recipients, 58.52 percent were female, but the average age was 22 years. Additionally, a much higher percentage of State Grant students – 83.80 percent – were enrolled full time.

Among SGDEPP recipients, the median annual household income was \$27,324, compared to \$31,784 for State Grant recipients. A higher percentage of SGDEPP recipients – 70.63 percent – were financially independent from their parents, compared to 22.51 percent of State Grant recipients.

Interestingly, the average distance from school for all SGDEPP recipients was about 43 miles, compared to roughly 45 miles for State Grant recipients. For those SGDEPP recipients enrolled exclusively online, the average distance from school was roughly 56 miles. Nationally, more than 52 percent of online undergraduate students enrolled exclusively online select online programs within 50 miles of their residence.<sup>12</sup> Thus, online students, including SGDEPP recipients, tend to enroll in online programs offered by local providers.

From the first year of the pilot to the second, the SGDEPP recipient profile remained consistent. In both award years, the typical SGDEPP recipient was an independent, 29-year-old female enrolled part time.

## 2014-15 SGDEPP Recipient Profile



- 29 = Average Age
- \$27,324 = Median Household Income
- \$12,512 = Average Tuition & Fees\*\*
- 43.03 = Average Miles from School
- 74.11% Female<sup>†</sup>
- 70.63% Independent
- 39.85% Full-Time Enrollment

## 2014-15 Pennsylvania State Grant Recipient Profile\*



- 22 = Average Age
- \$31,784 = Median Household Income
- \$14,238 = Average Tuition & Fees\*\*
- 44.56 = Average Miles from School
- 58.52% Female<sup>†</sup>
- 22.51% Independent
- 83.80% Full-Time Enrollment

\* The comparable State Grant Recipient profile is based only on State Grant recipients who attended the 2014-15 SGDEPP schools.

\*\* Tuition and fees are based on full-time, full-year students.

<sup>†</sup> Gender is not reported for all students.



The “typical” 2014-15 SGDEPP recipient was an independent, 29-year-old female enrolled part time.

# OUTCOME MEASURES

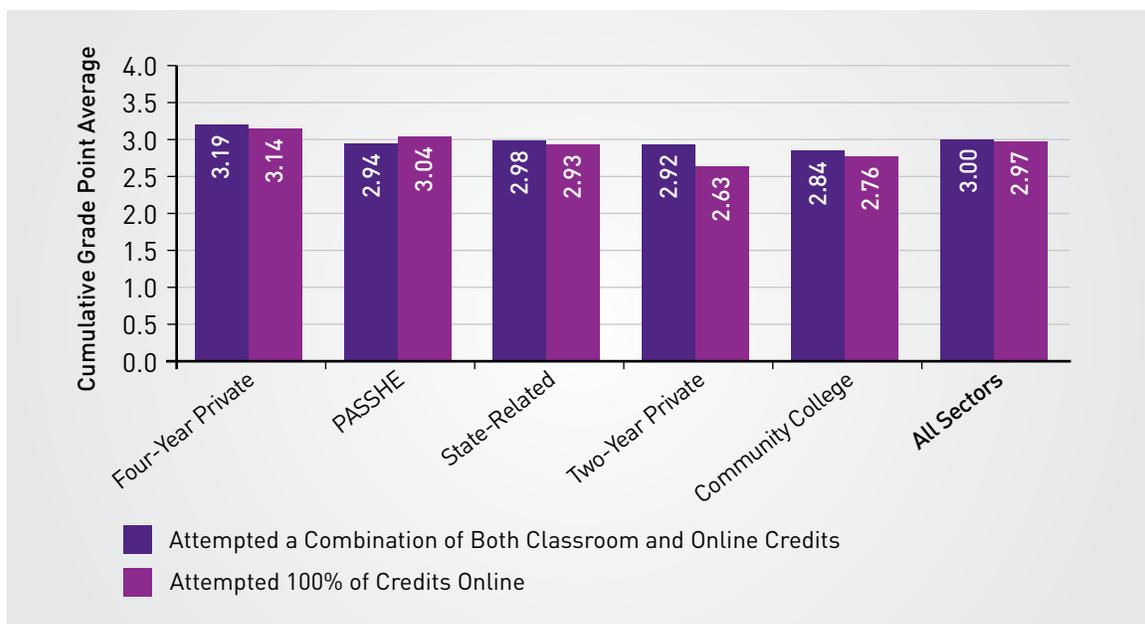
Participating SGDEPP schools have more in-depth reporting requirements for their SGDEPP recipients than for regular State Grant recipients. As previously mentioned, the goal of this comprehensive data collection is to assess the feasibility of supporting distance education with appropriated State Grant Program funding after the pilot ends. SGDEPP recipients completed nearly 91.10 percent of all attempted credits, which is a strong measure of student success toward degree attainment. Cumulative grade point average (GPA) statistics and first-year retention rates for SGDEPP recipients were also examined.

