



Student Satisfaction, Enrollment, Graduation, and Employment Outcomes

Benchmarks Report to the Board of Regents,
Regional University System of Oklahoma
April 2023

Regents Dashboard Work Team

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This seventh report of Benchmarks constitutes the Dashboard adopted by the Board of Regents of the Regional University System of Oklahoma. The information provided includes benchmarks that document graduating seniors' satisfaction with their experiences, and data sets on enrollment across a broad spectrum of participation: race, age, gender, retention, program selection, and more.

Noteworthy Findings

As in previous Dashboard reports, the comprehensive analysis of information has revealed significant findings that would have gone undiscovered if it not for this exercise.

Discoveries include:

Satisfaction. Our measurement of graduating seniors' satisfaction with the education and institutional experiences remains very strong. ***Student satisfaction at RUSO institutions is very high.***

Student Graduation. RUSO institutions excel at meeting the needs of transfer, returning and adult students. Each year our campuses enroll a traditional freshman class of students who recently graduated high school. We also receive hundreds of transfer students who started somewhere else but who go on to graduate from a RUSO institution. Chart 4 will show a comparison of all students graduating in a year as a percentage of the freshman class entering that year. ***In most institutions, we graduate nearly 150% more students each year than the number who enter as freshmen in the fall.***

Enrollment trends. RUSO institutions continue to fight effects of the COVID pandemic and nationwide enrollment downturns. However, they have met the challenges than most other state institutions.

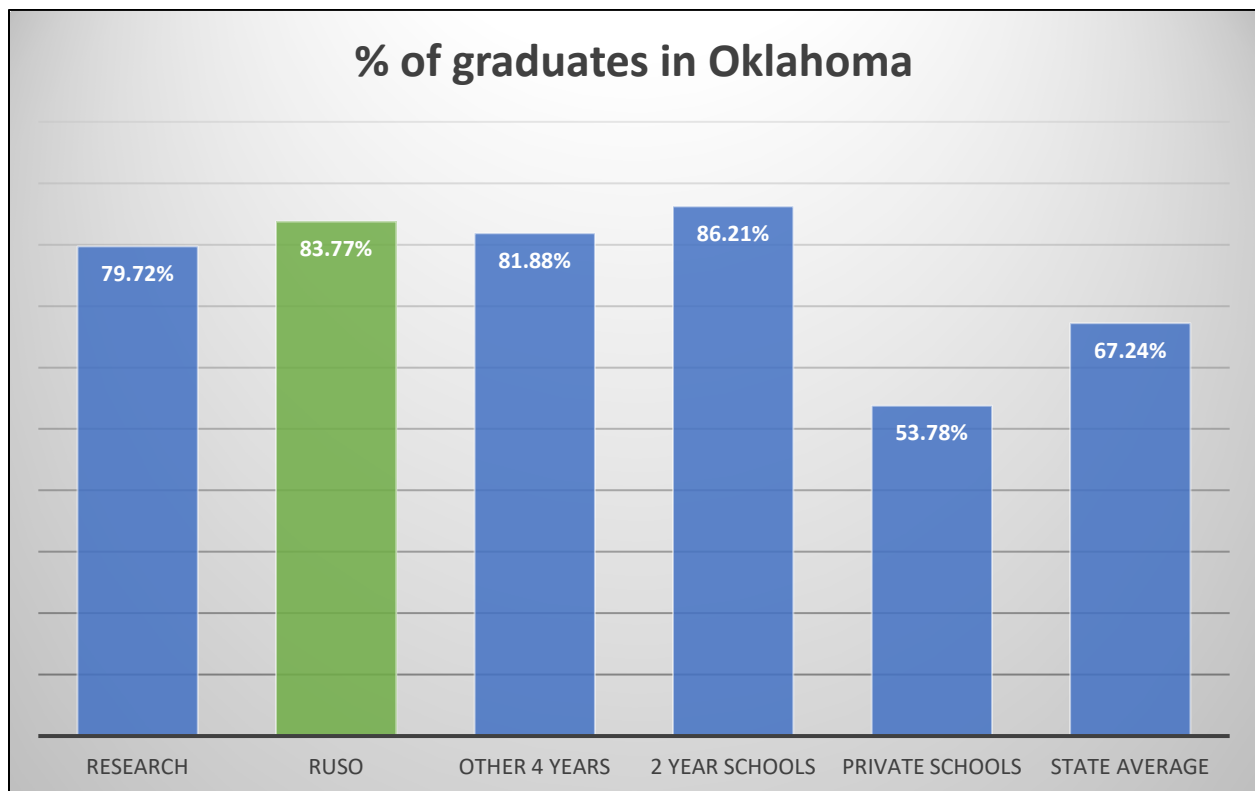
Program value over time. The value of a RUSO institution degree over a person's lifetime is much higher than many other types of institutions. A Georgetown Return on Investment study shows that **RUSO graduates have a high rate of return over their lifetime.**

Brain gain. RUSO institution graduates who stay in Oklahoma after five years continue to earn more money than graduates of Oklahoma's five other four-year institutions. Further, a higher percentage of graduates of RUSO institutions remained in Oklahoma's workforce than did graduates of the University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma State University. ***RUSO institutions are a "brain gain" for Oklahoma.***

Brain Gain

State regent data contains **data that clearly point to the efficiency and effectiveness of RUSO institutions in meeting the needs of Oklahoma with highly prepared graduates who, by remaining in state, serve as a “brain gain.”** These metrics indicate RUSO institutions are well-suited to address the employment needs of individual Oklahomans who may be displaced while also meeting the demands of employers as Oklahoma’s economy continues to grow.

Chart 1. Percent of graduates employed in Oklahoma five years after graduation



Source: Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education 2022 Employment Outcomes – Percent Employed in Oklahoma After Graduation – all students

Graduating Seniors' satisfaction with RUSO institutions

All institutions employ a graduation survey for Spring Semester commencing seniors. The information collected is based on questions posed to graduating seniors in the comprehensive National Survey of Student Experiences.

These questions also serve as an indirect means to assess student learning as it assumes that satisfaction with a student's overall experience also indicates satisfaction with what was learned.

At the conclusion of the Spring Semester, all RUSO institutions asked two questions on their institutional exit surveys. Question No. 1, that queries graduating seniors' satisfaction with the quality of their education, found a 1 percent over-all increase in satisfaction from the prior year. Regarding Question No. 2, there is a 3 percent over-all increase stating students would choose the same institution if they could do it all over again. Comparisons with last year's survey are reported in parenthesis. It should be noted that these surveys were administered in Spring 2022 at the end of two years of COVID-related complications.

Chart 2. Student satisfaction survey results

University	Question 1 - Were you provided a quality education/programs?	Question 2 - Would you attend same school if you had to do it over?
ECU	95% (no change%)	90% (no change)
NSU	71% (-18%)	68% (-20%)
NWOSU	89% (+3%)	88% (-2%)
SEOSU	86% (+1%)	91% (+13%)
SWOSU	97% (+1%)	93% (no change)
UCO	89% (-2%)	79% (-2%)
RUSO AVERAGE	87% (-3%)	84% (-6%)

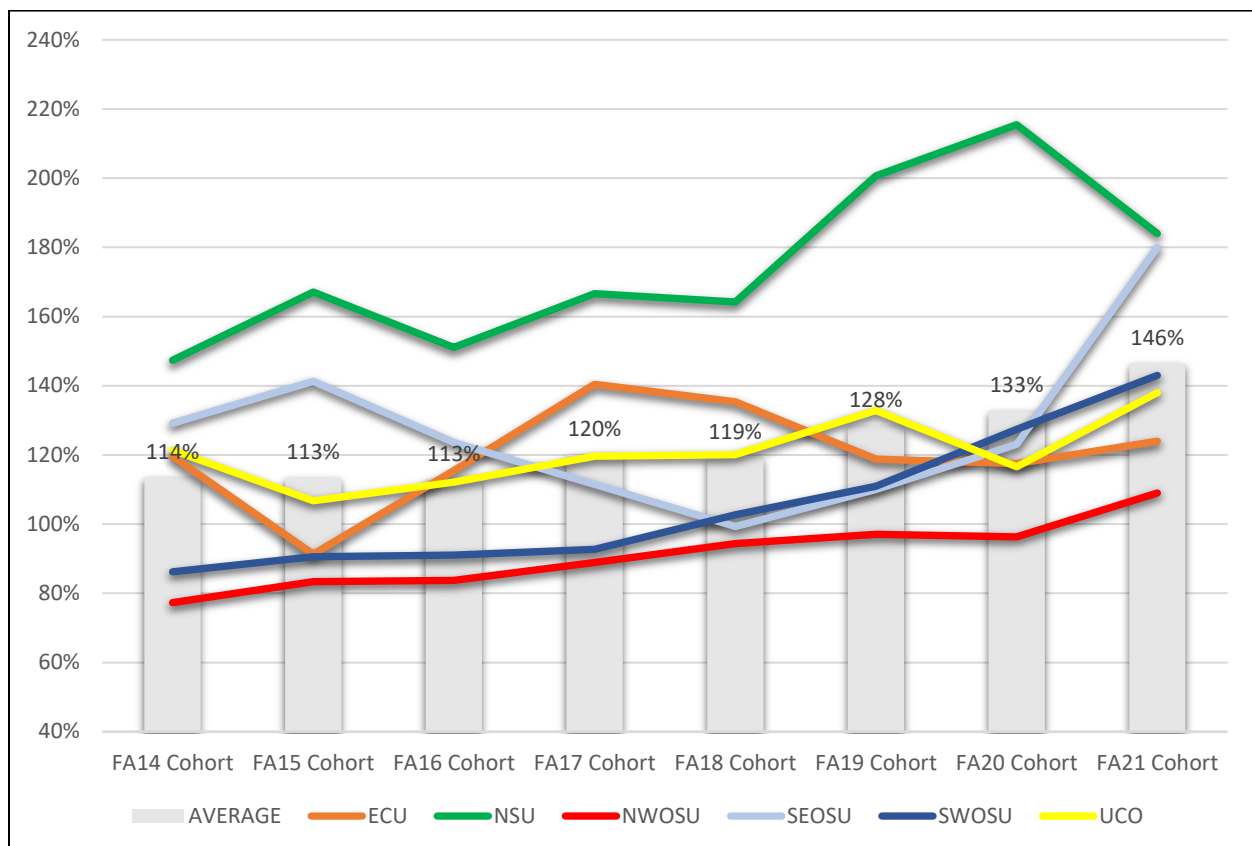
Graduation Success

Graduating more students each year than incoming freshmen

We believe it is our duty to clarify what “graduation rates” entail as defined by the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System of the U.S. Department of Education. IPEDS only measures the success of the cohort of first-time, full-time freshmen who enroll in the fall after graduating from high school, and then graduate from the same institution. It does not report the graduation rates of part-time, returning, adult, veterans, transfer students, or those who enroll in other terms. These students make up a large percentage of RUSO schools’ enrollment.

Chart 4 provides a comparison (in percentage terms) of the number of students graduating with an undergraduate degree in a given year divided by the number of full-time freshmen entering that same year. The chart shows that, on average, RUSO schools graduate more students every year than enroll as first-time freshmen. ***The average is nearing 150%.*** Part of this position jump can be attributed to smaller freshmen cohorts in Fall 2020 and Fall 2021. However, we believe that RUSO schools are making great progress in serving transfer students and students who come to the institutions as non-traditional students.

