

Research
About
Regional
Public
Universities



 @ARRC_Research



About Us

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Agenda

1. Our Mission

2. Addressing Misperceptions and Narratives

3. Research on Rural Anchor Institutions

4. Future Work on Rural Institutions

5. Looking Forward



Our Mission

About ARRC

Established in 2020 with seed funding from the Joyce Foundation

ARRC is a research collaborative and resource hub with the mission of increasing appreciation for and understanding of regional colleges and their contributions to opportunity and community wellbeing.

regionalcolleges.org

TheJoyceFoundation



Addressing Misperceptions and Dominant Narratives

Regional Public Universities Don't Need Rescuing

They've been treated shamefully, but they're more resilient than people give them credit for.

Misperceptions and Dominant Narratives

Public colleges are:

- experiencing enrollment decline
- are inefficient
- at risk of collapse
- uncommitted to their missions

The Reality

While some public colleges are experiencing declines, most are:

- experiencing enrollment *growth*
- highly *efficient*
- *resilient*
- highly *mission-centered* despite funding disparities



Rural Anchor Institutions

Protecting Rural Anchor Institutions

Released our policy brief in January that makes the case for federal intervention to support rural broadly accessible institutions (BAIs)

Analyzes contributions of rural BAIs to access, equity, attainment, as well as contributions to the labor force and public health

Examines the financial condition of rural BAIs pre-pandemic and potential budget effects of COVID-19

Our report was an effort that drew on the talents of many, including RUSO graduate (and current doctoral student), Eriech Tapia!

Defining Broadly Accessible and Rural

- Broad Access classification based on composite score that includes measures of selectivity, cost, and program offerings
- Excludes military/maritime institutions and colleges with 70% or more exclusively online
- Rural based on the urbanization variable in IPEDS (town/rural)
- 327 broad access institutions
 - 118 rural BAIs (10 are in Oklahoma and 5 are RUSO institutions)
 - 209 non-rural BAIs