## Cumulative GPA

Typically, cumulative GPA is calculated as the average of all final course grades that a student earns across multiple terms. Most often, it is measured on a 0.00 to 4.00 scale, with 4.00 being the highest achievable GPA.

- Overall, 2014-15 SGDEPP recipients earned a 2.98 average cumulative GPA. In comparison, 2013-14 SGDEPP recipients earned a collective 2.97 average cumulative GPA.
- Among recipients who attempted 100 percent of their credits online, the average cumulative GPA was 2.97, compared to 3.00 for recipients who attempted a combination of both classroom and online credits.
- With the exception of PASSHE institutions, the average cumulative GPA across all sectors was higher for SGDEPP recipients who attempted a combination of both classroom and online credits as opposed to recipients who attempted 100 percent of their credits online. It should be noted, however, that these differences are not statistically significant due to the small sample sizes on which they are based.

**SGDEPP RECIPIENTS' AVERAGE CUMULATIVE GPA BY PHEAA SECTOR\*  
2014-15 AWARD YEAR**



\* The differences in GPA depicted in this chart are not statistically significant due to the small sample sizes on which they are based.

Among programs of study with 20 or more recipients:

- Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse had the highest average cumulative GPA at 3.34. Mass Communication/Media Studies and Organizational Leadership had the second and third highest average cumulative GPAs with a 3.32 and 3.25, respectively.
- Criminal Justice/Law Enforcement Administration had the lowest average cumulative GPA at 2.61.

**TOP 5 PROGRAMS OF STUDY BY HIGHEST AVERAGE CUMULATIVE GPA FOR SGDEPP RECIPIENTS\*  
2014-15 AWARD YEAR**

Program of Study	Recipients	Average Cumulative GPA
Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse	413	3.34
Mass Communication/Media Studies	34	3.32
Organizational Leadership	90	3.25
Biology/Biological Sciences, General	20	3.20
Human Services, General	67	3.20

\* For programs of study with 20 or more recipients.

PHEAA was able to compare the average cumulative GPA for SGDEPP recipients in certain programs of study to the average cumulative GPA for all non-SGDEPP, Pennsylvania-resident undergraduates enrolled in the same programs of studies at the participating schools. PHEAA was not able to compare all programs of study since some institutions only offer certain programs of study online, which means a general undergraduate population was unavailable for comparison. Additionally, PHEAA was not able to compare programs where the degree type (i.e., bachelor's, associate, diploma, or certificate) differed depending on whether the program was offered online or in the classroom. Finally, the low volume of recipients in certain programs of study decreased the statistical significance, which limited analysis on further subdivisions of the data. The comparisons that follow are based solely on data that were directly comparable.

- The 3.03 average cumulative GPA among SGDEPP recipients was higher than the 2.87 average cumulative GPA for the comparable general undergraduate population.
- The 3.12 average cumulative GPA among SGDEPP recipients pursuing a bachelor's degree was higher than the 3.02 average cumulative GPA for the comparable general undergraduate population pursuing a bachelor's degree.<sup>13</sup>
- The 2.86 average cumulative GPA among SGDEPP recipients pursuing an associate degree was higher than the 2.55 average cumulative GPA for the comparable general undergraduate population pursuing an associate degree.<sup>14</sup>

Additionally, PHEAA was able to compare the average cumulative GPA for SGDEPP recipients in certain programs of study to the average cumulative GPA of an even smaller subset of the general undergraduate population. This subset includes only non-SGDEPP, Pennsylvania-resident undergraduates who were enrolled in the same program of study but in a 100-percent classroom setting.