Chart 3. Total undergraduate degrees as a percentage of incoming full-time freshman class



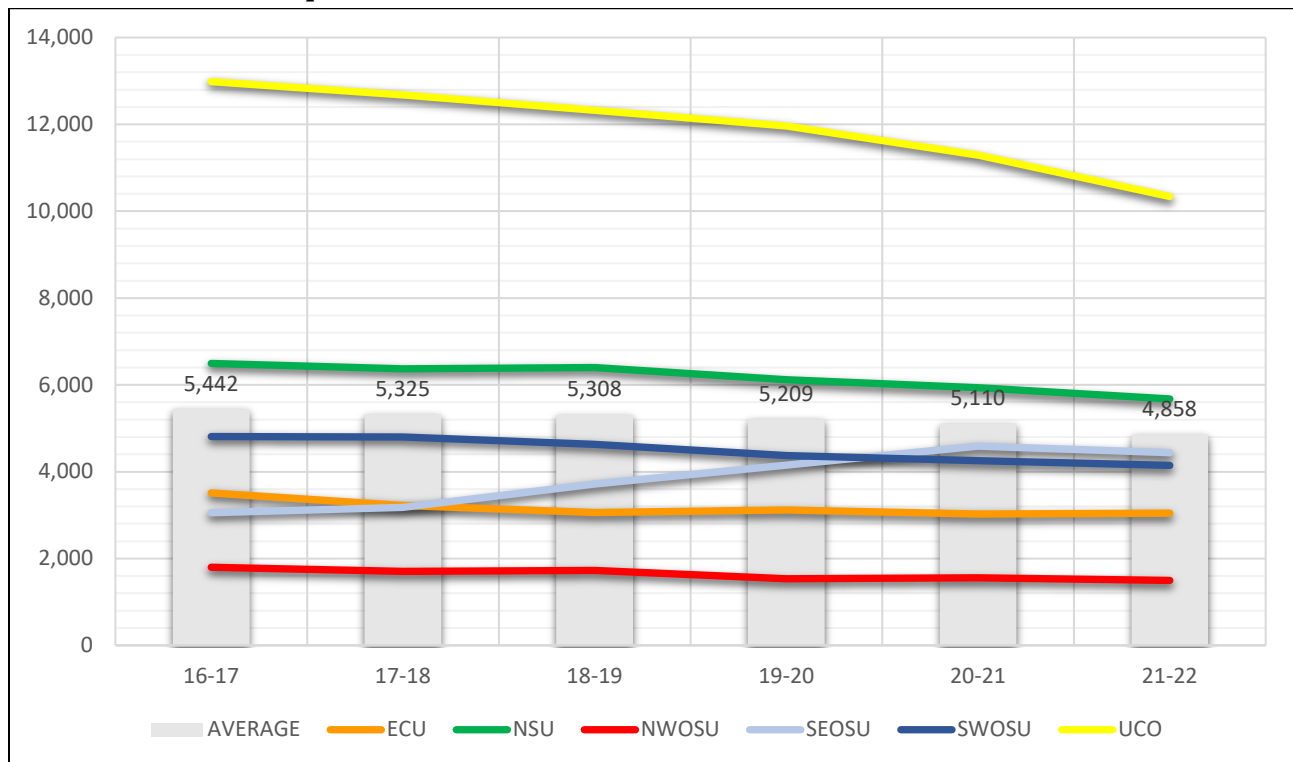
Access, Progress and Completion

Overall student enrollment

The academic year 2021-2022 included continuing difficulties associated with the COVID pandemic. The Fall 2021 semester included a spike in COVID cases in August that disrupted many enrollment activities. Spring 2022 also started off with a spike in cases across Oklahoma. While RUSO institutions dealt with COVID-related issues, they also faced lower college-going rates that are indicative of a nation-wide trend. Nationwide, college enrollment peaked in 2010 and has dropped since then, especially in the past two years. A

Full-time equivalent (FTE) is calculated by dividing total student credit hours enrolled in a semester and dividing by 15. Because completing 30 hours per year (15 per semester) will allow graduation for a 120-semester hour degree in four years, that is considered “full-time” for this statistic.

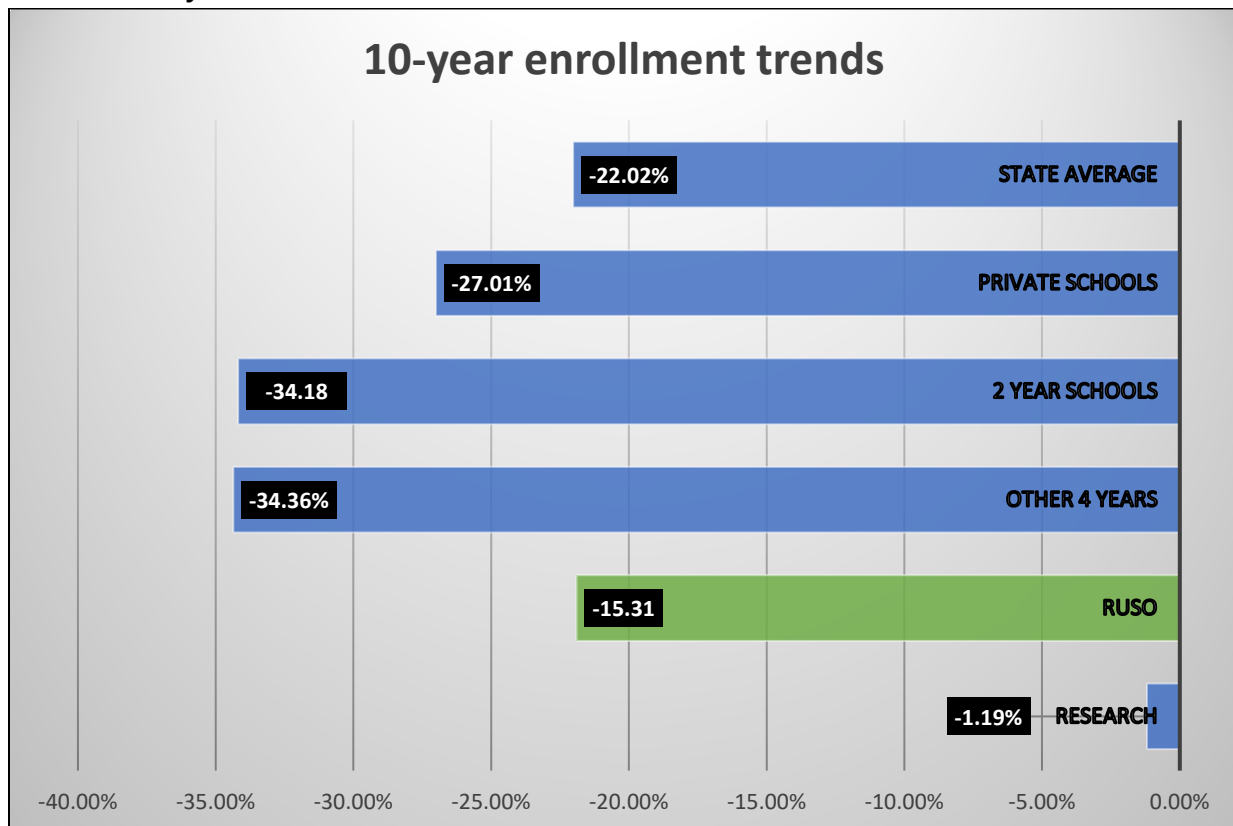
Chart 4. Full-time equivalent students



RUSO enrollment trend compared to other institutions

While RUSO schools have seen decreases in enrollment, other institutions within the state are also experiencing enrollment declines. Over 10 years, RUSO school enrollment has dropped from 50,747 to 42,971, a 15.31% decline. The only group of institutions that have decreased less are OU and OSU, largely in part to their change in admission standards. The other four-year schools (Cameron, Langston, Panhandle State, Rogers State, and USAO) have decreased in enrollment from 19,707 to 12,936, a 34.36% decline. Community colleges have dropped 34.18% in the last 10 years, and private schools are down 27.01%. The chart shows that all non-research institutions have been hit hard with enrollment declines in the past decade, but the RUSO institutions are mitigating the decline better than others.

Chart 5. 10-year enrollment trends of Oklahoma institutions

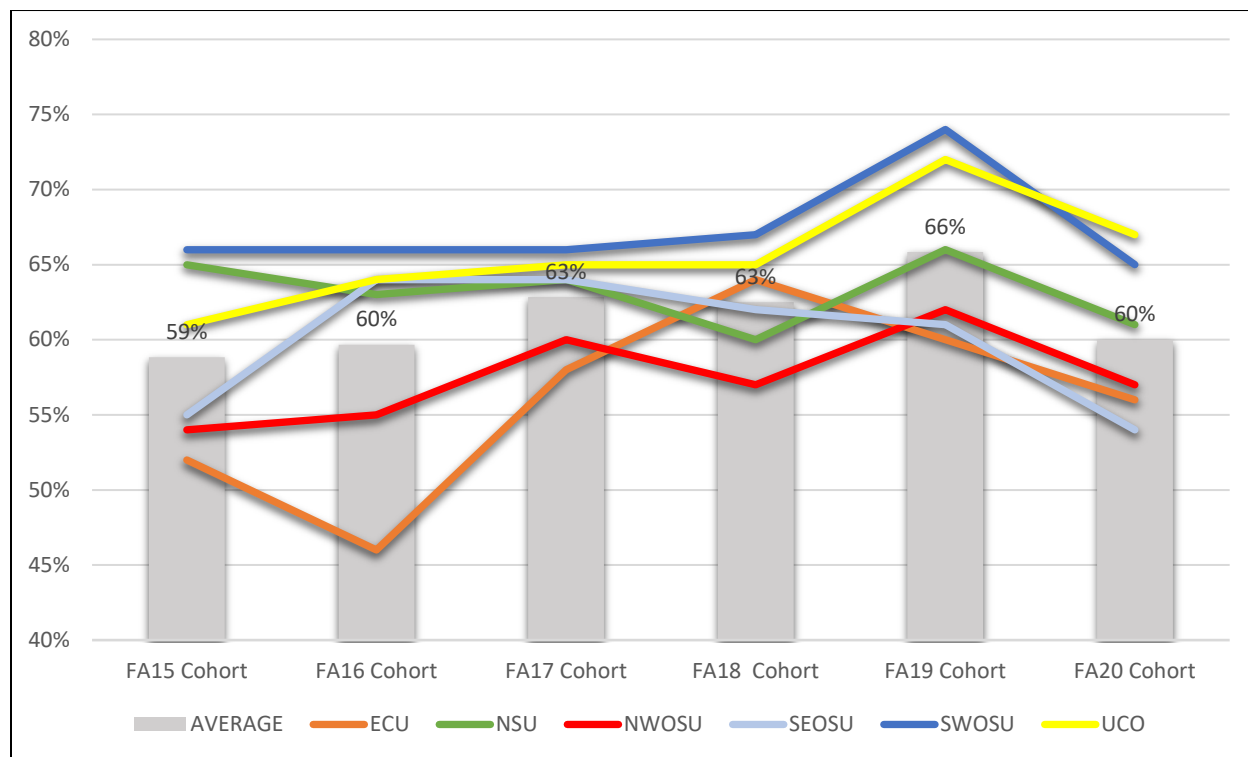


Source: OSHRE annual headcount enrollment, unduplicated within institution, AY13 to AY22

Retention successes and enrollment possibilities

This measures the percentage of students who enrolled as first-time, full-time freshmen in the fall who returned in the following fall. The most recent data is the Fall 2020 freshmen who returned for the Fall 2021 semester. As the data shows, this was in the middle of the COVID-related difficulties. We hit a high mark the previous year due to the larger freshman class in Fall 2019 that was ready for some type of normalcy in Fall 2020. However, the difficulties experienced by all students in the 2020-2021 year had a drastic effect on first-time freshmen. Each RUSO institution continues to implement retention and recruitment strategies designed to maximize student completion and institutional tuition revenue. Examples of these strategies include new student support services, changes in teaching methodology to increase student engagement, changes in freshman orientation classes to help students adjust to college life, changes to student advising models, and changes in tuition waiver awards to better assist students from low-income families. We know that we are losing students each semester who are unable to pay and consequently stop out or drop out.

