



SCHOLAR ENROLLMENT PATTERNS DURING COVID-19

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INTRODUCTION

In fall 2020, Achieve Atlanta (AATL) welcomed its fifth cohort of Scholars as first-year college students (Cohort 2020). Given the unique circumstances of enrolling during the COVID-19 pandemic, the enrollment patterns of this cohort are distinct from previous cohorts. The following report highlights enrollment patterns and insights for this class compared to previous cohorts and national enrollment data.

Achieve Atlanta Scholars are Atlanta Public Schools high school graduates who have earned a need-based scholarship to pursue various postsecondary paths after high school. A Scholar must graduate with a cumulative, weighted GPA of at least 75, demonstrate financial need, and enroll full-time in an eligible college, university or technical program.

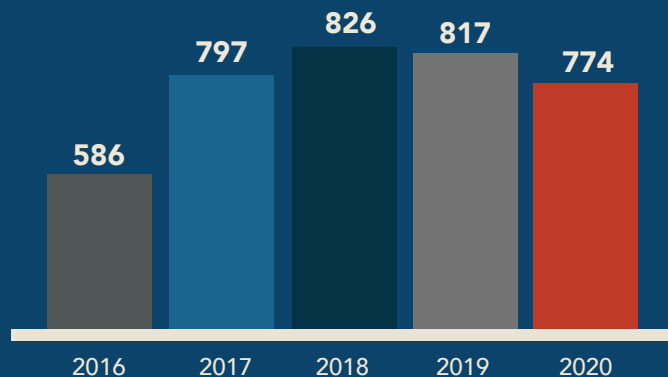
KEY TAKEAWAYS

-  Last fall, Achieve Atlanta welcomed 774 Scholars into its incoming 2020 cohort. While this represented a 5% decrease from the 2019 cohort, it was smaller than the 11% nationwide reduction in size for low-income students in the class of 2020.
-  The share of first-year Scholars enrolling in four-year degree programs increased from 74% to 88%. Much of this shift is likely due to most colleges and universities waiving SAT/ACT testing requirements and minimums for admissions. These institutions tend to have higher persistence and graduation rates than two-year or technical institutions.
-  Despite enrolling in institutions with higher persistence rates, 76% of Cohort 2020 Scholars returned for the spring semester, 12 percentage points lower than for Cohort 2019.
-  In contrast to first-year Scholars, those enrolled in college prior to the pandemic had similar enrollment patterns to past years.
-  Given the significant drop in persistence from fall to spring for Cohort 2020 Scholars, AATL is collaborating closely with our non-profit and college partners to re-engage those students and help them return to college in fall 2021.

INCOMING COHORT ENROLLMENT

Last fall, 774 Scholars enrolled as part of Cohort 2020, a 5% (43 student) decrease from the previous year.¹ While this drop was the largest since Achieve Atlanta's founding, it was smaller than national first-year student enrollment, which fell by 7% for all students and 11% for low-income students.²

INCOMING SCHOLARS BY COHORT



¹These counts are as of 3/1/21. Each year, the number of Scholars is counted as of October 1st and March 1st for reporting and auditing purposes.

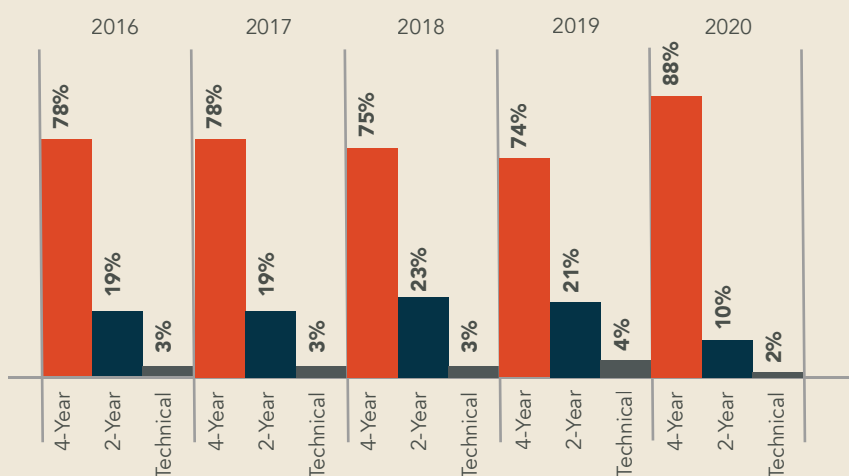
²National comparison is the seamless enrollment rate, defined as the percentage of high school graduates who enrolled in college in the fall after graduation. High School Benchmarks 2020. National Student Clearinghouse. March, 25 2021. https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021_HSBenchmarksCovidReport.pdf