**AVERAGE CUMULATIVE GPA FOR SGDEPP RECIPIENTS & CLASSROOM STUDENTS  
FOR THE TOP 5 SGDEPP PROGRAMS OF STUDY BY NUMBER OF RECIPIENTS  
2014-15 AWARD YEAR**

Program of Study	Average Cumulative GPA	
	SGDEPP Recipients	100% Classroom Students
Business Administration and Management	3.04	2.85
Liberal Arts and Sciences/Liberal Studies	2.76	2.55
Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse	3.38	3.07
Business/Commerce, General	2.95	2.61
General Studies	2.77	2.60



Overall, 2014-15 SGDEPP recipients earned an average cumulative GPA of 2.98.

## First-Year Retention Rates

First-year retention rates are usually measured as the percentage of first-year students who return to the same institution for their second year. In this report, first-year retention rate calculations only include SGDEPP recipients who are part of a school's first-year, first-time Fall 2014 cohort. Among all 2014-15 SGDEPP recipients, only 199 students – roughly 3.37 percent – were first-year, first-time students in Fall 2014. **Due to the small sample size, the rates reported below for recipients who returned in Fall 2015 should be interpreted with caution.**

### FIRST-YEAR, FIRST-TIME SGDEPP RECIPIENT RETENTION RATES BY PHEAA SECTOR FALL 2014 TO FALL 2015

Sector	Retention Rate	
	Full-Time Recipients	Part-Time Recipients
Four-Year Private	69.23%	70.59%
PASSHE	25.00%	22.22%
State-Related	46.15%	50.00%
Two-Year Private*	84.62%	--
Community College	48.08%	49.06%
<b>All Sectors</b>	<b>53.54%</b>	<b>50.00%</b>

\* The number of first-year, first-time SGDEPP recipients who were enrolled part time was too small for statistical analysis.

Among first-year, first-time SGDEPP recipients enrolled full time:

- The retention rate for all sectors combined was 53.54 percent.
- Two-Year Private institutions had the highest retention rate at 84.62 percent.

Among first-year, first-time SGDEPP recipients enrolled part time:

- The retention rate for all sectors combined was 50.00 percent.
- Four-Year Private institutions had the highest retention rate at 70.59 percent.

**It should be noted that these retention rates are underestimated.** PHEAA only could confirm retention from Fall 2014 to Fall 2015 for students who reenrolled, had a current year's FAFSA on file, and were fully processed by the institution for SGDEPP or the State Grant Program. Additionally, unlike student persistence rates, retention rates do not capture students who transfer between institutions.