Chart 6. Retention rates, first-time, full-time freshmen



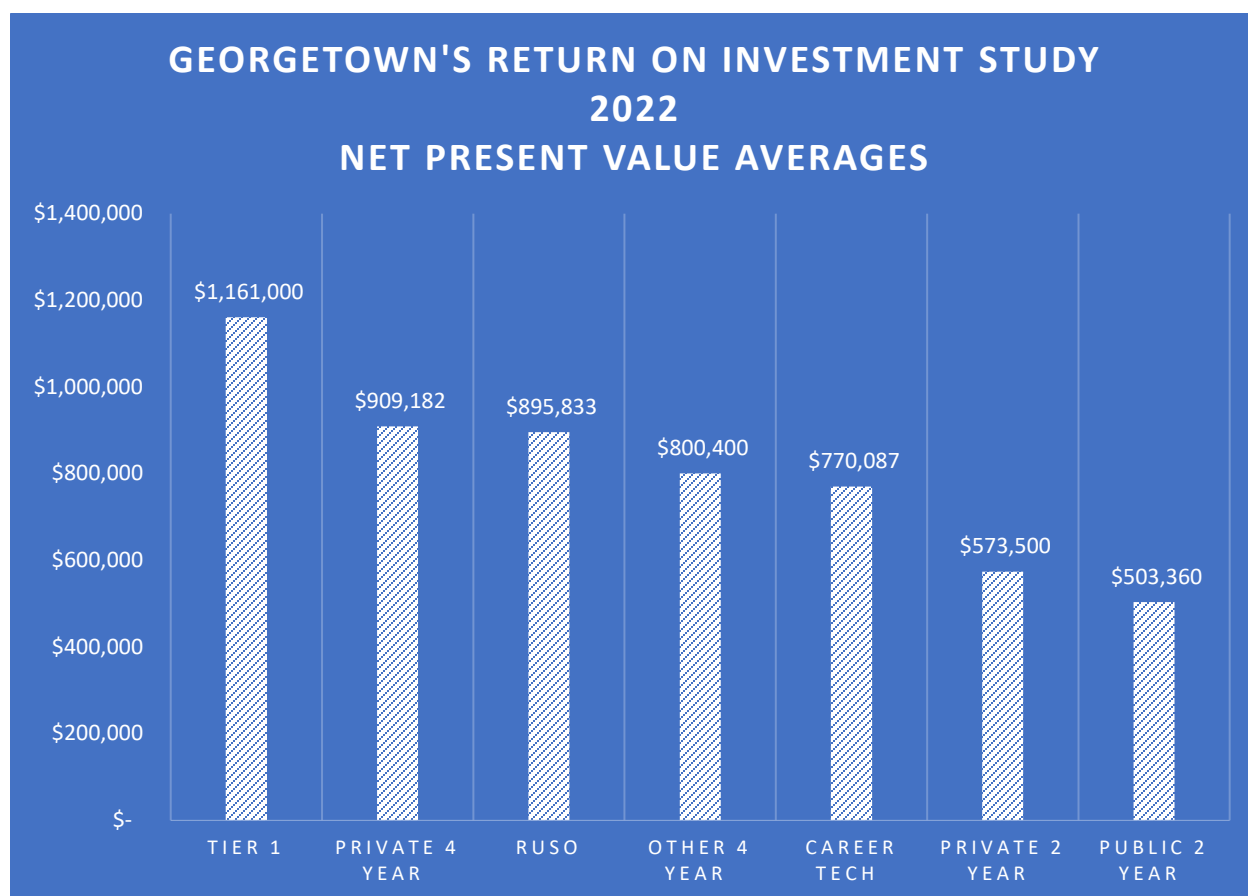
Program Value

Return on Investment

[Georgetown University ranks all 4,500 post-secondary institutions](#) in terms of 40-year return on investment. The study calculated the total investment in an institution, average annual net price, debt calculations, and 10- and 40-year returns by average earnings of graduates. For Oklahoma, the study calculated a ranking of all 92 institutions that offer some type of post-secondary degree, including technology centers. Key findings are that:

- All RUSO institutions placed in the top quartile of the state rankings.
- Each of the six RUSO institutions were ranked higher than any of the other five four-year master's level public universities.

Chart 7. Net Present Value



Graduation Rates

6-year graduation rates and persistence

The trend among RUSO institutions for six-year graduation is staying at 35%. This statistic is very difficult to move, and the improvement to the current level represents considerable work over time by the institutions. There are no shortcuts, and it is problematic to get empirical data on the causes of the improvement. A university often implements many measures at once on a continuous basis, so it is difficult to know definitively which interventions accounted for the change.

IPEDS Graduation rates do not account for students who begin degrees at one institution and finish at another. Many of our RUSO students complete their first two years at our institutions, never intending to graduate, and transfer to a specialized program at another institution and graduate on time. In IPEDS statistical reports, these students are treated the same as dropouts who never completed their college degrees, even though they are indeed successful.

Chart 8. IPEDS Graduation rates (within 6 years)

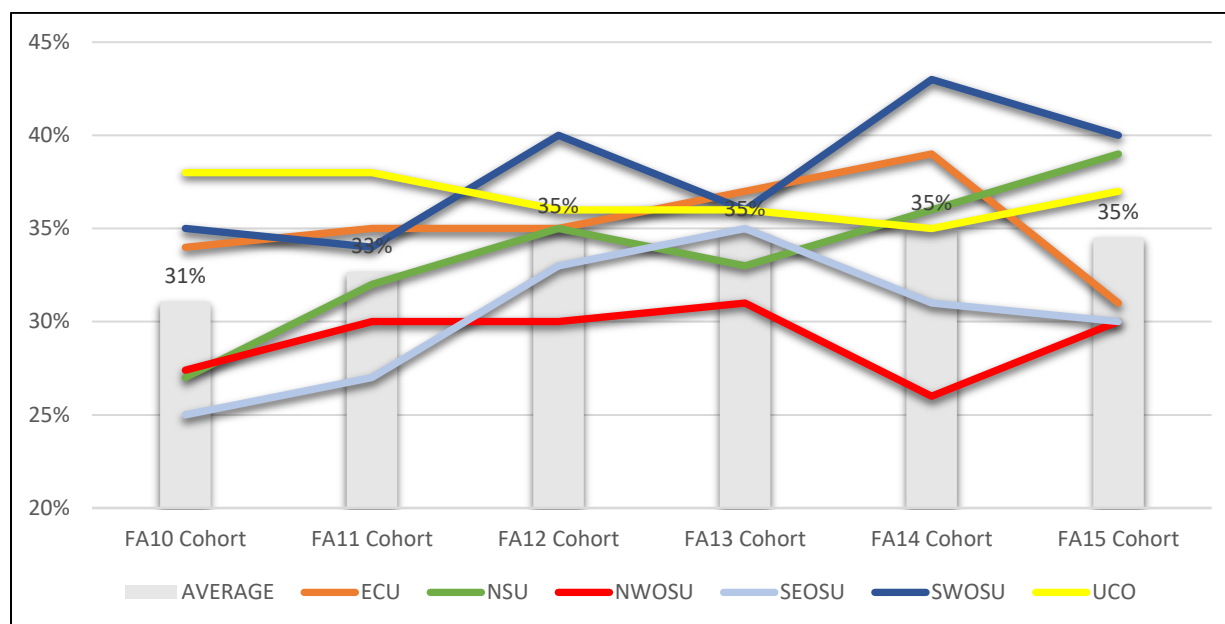
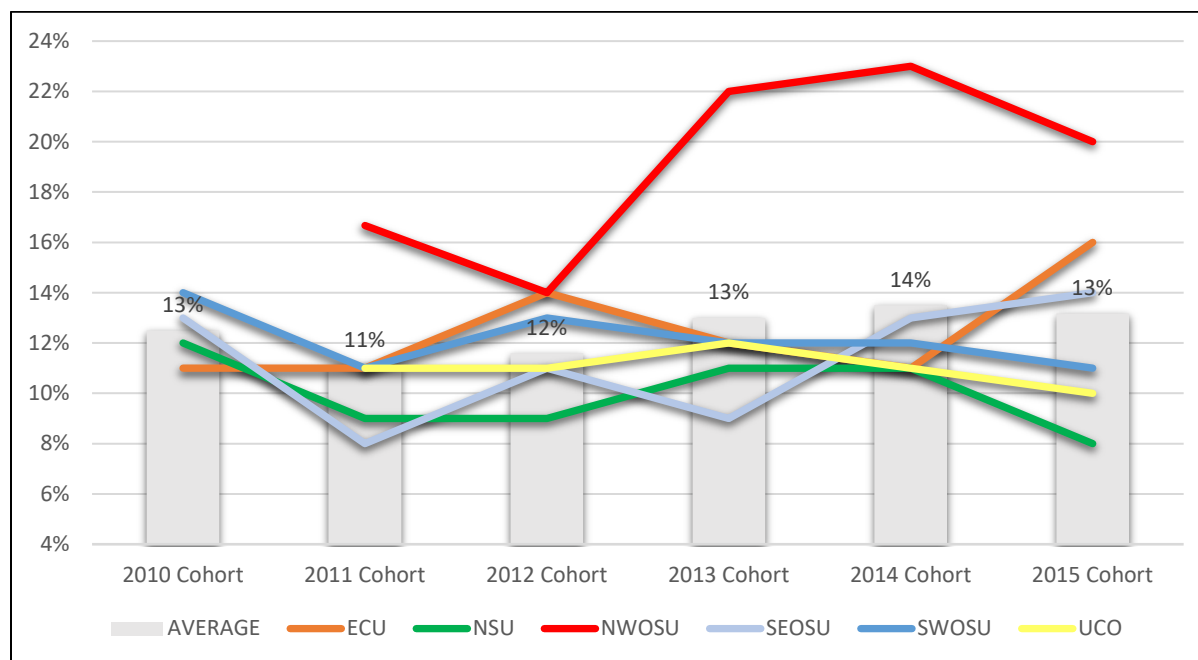
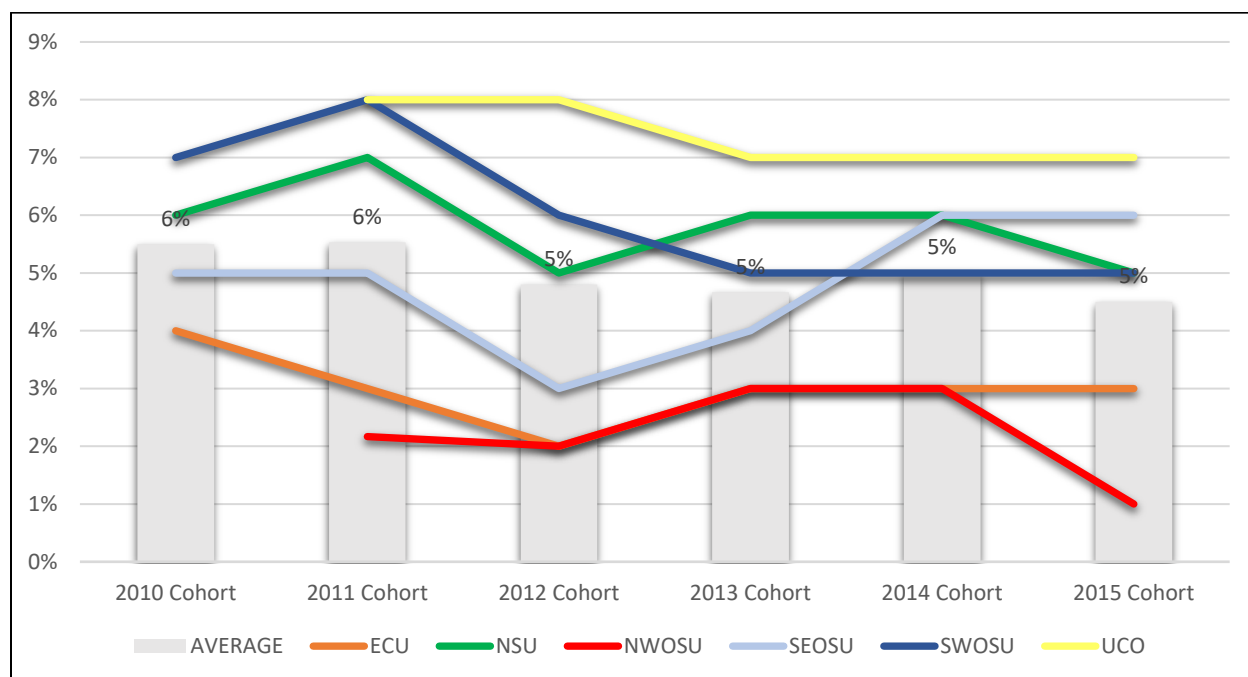


Chart 9. First-time freshmen, transferred and graduated elsewhere in 6 years

Likewise, students who do not complete within six years do not show up as successes in IPEDS data. Many students at RUSO institutions (this chart shows between 2-8 percent of them) work during school, attend part-time, and take longer than 6 years to finish.