ENROLLMENT PATTERNS BY DEGREE TYPE

First-year Scholar enrollment shifted significantly for Cohort 2020 compared to prior cohorts. More specifically:

- ➔ 88% of incoming Scholars enrolled in four-year degree programs—14 percentage points higher than in 2019. Four-year institutions tend to have higher persistence and graduation rates than two-year or technical programs. Nationally, the proportion of students enrolled in four-year institutions increased by only two percentage points.³
- ➔ Many four-year institutions, including those in the University System of Georgia, waived ACT/SAT admissions requirements due to the pandemic. This may have encouraged Scholars to apply to institutions that they normally wouldn't feel qualified to attend. It likely enabled Scholars who otherwise would not have been admitted to gain admission to four-year institutions.⁴
- ➔ Only 12% of incoming Scholars enrolled in two-year degree or technical programs—13 percentage points lower than last year. Nationally, the share of students enrolled in two-year public enrollment dropped by only two percentage points.
- ➔ Despite enrolling in institutions with generally higher persistence rates, the percentage of Cohort 2020 Scholars who returned for the spring semester was 12 percentage points lower than last year. This drop occurred in each degree type compared to prior cohorts.

INCOMING SCHOLARS BY DEGREE PROGRAM



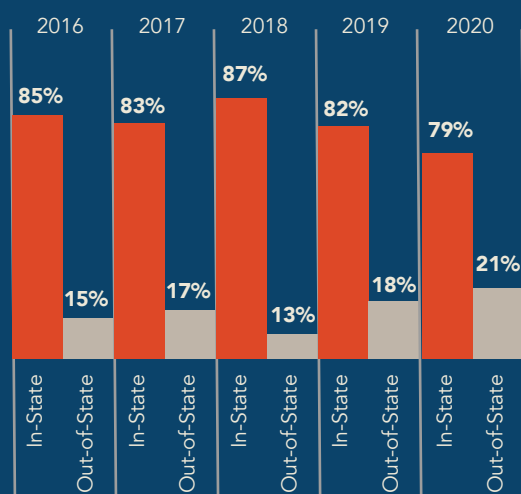
³ Proportional enrollment calculated from p. 4 of Term Enrollment Estimates Fall 2020. National Student Clearinghouse. December 17, 2020. https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/CTEE_Report_Fall_2020.pdf

⁴ The University System of Georgia (USG) consists of 26 public colleges and universities in Georgia. The Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) consists of the 22 public technical colleges in Georgia.

ENROLLMENT PATTERNS BY IN- AND OUT-OF-STATE

Nineteen more Scholars enrolled in out-of-state institutions compared to last year, an increase of three percentage points. Many out-of-state institutions also waived test score requirements, potentially creating opportunities for students who may have not been previously admitted.