Oklahoma's Rural BAIs



Rural RUSO Institutions



**Southeastern Oklahoma
State University**

SWOSU
Southwestern Oklahoma State University

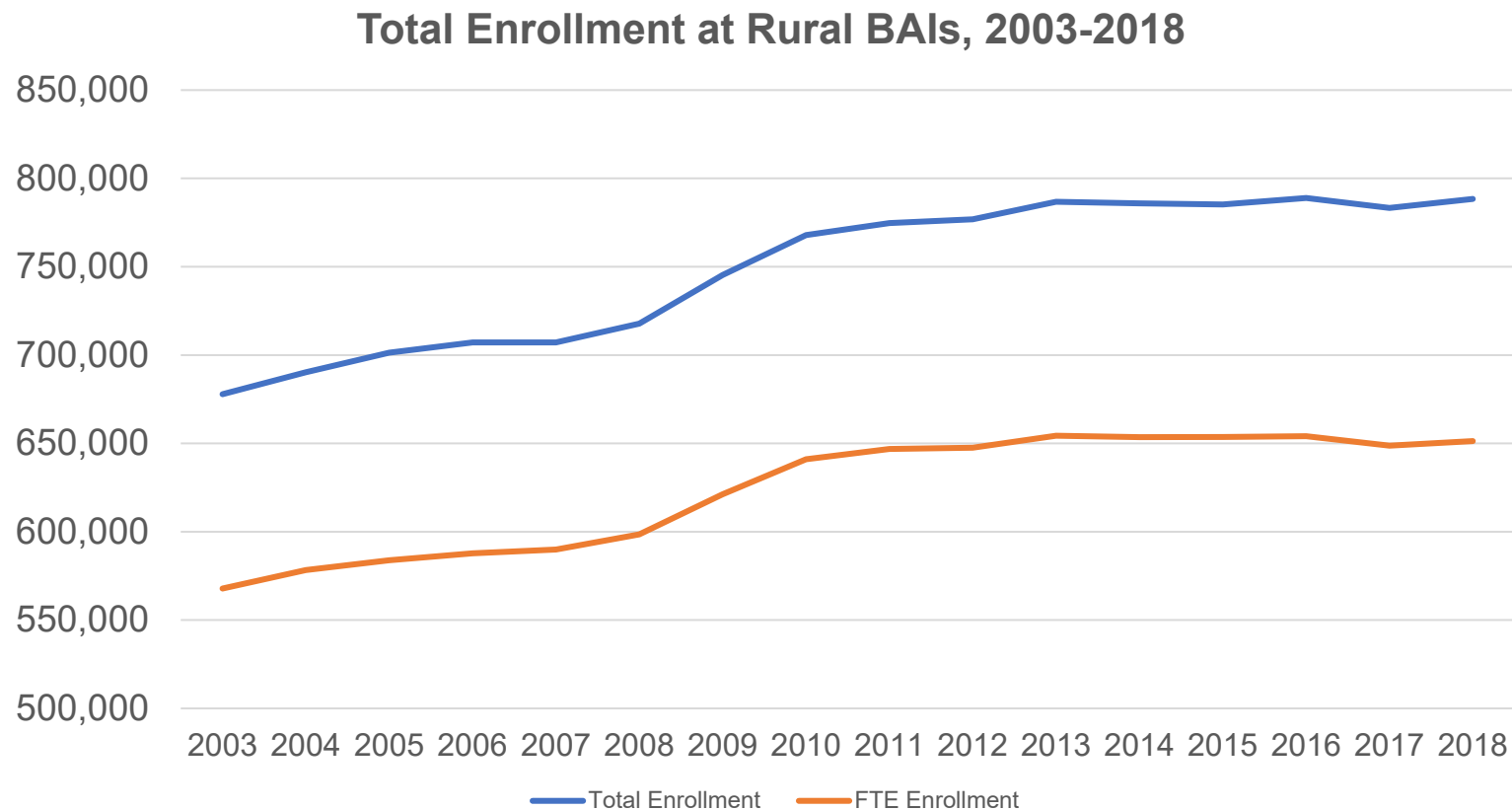