Chart 10. First-time freshmen still enrolled after 6 years

Degrees awarded

The numbers of Bachelor's degrees awarded are holding steady on average. It dipped in 2021-2022 mainly as a result of the dropoff of students enrolling in 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. Master's degrees are up at most institutions, and especially at Southeastern Oklahoma State University. Certificates also are up in response to a workforce and legislative push to create certificates that are industry-based.

Chart 11. Bachelor's degree awarded

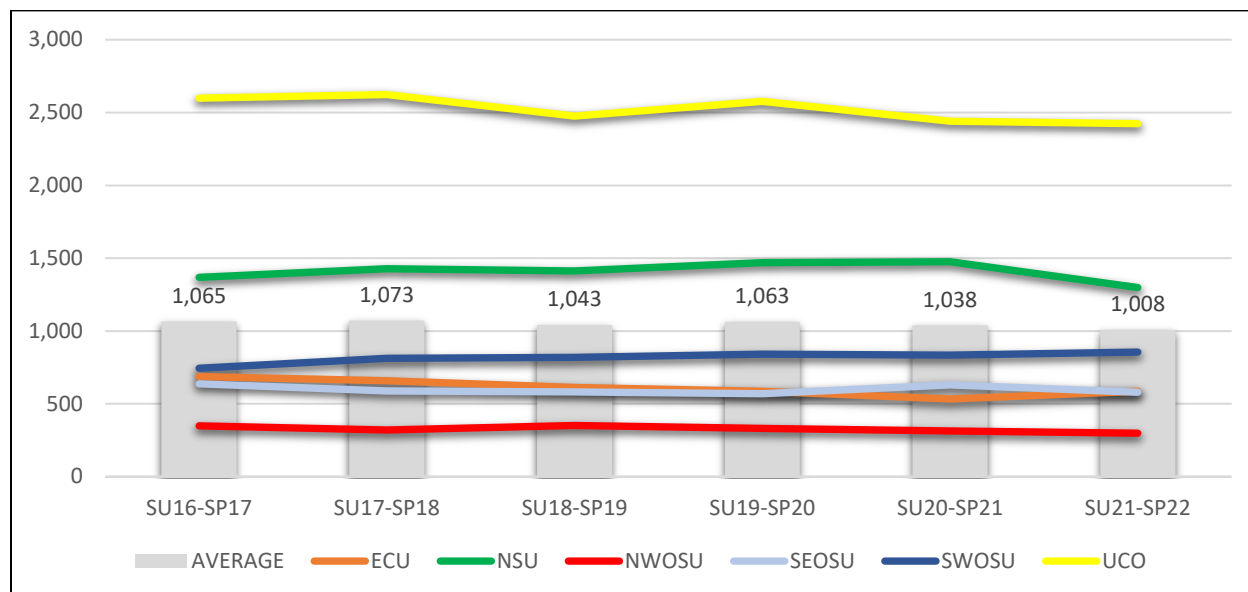


Chart 12. Master's degrees awarded

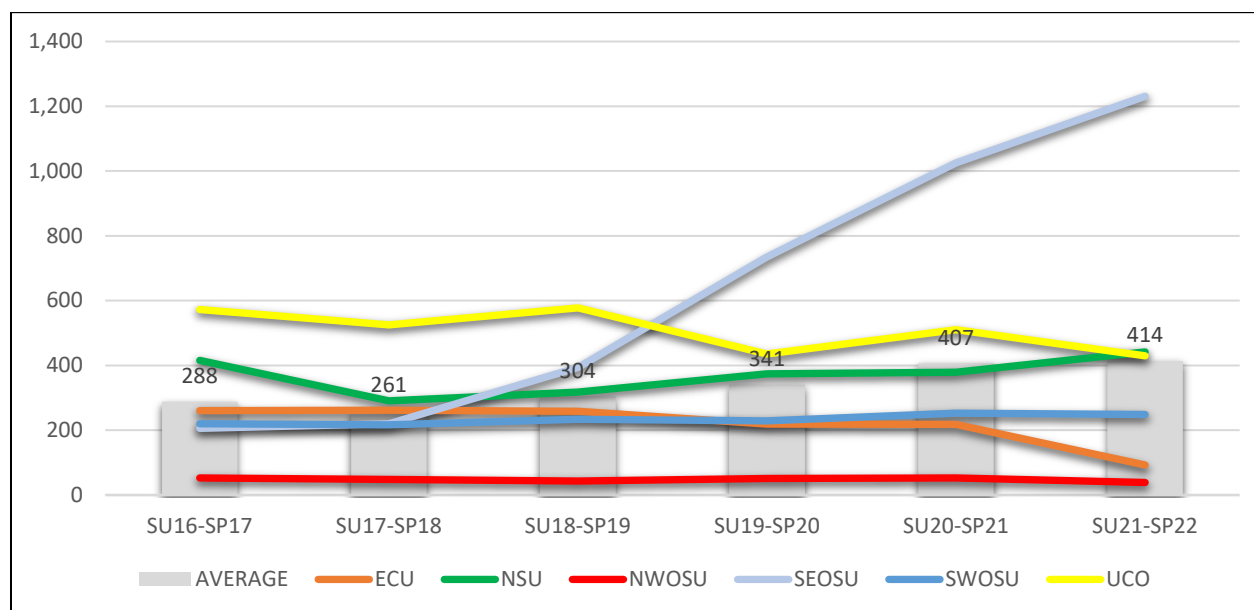
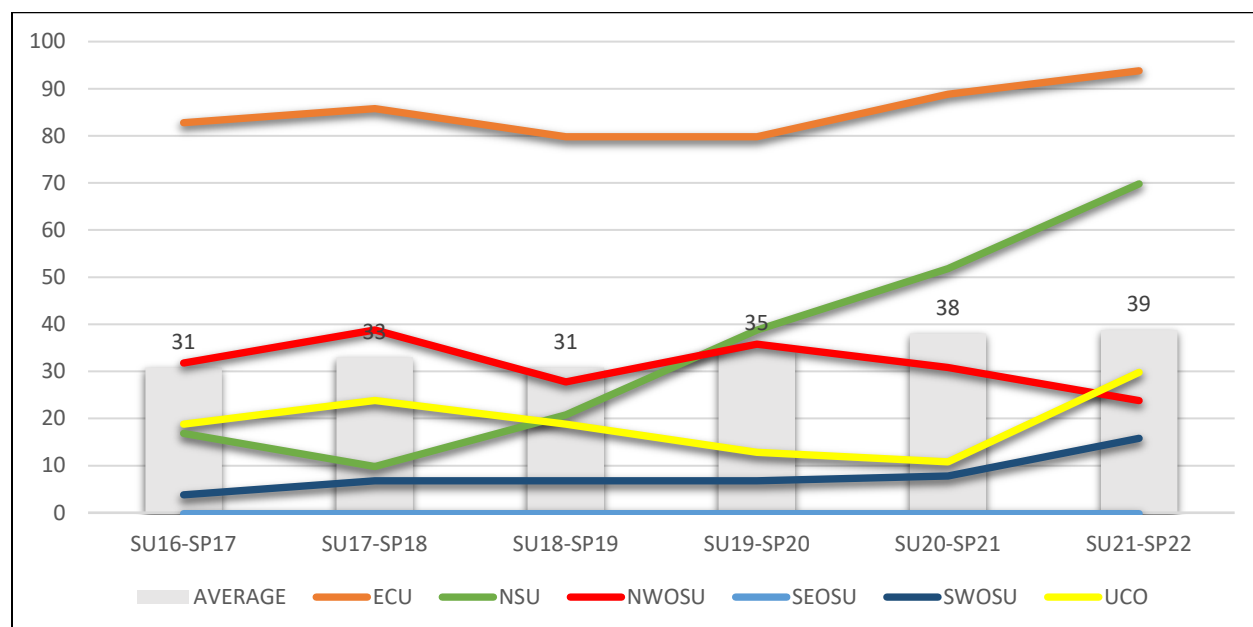
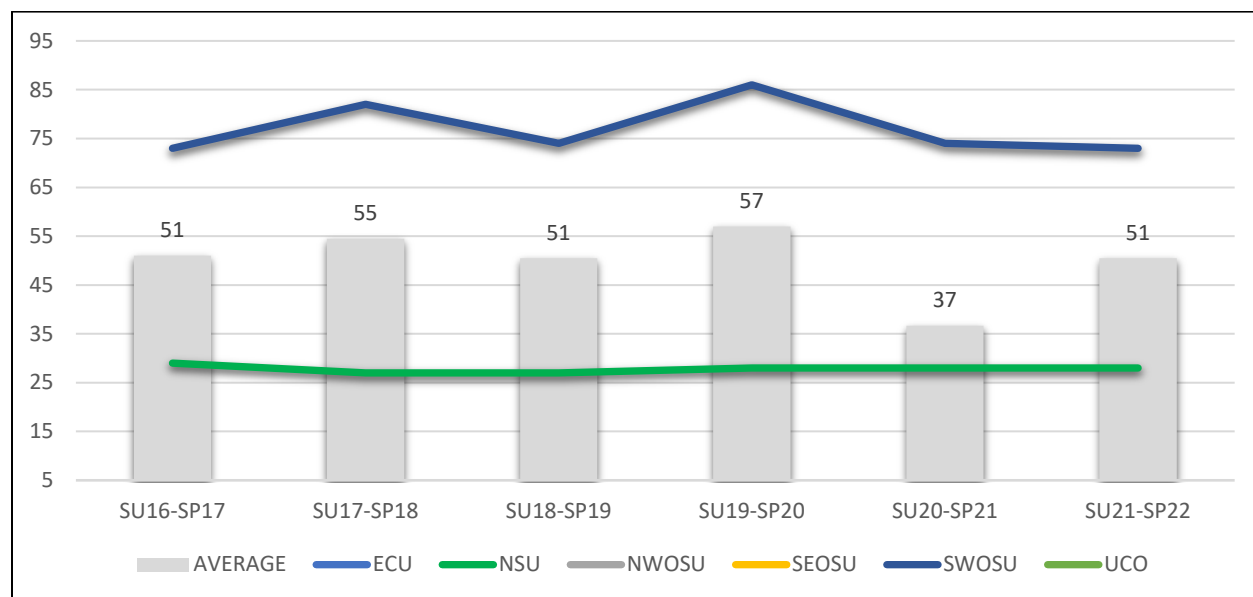


Chart 13. Certificates awarded**Chart 14. Doctoral degrees awarded**

General Education Math and English completion

We track enrollment and completion rates in General Education Math and English courses because most students take those courses as freshmen, and data from *Complete College America* indicates that passing Math and English as freshmen is a predictor of enhanced probability of graduation.

Because of our investment in the co-requisite model and (in some cases) use of a minimum HS GPA to exempt students from remediation, more students are taking GE Math and English courses, including many who previously would have been placed in developmental courses first. Our current strategy is to enroll most of the deficient students in the GE course along with a required support class. Even though this way of measuring does not show it, we have a higher number of students completing GE Math and English as freshmen than we did previously, which should aid retention. The large dip and subsequent increase in completion rates for deficient students indicates two effects: 1) the negative affect of COVID on the most vulnerable student population – deficient students; and 2) increased efforts of institutions to support students with academic needs.

We are also taking note of the decline in students taking general education mathematics and English. The percentage decline in the number of students taking these courses is much steeper than overall enrollment decline at institutions. This is due to several factors, including the rise of concurrent enrollment, the increased choice for students to take courses from different institutions, and the availability of online general education courses.