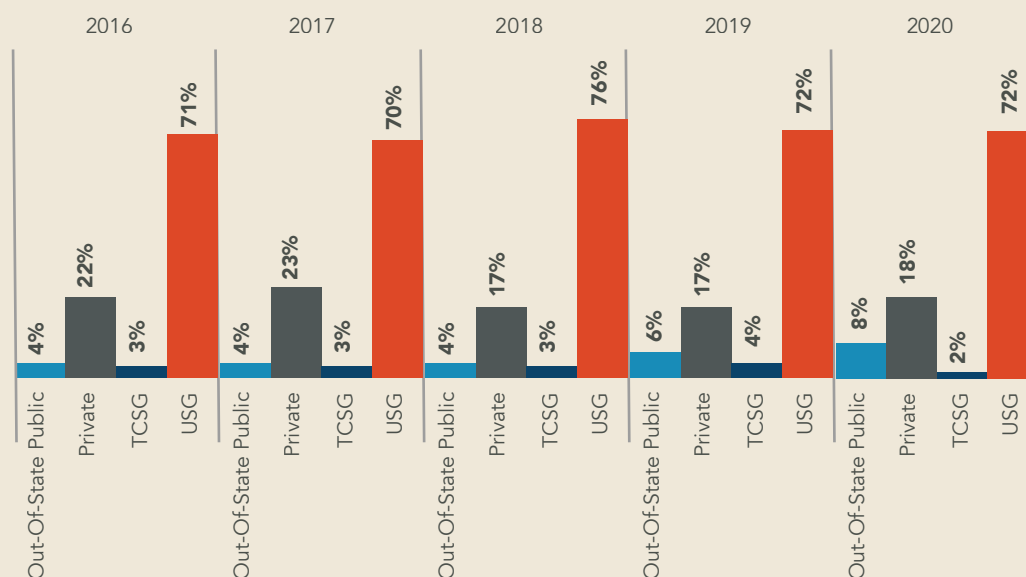
INCOMING SCHOLARS BY IN/OUT-OF-STATE



ENROLLMENT PATTERNS BY INSTITUTION TYPE

Similar to past years, nearly three-fourths of Cohort 2020 Scholars enrolled in University System of Georgia (USG) institutions. However, the share of Cohort 2020 Scholars attending Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) institutions was cut in half from last year. Enrollment in private and out-of-state public institutions increased slightly.