Northwestern
OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

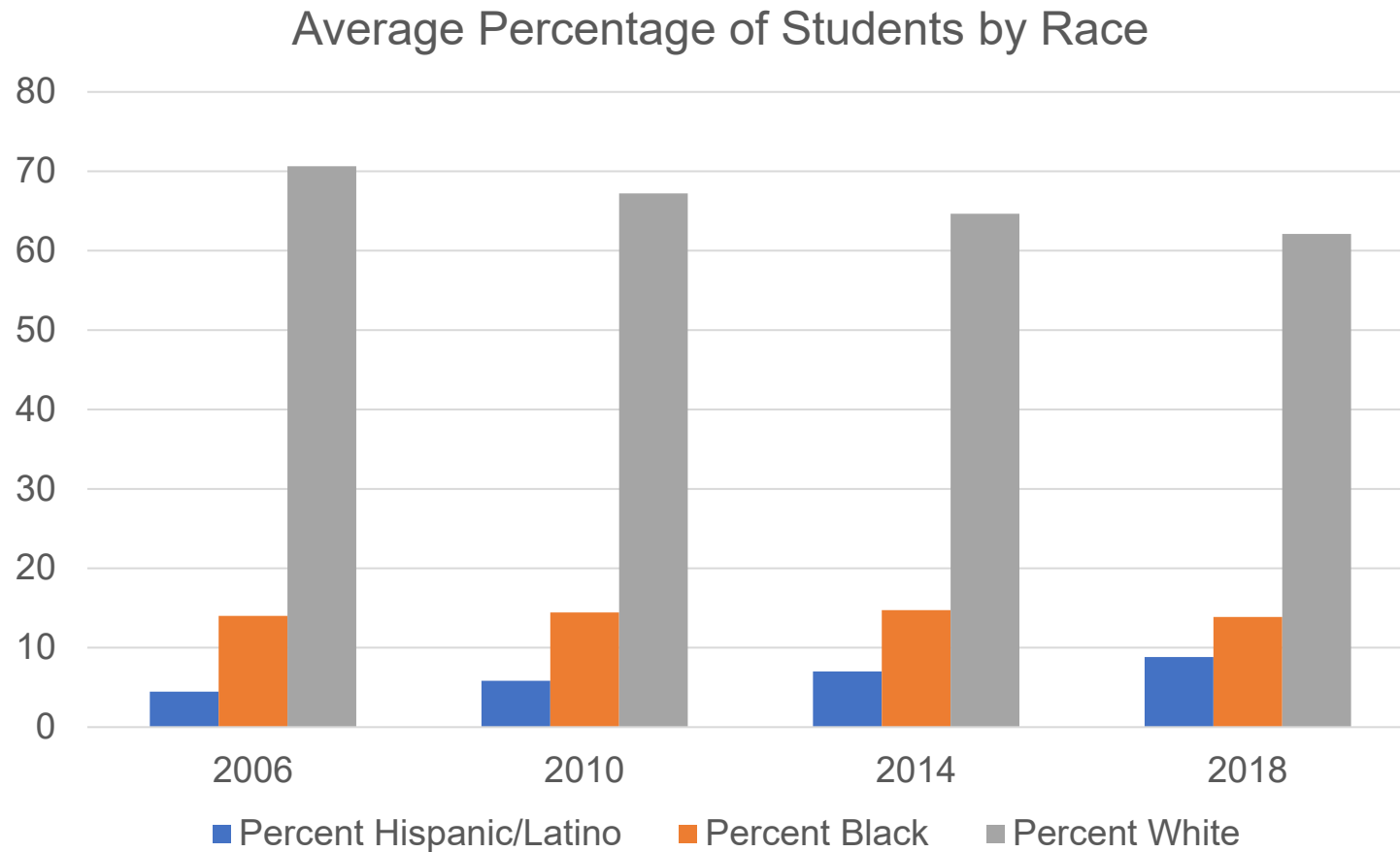


**NORTHEASTERN
STATE UNIVERSITY**

Enrollment (All Rural BAIs Combined)



Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

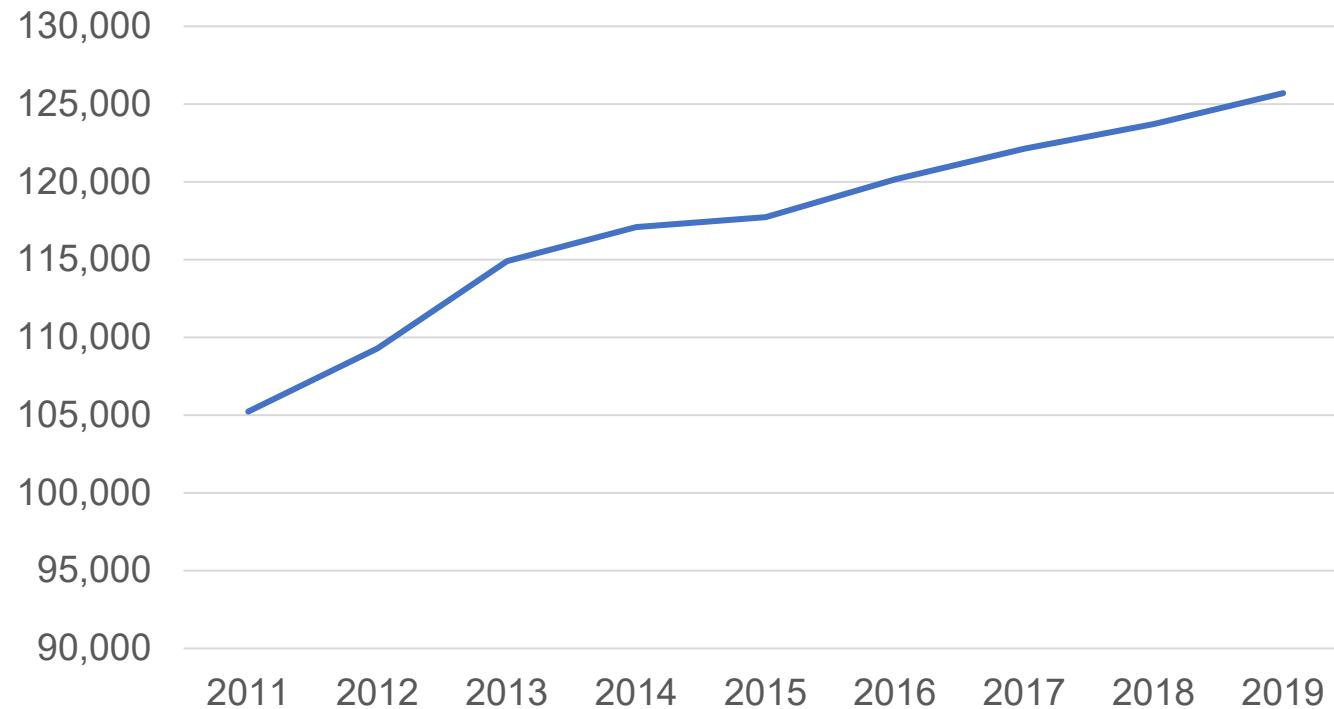


Native American Students

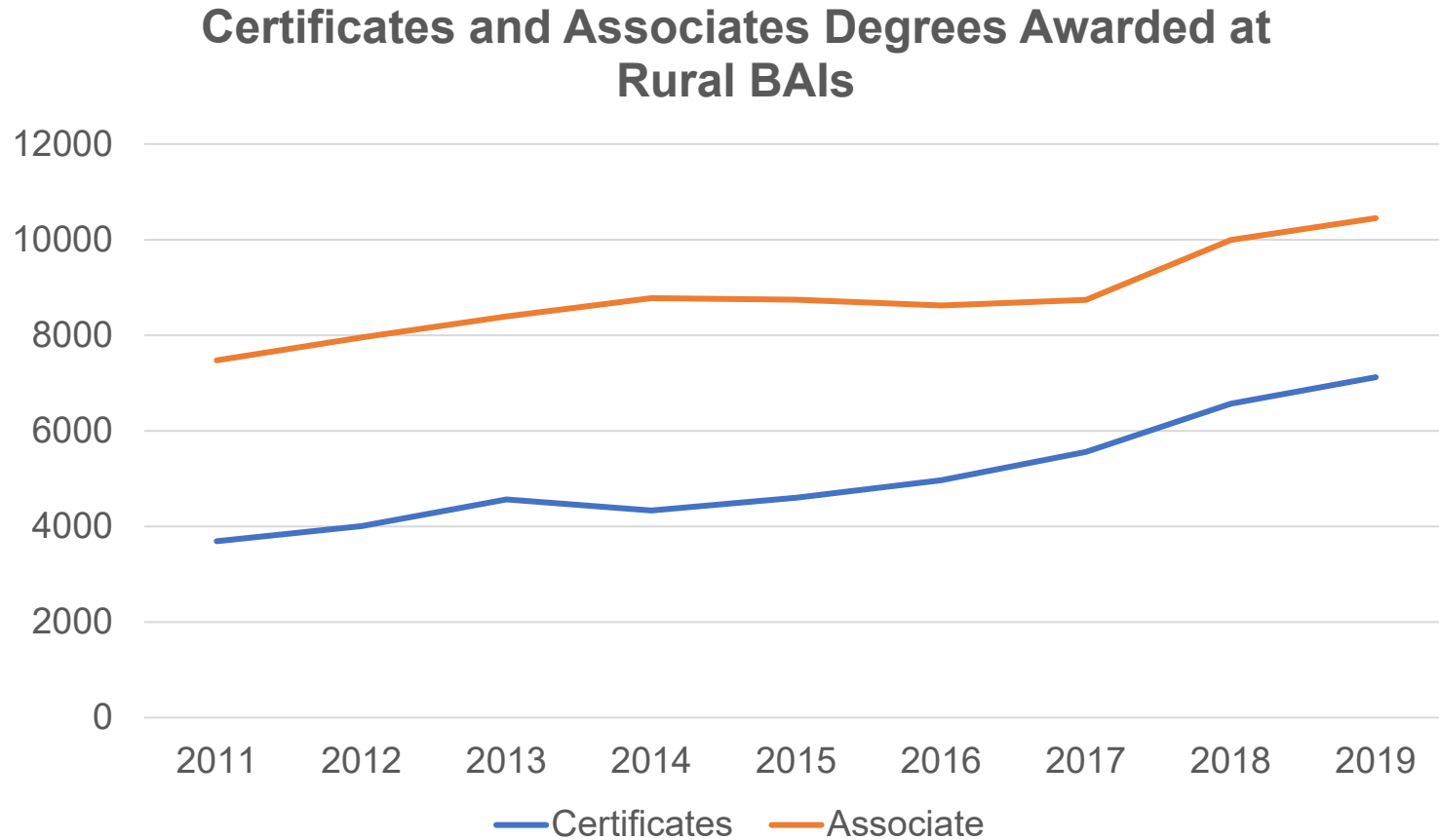
- Group with the largest percentage of students attending rural public universities
- 90% of NASNTI eligible institutions are rural
- 90% of Tribal Colleges and Universities are rural
- Even without NASNTIs and TCUs, native students still choose to attend rural public institutions more often than their peers.
- We cannot support native students without supporting rural institutions.