Chart 15. General Education Math completion rates as a percentage of enrollments

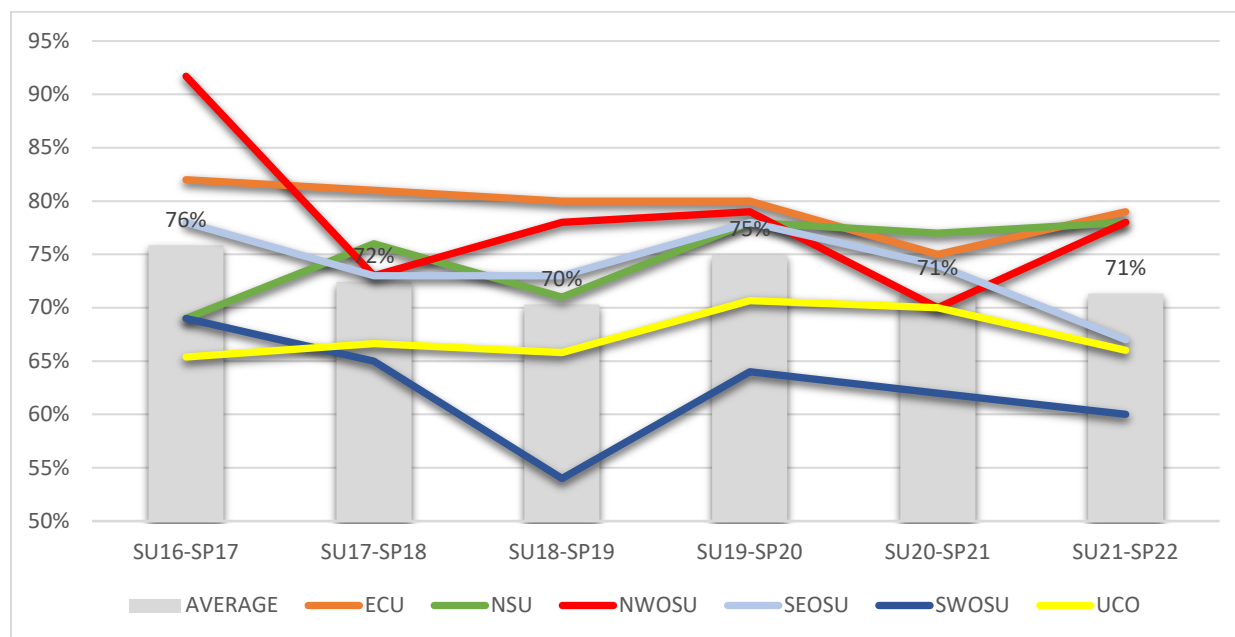


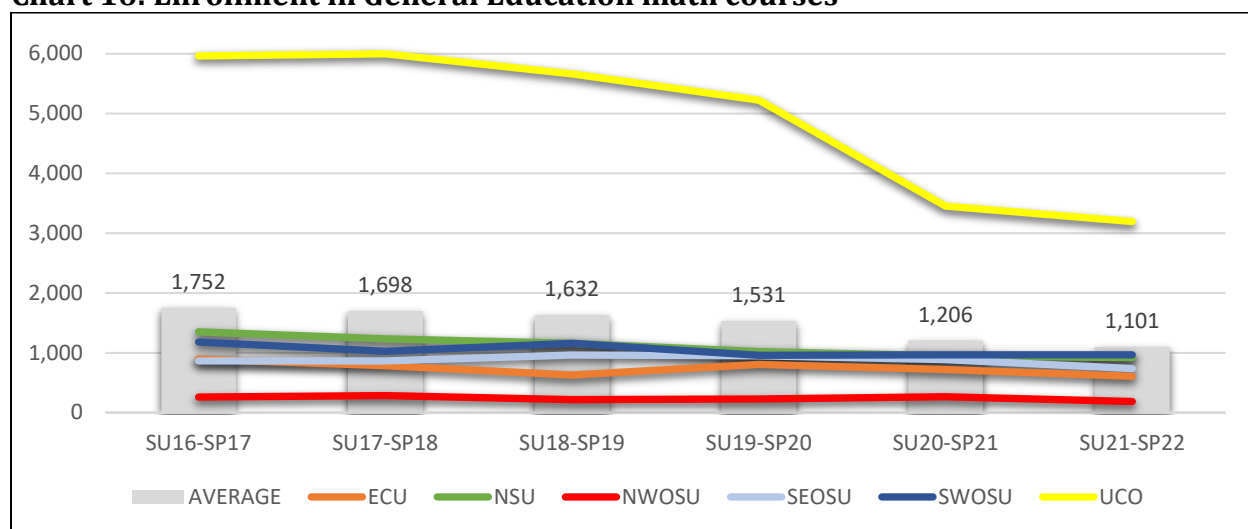
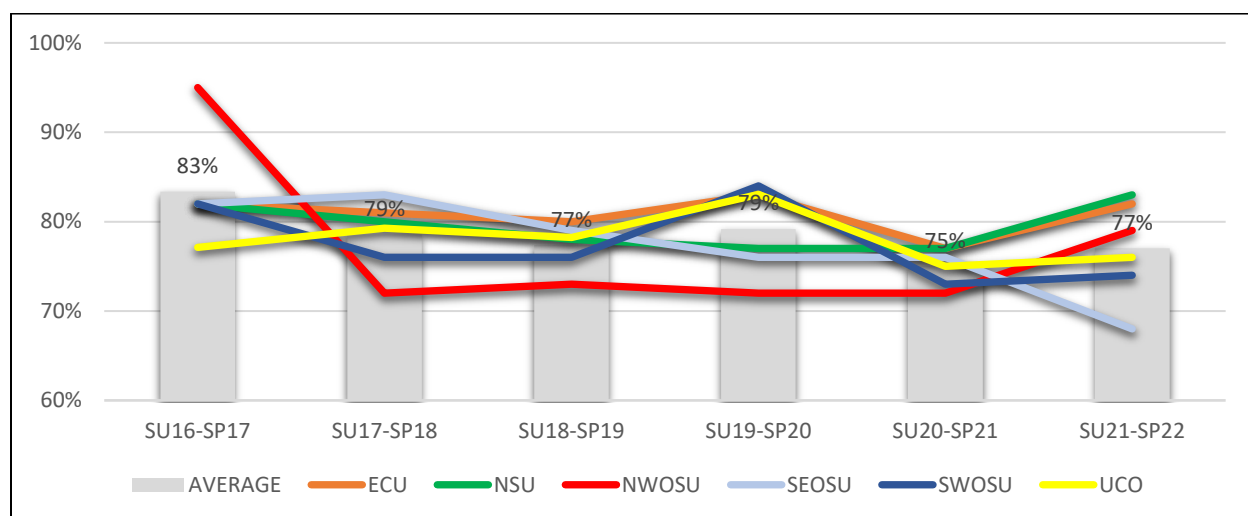
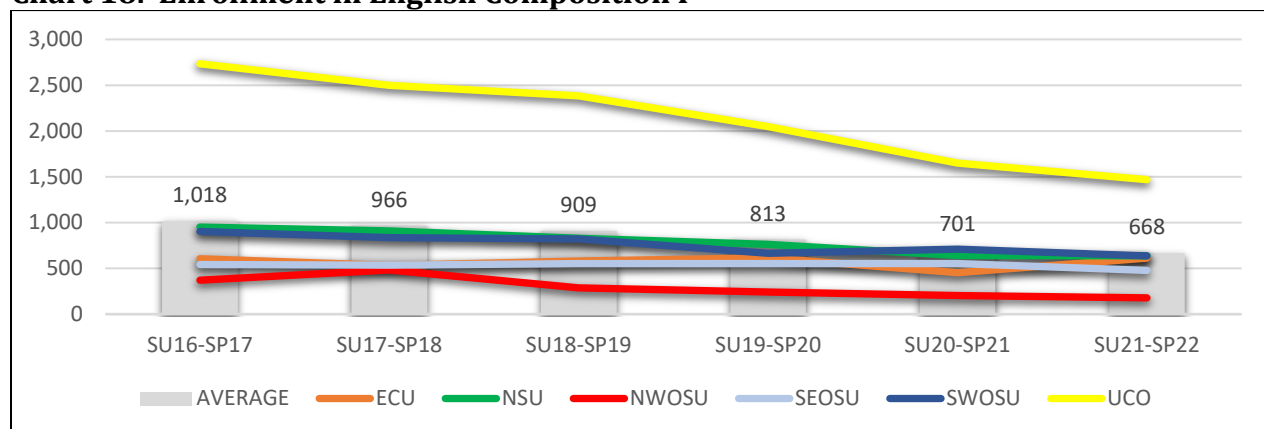
Chart 16: Enrollment in General Education math courses**Chart 17. English Composition I completion rates as percentage of enrollments****Chart 18. Enrollment in English Composition I**

Chart 19. General Education Math completion rates of deficient students as a percentage of enrollments

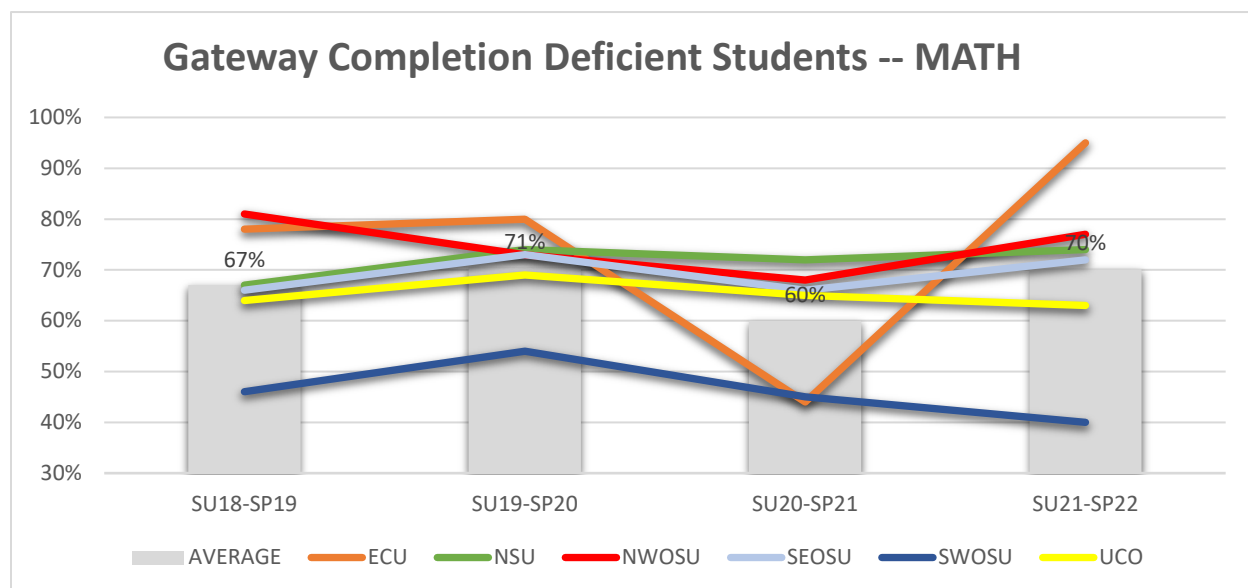
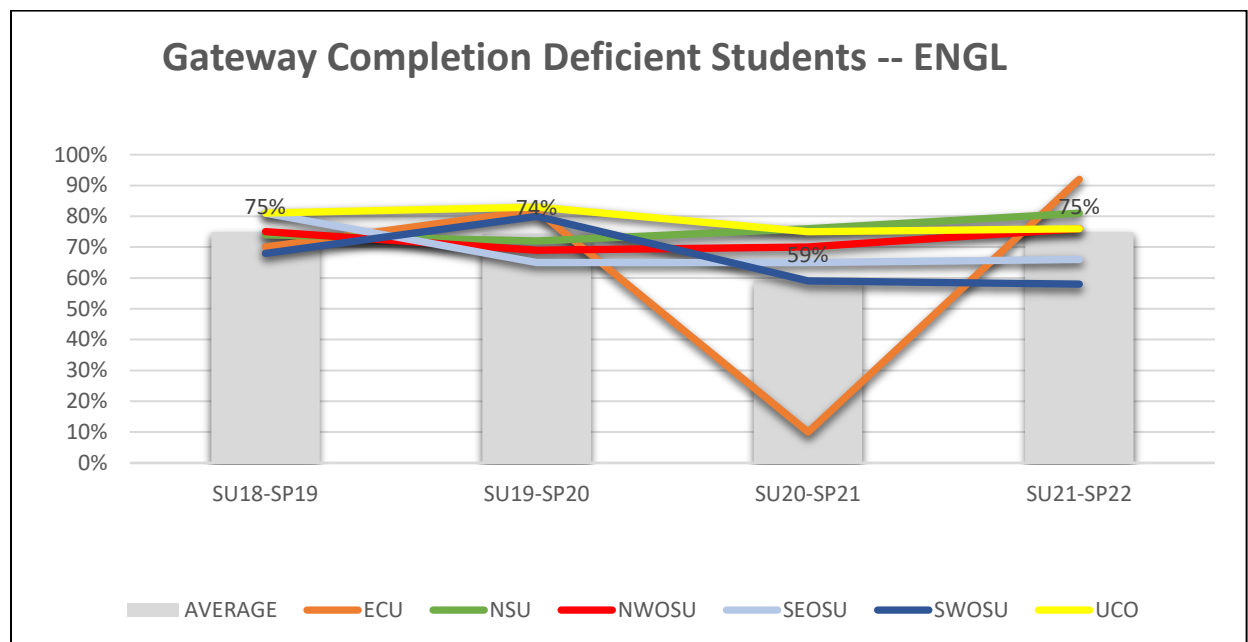