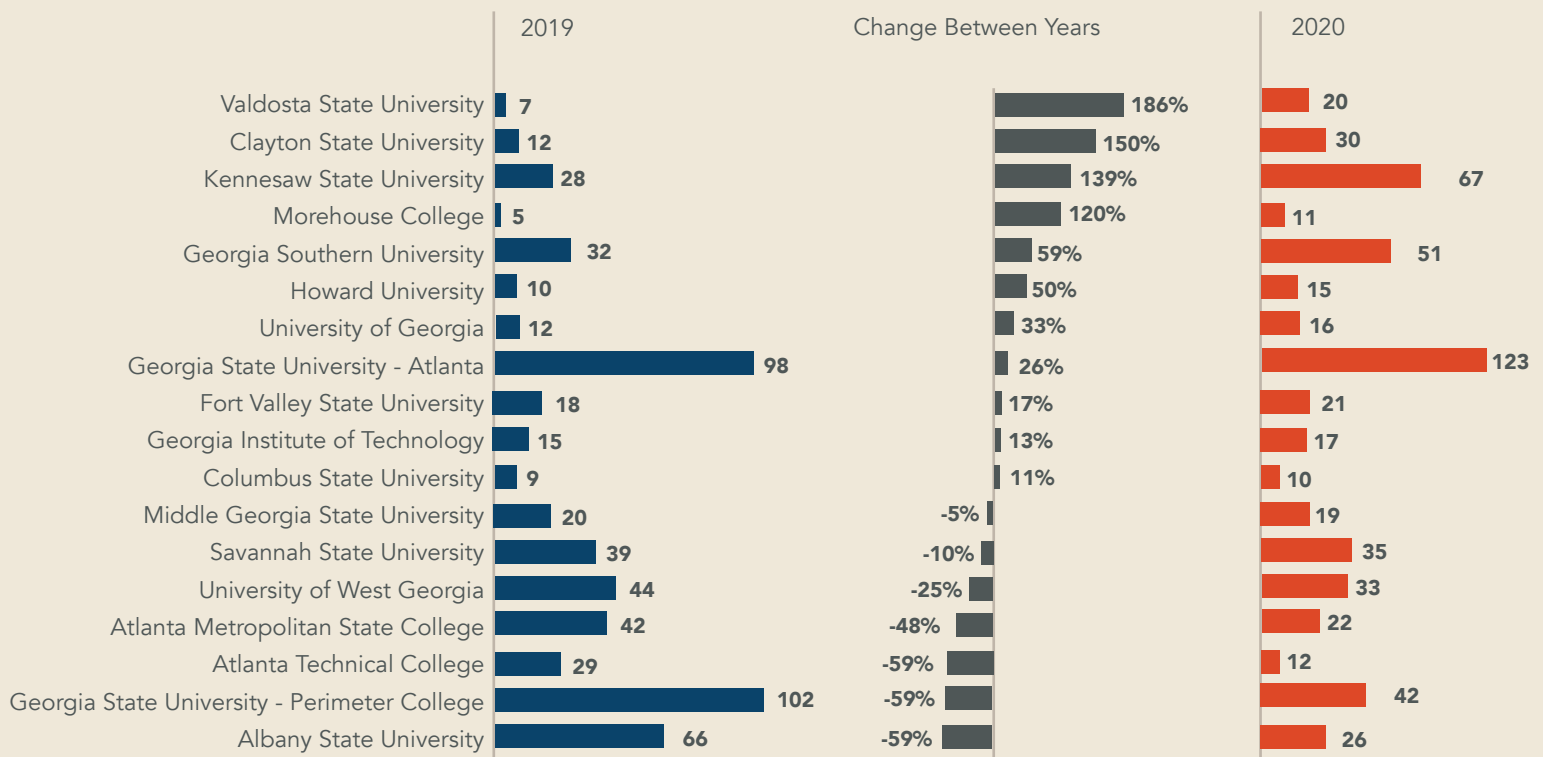
INCOMING SCHOLARS BY INSTITUTION TYPE & COHORT



ENROLLMENT PATTERNS BY INSTITUTION

- ➔ Georgia State University's main Atlanta campus had 123 Cohort 2020 Scholars, the highest enrollment of any institution and 25 more Scholars than last year. However, its two-year Perimeter College campuses had 60 fewer incoming Scholars than last year.
- ➔ Several, but not all, four-year public institutions with waived SAT/ACT requirements had large upswings in AATL Scholar enrollment. This included Kennesaw State University, Georgia Southern University, Valdosta State University and Clayton State University.
- ➔ On the other hand, institutions with large two-year programs, such as Albany State University and Atlanta Metropolitan State College, had significant drops in enrollment.

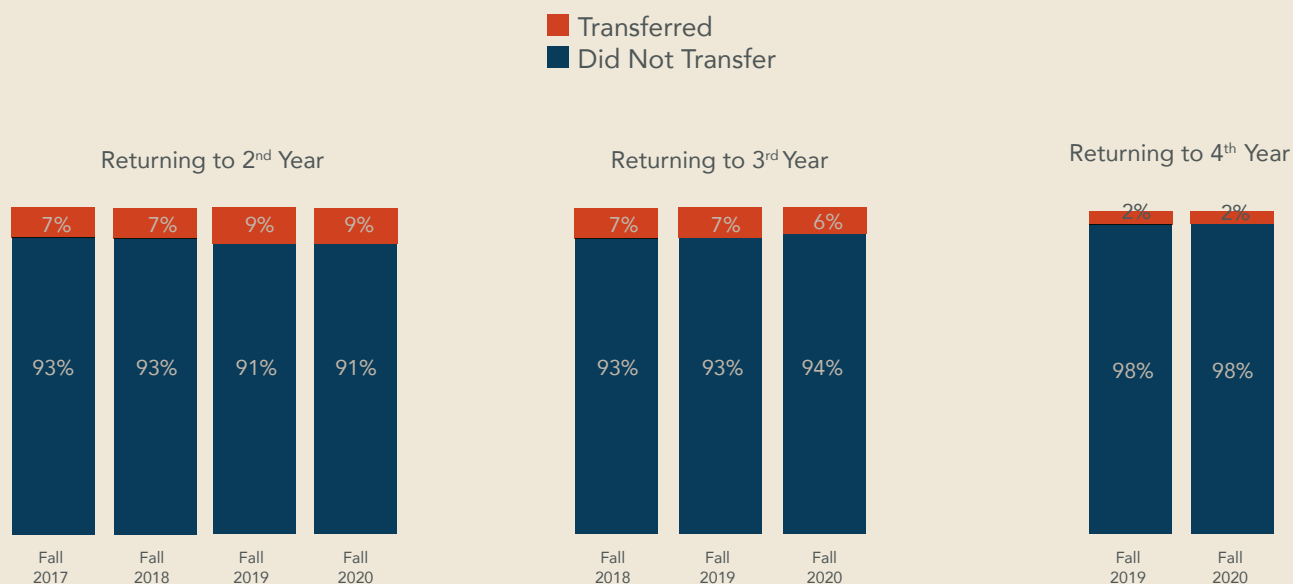
INCOMING SCHOLARS BY COHORT & COLLEGE



RETURNING COHORT ENROLLMENT

Unlike Cohort 2020 Scholars, returning Scholars had few enrollment shifts in fall 2020. Nine percent of second-year returning Scholars transferred to a different institution in fall 2020, similar to the transfer rate in fall 2019. Returning Scholars had similar fall-to-spring persistence patterns as prior cohorts.

RETURNING SCHOLAR TRANSFER RATES BY COHORT



LOOKING FORWARD

The COVID-19 pandemic led to significant enrollment shifts for the most recent cohort of AATL Scholars. Many institutions continued to waive test score requirements for current high school seniors' admission, so we expect this shift toward four-year institutions to continue for the incoming fall 2021 cohort.

Due to the pandemic's effect on college enrollment for last year's high school graduates, we offered 2020 APS high school graduates who qualified for the AATL scholarship but didn't enroll last fall a one-time opportunity to enroll with the AATL scholarship this coming fall. Typically, students must enroll in college in the fall after high school graduation to receive the scholarship. Given the significant drop in persistence from fall to spring for Cohort 2020 Scholars, AATL is collaborating closely with our non-profit and college partners to re-engage first-year students and help them return to college in fall 2021.