Bachelor's Degrees Conferred

Bachelors Degrees Awarded at Rural BAIs



Certificates/Associate's Degrees Conferred



Communities Rural BAIs Serve

County-level Data from the American Community Survey

Comparing rural BAI communities with non-rural BAI communities

Low Employment: Counties in which less than 65% of residents aged 25-64 are employed (the employment/population ratio)

Low Employment Counties

Low Employment

- 17% of rural BAIs are in low employment counties (20/118)
- 7% of non-rural BAIs are in low employment counties (14/209)
- Significant at $p < .01$

Context

- Higher percentage of residents in poverty
- Higher percentage of residents receiving disability benefits

Rural BAIs and Rural County Employment

Currently, only 19 counties with a rural BAI are Low Employment counties.

What if these counties lost the number of jobs at each college?

- Low Employment counties go from 19 to 51.
- The percentage of counties that are “Low Employment” would more than double, going from 17% to 44%

In the 10 Oklahoma counties, one is currently considered to be low employment. If we removed the college jobs, three counties would be low employment, and two more would be close to the threshold.

Job loss is always hard, but job loss at rural institutions will affect their communities in unique and challenging ways.



Policy Recommendations

Policy Recommendations

Short Term

- Provide funding to rural BAIs to address COVID-19 budget shocks
- Base funding on number of students enrolled, not full-time enrollment
- Extend small business supports and programs to rural BAIs

Long Term

- Lower enrollment thresholds for MSI designation for rural BAIs so that they can access funding to support diversifying student bodies
- Establish Rural Serving Institution (RSI) designation that includes federal grants to support the regional service mission of rural BAIs



Future Research on Rural Colleges

Rural Serving Institution (RSI) Designation

Currently, there is no formal definition of what it means to be a rural-serving postsecondary institution, and this has impacts for information-sharing, policymaking, philanthropy, and research.

We received funding to create a data-driven, cross-sector RSI definition in order to better identify these institutions.

In addition to comprehensive documentation, data files, and research briefs, the release of this work will also include interactive maps to present a range of data about these institutions and the communities they serve.

This project will build out a new data infrastructure that will enable a better understanding of these institutions, their students, and their regions.



Looking Forward

Better Understanding, Better Policy

Most policymakers, analysts, and researchers have educational experiences that are fundamentally different from most US undergraduates. At the national level, they rarely have personal experience in community-focused higher education.

Regional colleges are the backbone of public higher education, and Oklahoma's regional colleges are leading the nation in their support of rural students.



Thank You!