Chart 20. General Education English Composition I completion rates of deficient students as a percentage of enrollments

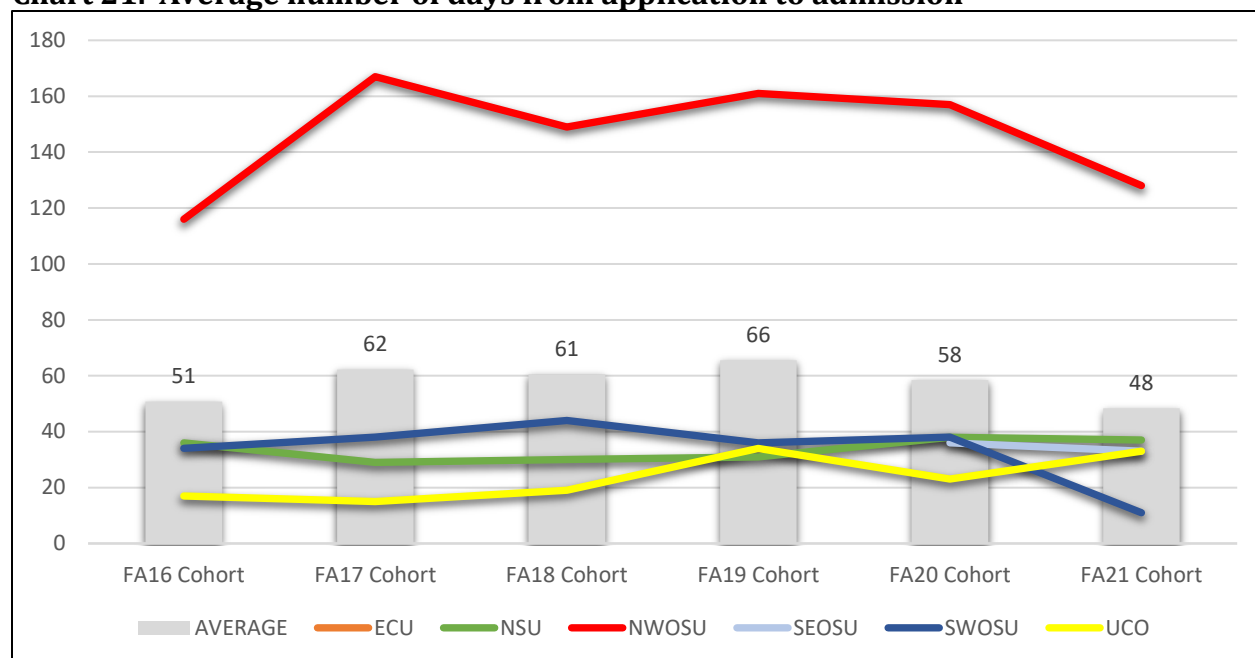


Student on-boarding efforts

Quicker admission efforts

RUSO institutions are aware that students are coming from a world where speed of service is increasingly expected. Institutions are looking at strategies to decrease the number of days from when a student submits an application to a RUSO university to when the student is officially admitted. A student who is admitted can be more likely to eventually enroll.

Chart 21. Average number of days from application to admission

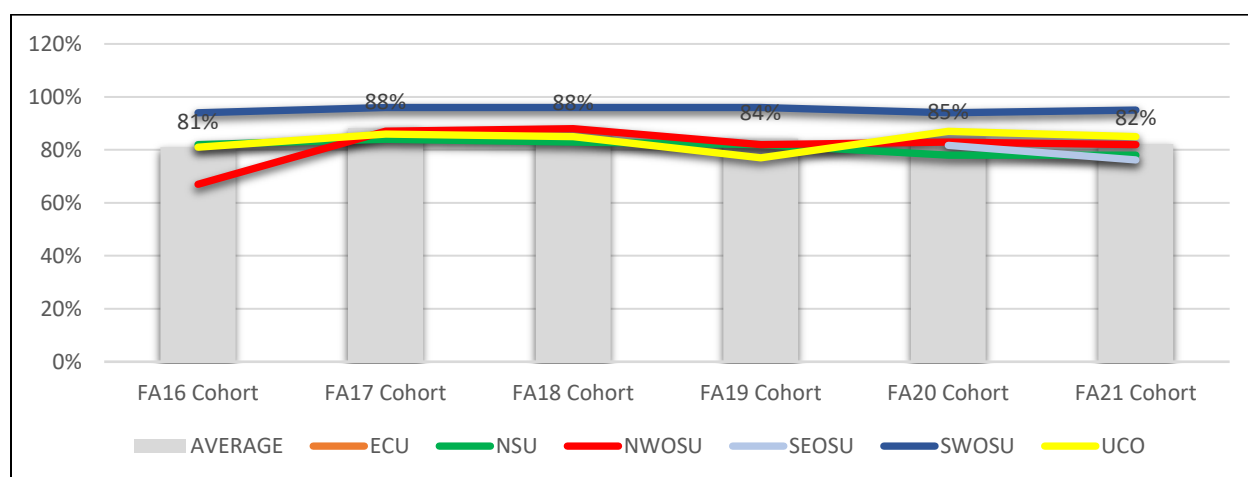


**East Central University data is available for the most recent cohort and thus does not include a trendline. However, ECU's numbers for 2021-2022 are aligned with the RUSO average.*

FAFSA efforts for current students

A higher percentage of students who can fill out the FAFSA financial aid package can result in a higher percentage of students receiving aid that will enable them to persist in degree achievement. RUSO institutions have implemented strategies to highlight the advantages of completing the FAFSA.

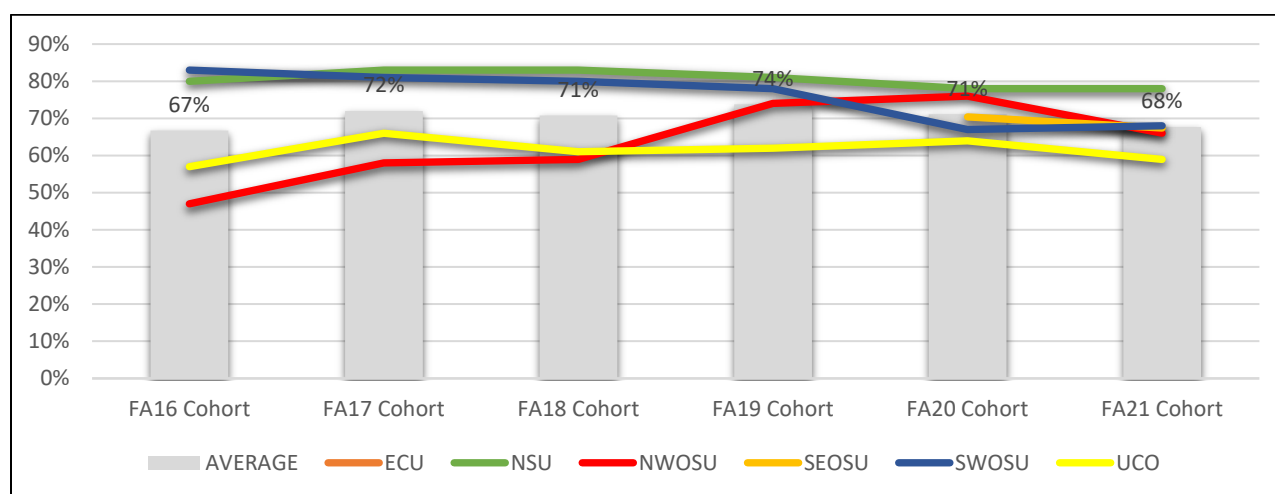
Chart 22. Percentage of students who fill out the FAFSA



FAFSA efforts for applicants

RUSO institutions also have implemented strategies to highlight the advantages of completing the FAFSA for applicants. This will give potential students a better idea of how much financial aid is available for them at RUSO institutions. However, the trend in the past few years have been a lower percentage of applicants filling out the FAFSA. This could be due to decreasing resources at high schools in which counselors do not have time to provide college counseling.

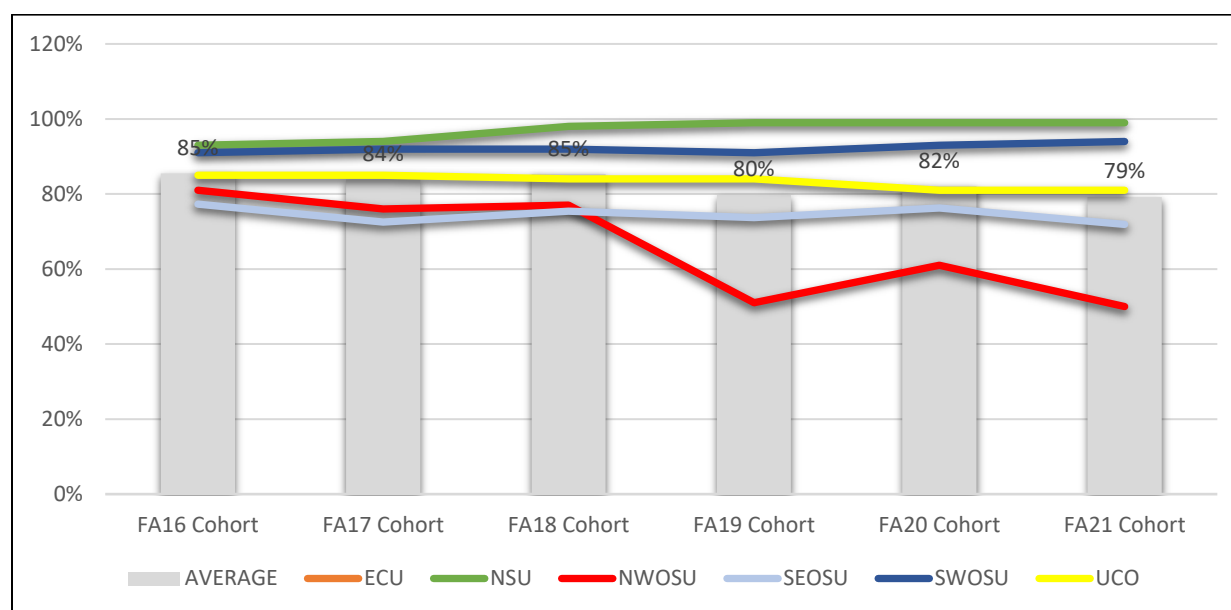
Chart 23. Percentage of applicants who fill out the FAFSA



Acceptance rates

The average percentage of students who applied who were then accepted has decreased somewhat over the past five years. Several factors go into student admittance, including student performance in high school and on standardized tests.

Chart 24. Percentage of students who applied who were then accepted



**East Central University data is available for the most recent cohort and thus does not include a trendline. However, ECU's numbers for 2021-2022 are aligned with the RUSO average*

Course delivery methods

Student demand for alternative course delivery methods than face-to-face was expedited by the COVID-19 pandemic. The result is a marked decrease in face-to-face courses. This changing landscape of course delivery brings opportunities but also challenges. RUSO institutions are seeking ways to meet student demand while also fulfilling their missions.

Online and traditional courses

Online courses were highest in 2020-2021 in response to the COVID pandemic. In 2021-2022, some courses returned to face-to-face, but the percentage of online courses is still much higher than pre-pandemic. The percentage of courses taught face-to-face started declining even before the pandemic.