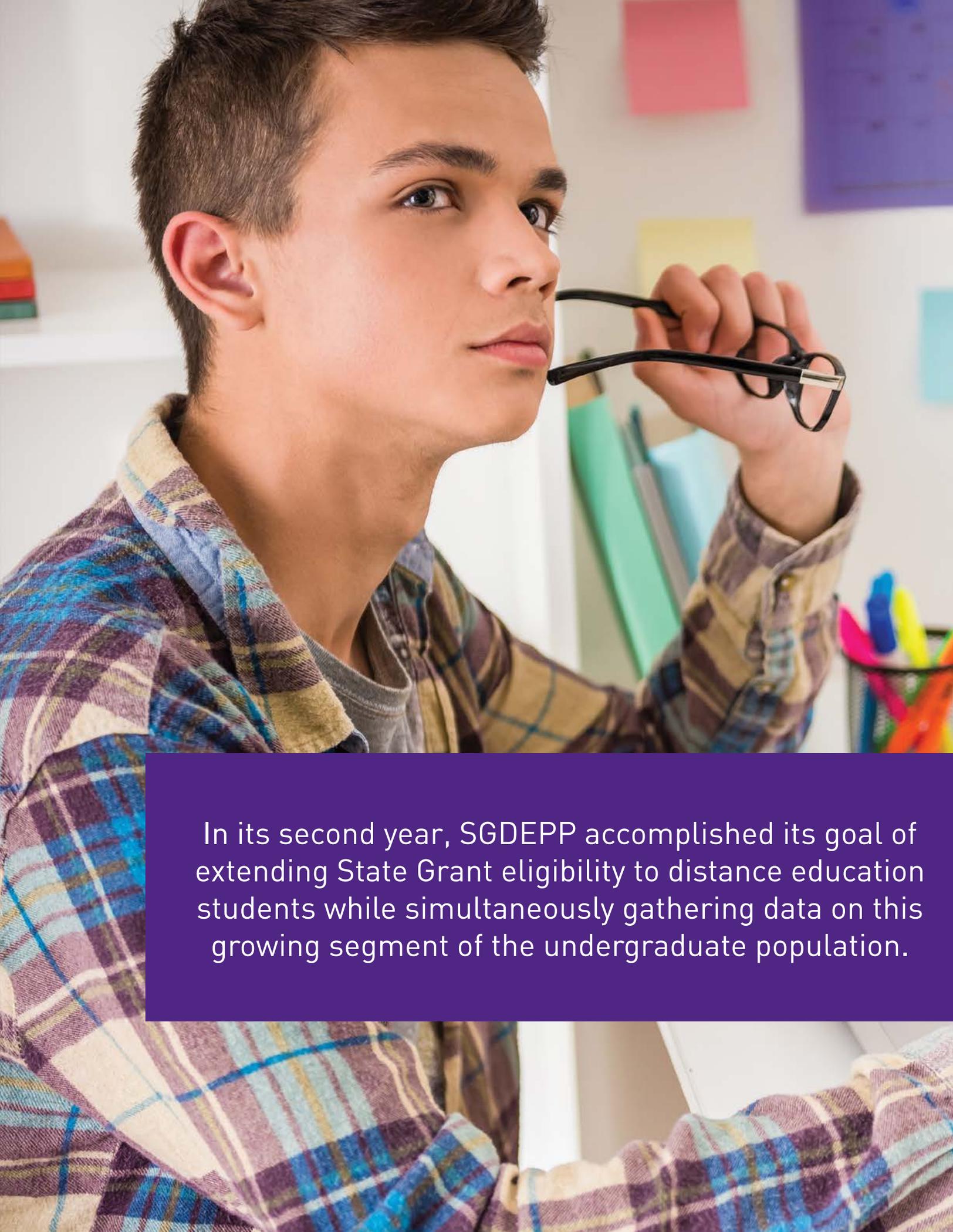
# LOOKING AHEAD

Currently, Pennsylvania is the only state that restricts students from receiving grant funding based on whether they are distance learners.<sup>15</sup> It should be noted that, at the national level, online students were granted equal access to federal Title IV student aid programs, including the Federal Pell Grant Program, in 2006.<sup>16</sup> Congress repealed a regulation, known as the 50-percent rule, which restricted Title IV eligibility to institutions that enrolled more than half of their students in distance learning or offered more than half of their courses through distance learning.

Due to the differing positions between Pennsylvania and the rest of the nation regarding grant funding for distance education, SGDEPP was created to collect vital data concerning the number of Pennsylvania residents receiving postsecondary education through online learning, with the goal of developing policy recommendations for the future. The program's first two years yielded valuable information on Pennsylvania's online student population, changing student demographics in postsecondary education, and program outcomes for online students.

Now that the pilot program is in its third year, PHEAA is working on policy recommendations regarding distance education relative to the larger State Grant Program. Areas of review include defining those institutions which will be eligible for expanded State Grant Program eligibility and assessing the availability of sufficient funding. After careful consideration of these recommendations by PHEAA's Board of Directors, PHEAA will report back to the Pennsylvania General Assembly on the results of the pilot. Expanding State Grant Program eligibility to include distance education students would ultimately require legislation by the General Assembly.

PHEAA looks forward to continued reporting to higher education stakeholders on the impact of SGDEPP. Through its collaborative work with both the institutions participating in the pilot program and the decision makers crafting the educational policies that will shape Pennsylvania's future, PHEAA is excited to be part of the ongoing progress to improve the accessibility and affordability of postsecondary education in the Commonwealth.



In its second year, SGDEPP accomplished its goal of extending State Grant eligibility to distance education students while simultaneously gathering data on this growing segment of the undergraduate population.

# NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).
- <sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).
- <sup>3</sup> PHEAA allocates SGDEPP \$10 million annually from its business earnings, subject to approval by PHEAA's Board of Directors. Per academic year, any funds that remain unallocated are transferred into the summer term. Following the summer term, any additional funds remaining are carried forward to the next academic year.
- <sup>4</sup> SGDEPP reporting requirements include 1) term-by-term reporting for all SGDEPP-nominated students and 2) institutional reporting for matriculated, Pennsylvania-resident undergraduate students. For more information on the SGDEPP reporting requirements, please reference the *SGDEPP School Guidelines*, *Student Term-by-Term Data Dictionary*, and *Institutional Reporting Data Dictionary* at [PHEAA.org/sgdepp](http://PHEAA.org/sgdepp).
- <sup>5</sup> The State Grant Program generally reports the academic year and the summer prior to that academic year as part of an award year cycle. Since SGDEPP reporting includes the academic year and the following summer as an award year cycle, the State Grant Program values used in this report are for the 2014-15 Academic Year and 2015 Summer Term.
- <sup>6</sup> The student-level credit data provided by reporting institutions are only used for research purposes and are not used to determine student eligibility. Data must be provided for each student during all terms of enrollment for which a FAFSA® is on file until graduation or until the student leaves the institution even if the student is no longer eligible for a State Grant award of any type.
- <sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).
- <sup>8</sup> Two academic years is defined as the equivalent of a minimum of 60 semester credits or 90 quarter credits for a degree program or at least 1,800 clock hours for a non-degree program. Programs leading to an associate degree in Specialized Technology or an associate degree in Specialized Business must have a minimum of 1,500 clock hours.
- <sup>9</sup> For more details on eligible programs of study for the State Grant Program, refer to the latest version of the *Pennsylvania State Grant Certification Procedures*.
- <sup>10</sup> Clinefelter, D. L., & Aslanian, C. B. (2015). *Online college students 2015: Comprehensive data on demands and preferences*. Louisville, KY: The Learning House, Inc.
- <sup>11</sup> Clinefelter, D. L., & Aslanian, C. B. (2015). *Online college students 2015: Comprehensive data on demands and preferences*. Louisville, KY: The Learning House, Inc.; Aslanian, C. B., & Clinefelter, D. L. (2012). *Online college students 2012: Comprehensive data on demands and preferences*. Louisville, KY: The Learning House, Inc.
- <sup>12</sup> Clinefelter, D. L., & Aslanian, C. B. (2015). *Online college students 2015: Comprehensive data on demands and preferences*. Louisville, KY: The Learning House, Inc.
- <sup>13</sup> Statistics include programs of study with five or more recipients.
- <sup>14</sup> Statistics include programs of study with five or more recipients.
- <sup>15</sup> Education Commission of the States, 50-State Policy Database, <http://statefinancialaidredesign.org/state-financial-aid-database/>.
- <sup>16</sup> Read, B. (2006, August 9). No More 50-Percent Rule for Online Education. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.



Created in 1963 by the Pennsylvania General Assembly, the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) has evolved into one of the nation's leading student aid organizations. Today, PHEAA is a national provider of student financial aid services, serving millions of students and thousands of schools through its loan guaranty, loan servicing, grant administration, outreach, and other student aid programs.

PHEAA's earnings are used to support its public service mission and to pay its operating costs, including the administration of the Pennsylvania State Grant and other state-funded student aid programs. PHEAA continues to devote its energy, resources and imagination to developing innovative ways to ease the financial burden of higher education for students, families, schools, and taxpayers.

PHEAA conducts its student loan servicing activities nationally as FedLoan Servicing and American Education Services (AES). For more information, visit [PHEAA.org](http://PHEAA.org).

---

## PHEAA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Representative William F. Adolph, Jr.**  
Chairman, Springfield

**Senator Vincent J. Hughes**  
Philadelphia

**Senator Lloyd K. Smucker**  
Lancaster

**Senator Wayne D. Fontana**  
Vice Chairman, Pittsburgh

**Representative Sandra J. Major**  
Montrose

**Chancellor Timothy R. Thyreen**  
Waynesburg

**Senator Ryan Aument**  
Landisville

**Representative Michael Peifer**  
Greentown

**Senator Robert M. Tomlinson**  
Bensalem

**Representative Matthew Bradford**  
Worcester

**Mr. D. Raja**  
Pittsburgh

**Senator Sean Wiley**  
Erie

**Representative Mike Carroll**  
Avoca

**Honorable Roy Reinard**  
Holland

**Senator John N. Wozniak**  
Johnstown

**Representative Sheryl M. Delozier**  
Cumberland

**Representative James R. Roebuck, Jr.**  
Philadelphia

**PA Secretary of Education**

**Representative Jaret Gibbons**  
Ellwood City

**Senator Mario M. Scavello**  
Monroe/Northampton

---

[PHEAA.org](http://PHEAA.org)

800.692.7392



Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency

1200 North Seventh Street, Harrisburg, PA 17102-1444

These materials have been developed and paid for by the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) for informational purposes. Although the information contained in this document is believed to be accurate at the time of printing, PHEAA does not guarantee its accuracy. You should independently verify that this information is correct.

GR-DEPAR  
040416