Chart 25. Percentage of courses taught online

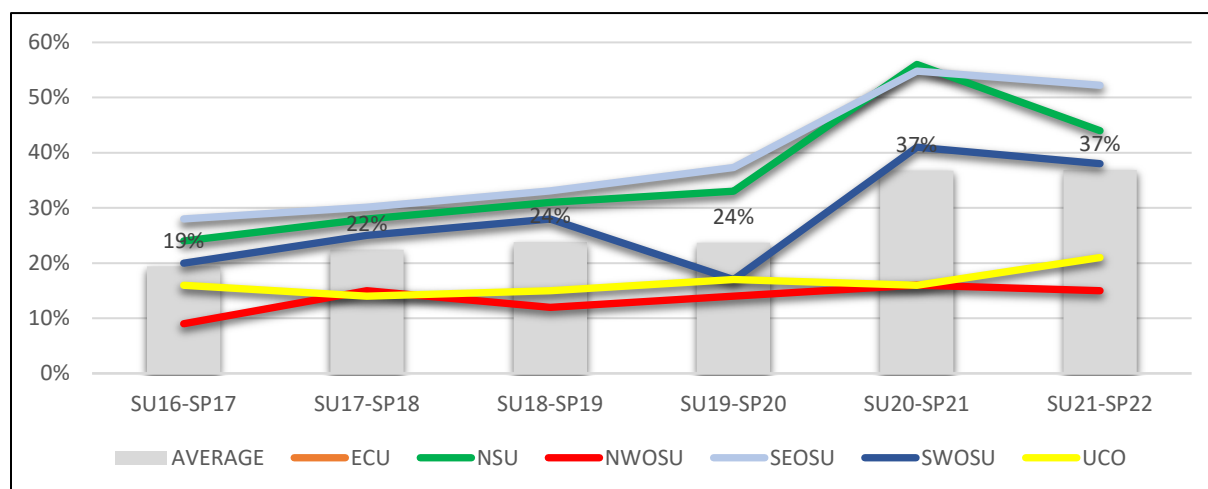


Chart 26. Percentage of courses taught traditional face-to-face

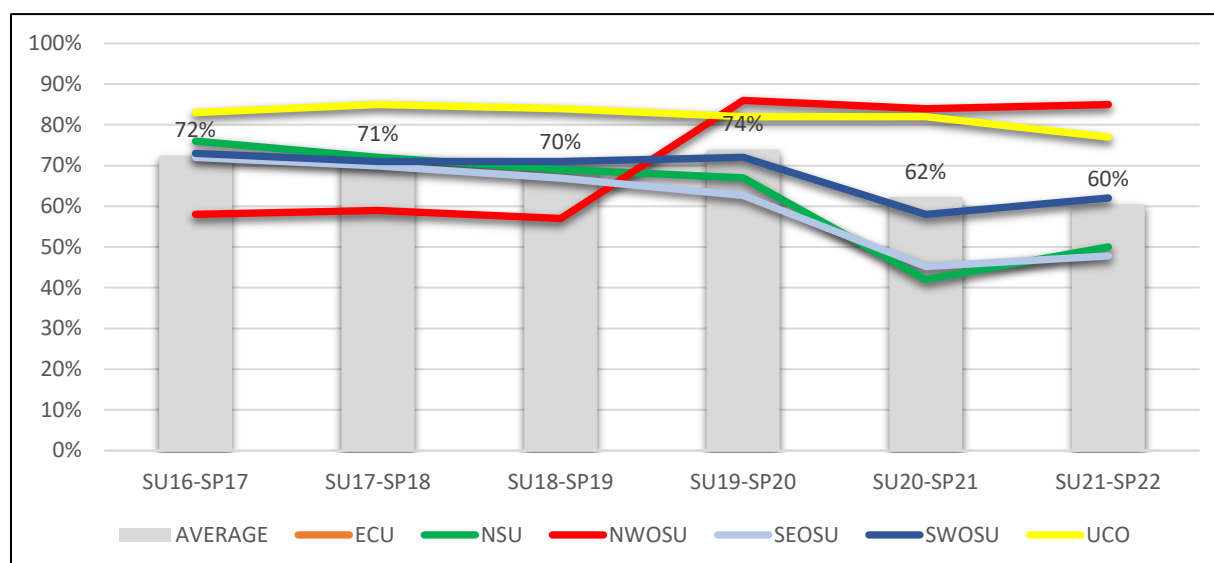
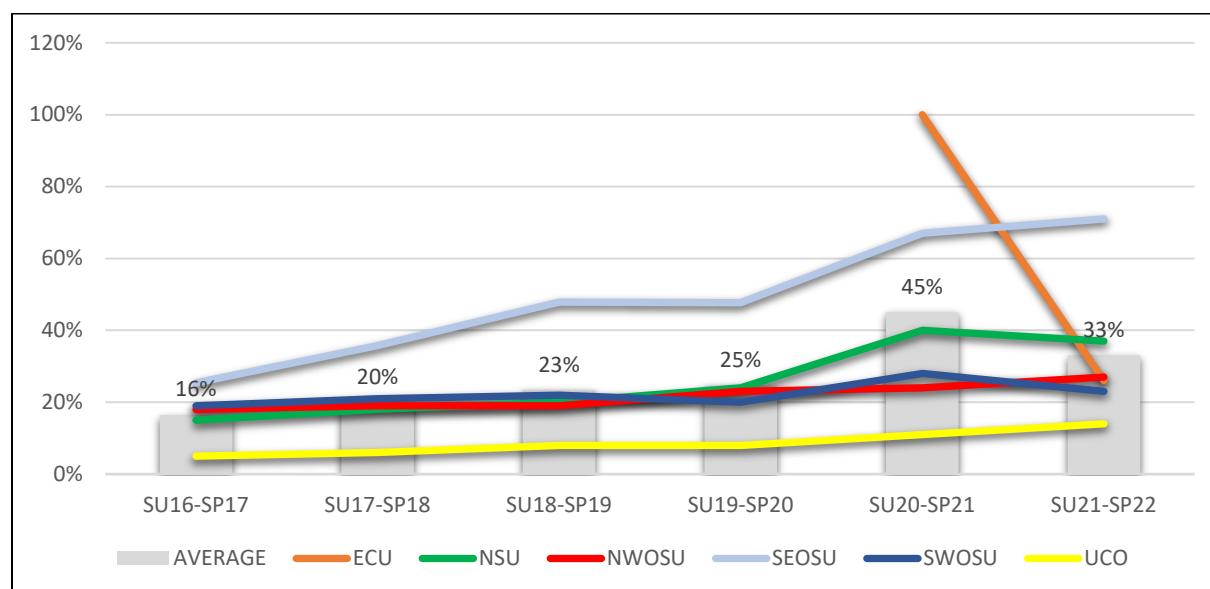
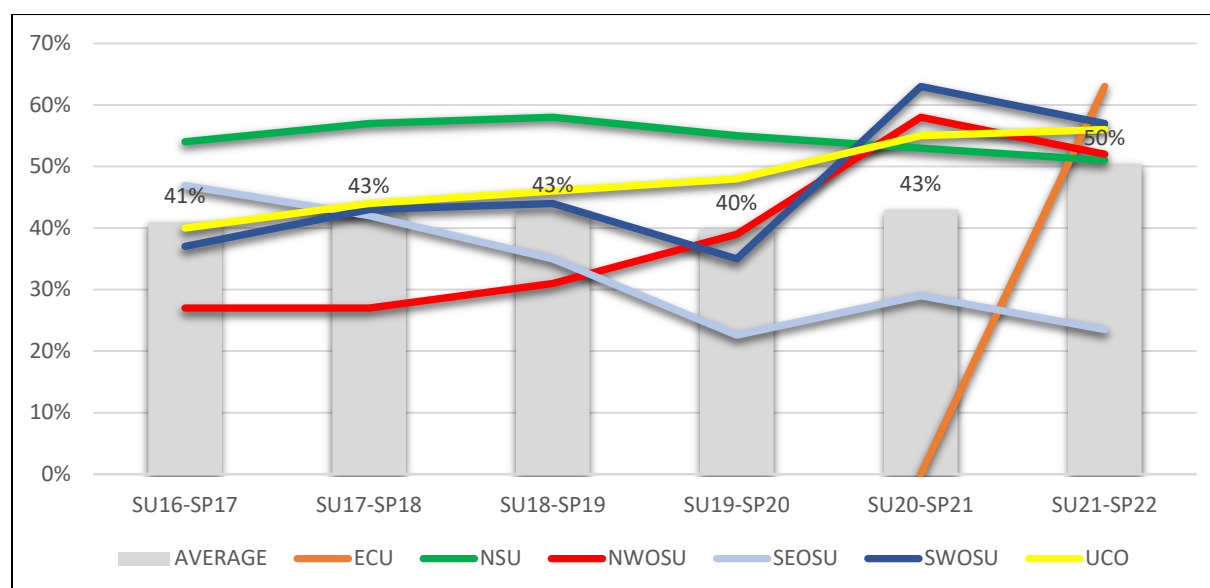
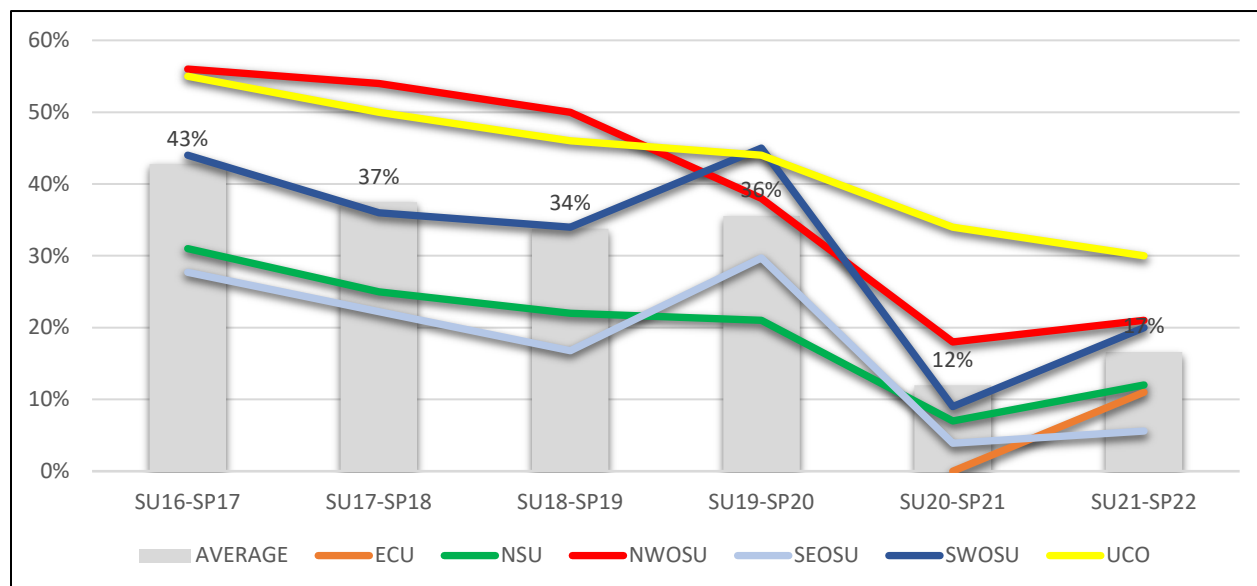


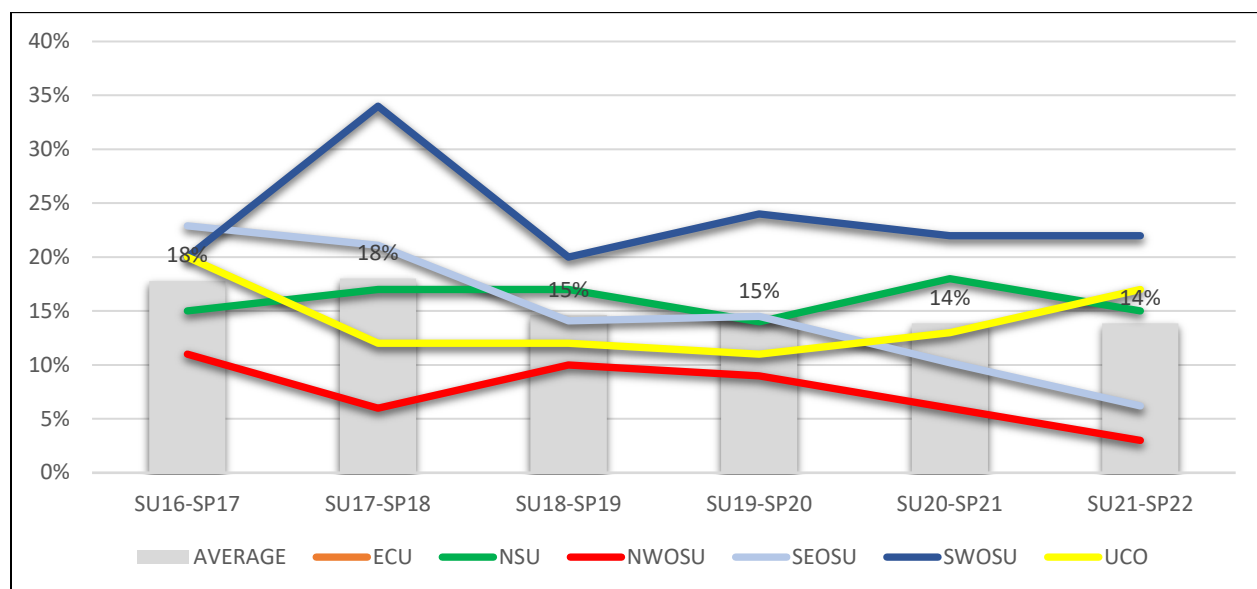
Chart 27. Percentage of students taking only online classes**Chart 28. Percentage of students taking at least one online class**

**East Central University data is available for the most recent cohort and thus does not include a trendline. However, ECU's numbers for 2021-2022 are aligned with the RUSO average*

Chart 29. Percentage of students enrolled in only face-to-face courses

Meeting online course demand

One way to determine if an institution is meeting online course demand is to monitor the enrollment in online sections. If many sections are completely filled, it is an indicator that students want more online sections than are being offered.

Chart 30. Percentage of online sections completely filled

**East Central University data is available for the most recent cohort and thus does not include a trendline. However, ECU's numbers for 2021-2022 are aligned with the RUSO average*

Campus services

Auxiliary services on campus are services that must be profitable in order to operate. Two major areas are campus housing and meal plans. RUSO institutions are aware that the number of students living on campus and using campus meal plans are not only provide additional revenue for the universities, but they are also more connected to the university in ways that could help with retention and completion.

Chart 31. Percentage of students living in campus housing

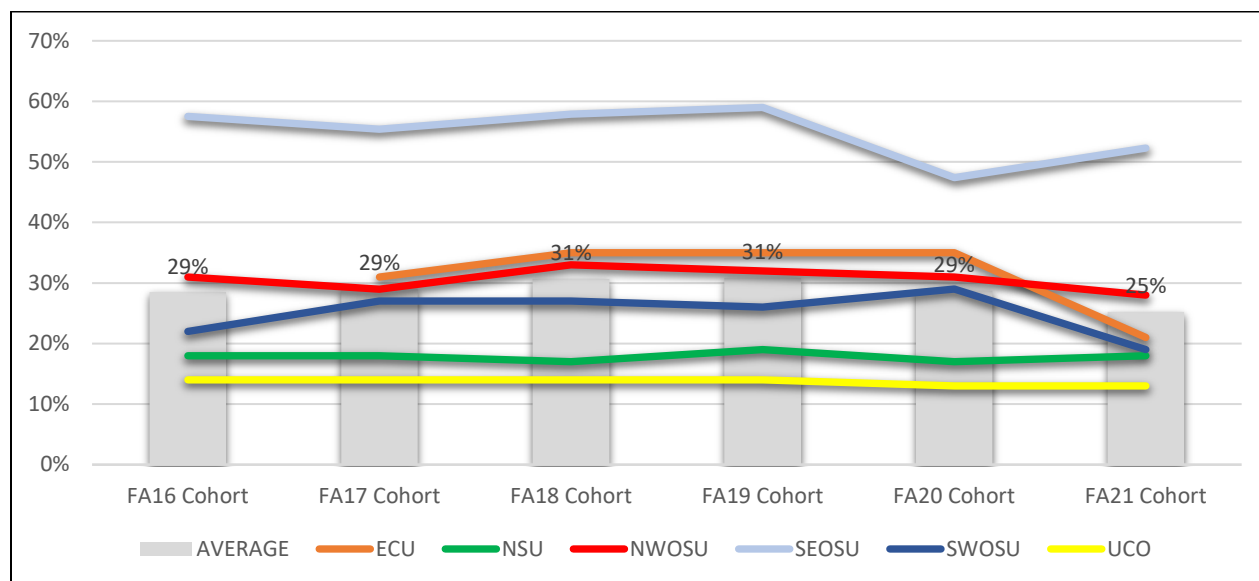
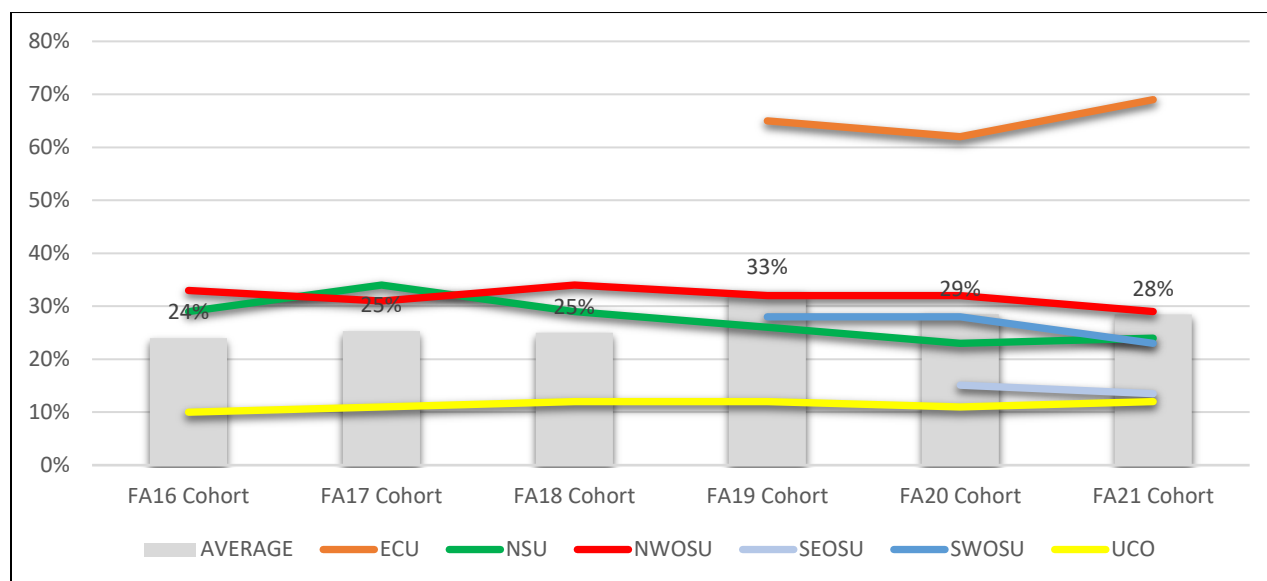


Chart 32. Percentage of students enrolled in meal plans



Concluding Observations

The data sets and their interpretation in this report point to a substantial array of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to RUSO institutions. They are summarized below.

The **STRENGTHS** of the RUSO system are many and profound.

- RUSO universities provide the workforce for Oklahoma and the surrounding areas.
- Our students are very satisfied with the quality of their education. The overwhelming majority would choose their same institution again to pursue their degree.
- RUSO graduates stay in Oklahoma and work for at least 5 years at a rate that exceeds all other state systems and tiers.
- Our retention rates and graduation rates are strong despite the challenges of the pandemic, indicating that we support students to the point that they stay in college and graduate.

Our **WEAKNESSES** are mainly tied to financial pressures and enrollment trends.

- State appropriations to higher education have dropped at an alarming rate in recent years and at the same time we have been politically unable to raise tuition sufficiently to make up the difference. Because of the population we serve, our institutions are price-sensitive to the ability of our students to pay higher tuition and fees.
- We are beginning to see evidence that the rising cost of tuition at RUSO institutions is a serious barrier to many of our students, even though we are still at or below regional averages for overall tuition and fees.
- Like many universities around the country, we are experiencing a decline in enrollment that is influenced by a myriad of issues, including the COVID-19 pandemic.
- We continue to battle high school preparedness for university coursework, especially considering two years of “pandemic” learning. Students are increasingly ill-prepared for the rigors of university coursework. All RUSO institutions have support services for these students (co-requisites, academic support centers, Title III services) but the strain on university faculty and staff to ensure these students’ success is increasing.

We have **OPPORTUNITIES** for increased tuition revenue if we can improve student retention and capture our share of a projected growth in potential students.

- Our institutions have great relationships with area high schools and are working with those schools to expand concurrent offerings.

- Oklahoma is among one of few states that are projected to see an increase in traditional high school graduates between 2023-2030. OSRHE in its analysis offers the increase will be primarily among non-white students. RUSO institutions must closely focus on their recruitment and retention strategies and tactics to attract these new students.
- RUSO institutions are more agile in responding to student demand for alternative course and program delivery options.
- RUSO institutions are also more agile in responding to changes within workforce demands.
- OSRHE changes may allow for more innovation in programs and program delivery.

THREATS limit our ability to carry out our mission.

- The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted enrollment behavior of students. The traditional method of recruiting, enrolling, and retaining students is losing effectiveness.
- Both OU and OSU enrolled larger freshman classes the past two years, primarily by slightly lowering admission standards. They are now accepting students who traditionally would have entered a regional university, and many of those students eventually find their way back to RUSO universities as transfer students.
- Future reductions in state appropriations remain a possibility should the United States enter a recession. Past recessions have taught us that a slowdown in the economy overall will result in less demand for energy resources. This volatility of a major revenue source for the state results in budget reductions. A lesson learned from past recessions is that RUSO institutions must be active public policy advocates and entrepreneurs to help diversify Oklahoma's economy.
- Declining ACT scores among Oklahoma high school seniors and the increasing number of students declining to take the ACT present us with remediation challenges.

Recommendations for Action

- Work as a system to monitor and respond to enrollment trends.
- Educate legislators and the public about how RUSO meets workforce needs.
- Ensure that RUSO institutions can continue to meet their mission in the face of ever-changing pressures on enrollment, retention, and completion.
- Work with industry to develop partnerships that will benefit both the workforce and the students.
- Implement best practices system-wide to facilitate transfer student support while continuing to meet institution mission.

Appendix A: Data Sources

The Benchmark and data sources are as follows:

- **Student Satisfaction:** RUSO institutions graduating senior survey.
- **Enrollment:** OSRHE Unitized Data System.
- **Retention:** OSRHE Unitized Data System.
- **Credit Accumulation:** OSRHE Unitized Data System.
- **Gateway Course Completion:** OSRHE Unitized Data System.
- **Education Programs Offered:** *Institutional data.*
- **Transfer Rate:** OSRHE Unitized Data System.
- **Graduation Rate:** OSRHE Unitized Data System.
- **Program of Study Selection:** Institutional Data Collection.
- **Enrollment by Preparation, Economic Status, Age, Race/Ethnicity:** *OSRHE Unitized Data System.*
- **Progression Performance by Preparation, Economic Status, Age, Race/Ethnicity:** *OSRHE Unitized Data System.*

The financial Benchmarks are as follows. All are the province of the Business Officers for data collection and analysis:

- **Composite Financial Index:** *RUSO Business Officers.*
- **Viability:** RUSO Business Officers.
- **Debt Burden:** RUSO Business Officers.
- **Return on Total Net Assets:** *RUSO Business Officers.*
- **Net Operating Revenues:** RUSO Business Officers.
- **Restricted to unrestricted net assets ratio:** *RUSO Business Officers.*
- Gross tuition contribution ratio and state appropriations contribution ratio:
- RUSO Business Officers.