

# Benchmarking Professional Master's Degree Athletic Training Program Enrollment Data 2024 - 2025

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## ABOUT US:

This document was developed by three educators who are passionate about the future of the athletic training profession. This report was written independently from any organization. The authors have no financial conflict of interest. The interpretations of these data are our own.



# Key Findings

1. This analysis is based on 195 professional athletic training programs of 258 programs sampled (81.2% response rate) who responded to our information gathering request this year.
2. Programs were delineated by NCAA athletic division, and then NCAA Division I schools were further delineated to include the “Power 4” and “Group of 5” institutions where applicable.
  - The responding Power 4 schools (n = 29) have a statistically significant higher average enrollment (29.5 students) than other athletic divisions (Group of 5: 22.0, Division I: 19.0, Division II 18.2, Division III 16.1, and NAIA 11.3); there was no difference between the other NCAA divisions in average program enrollment. This likely indicates prospective student interest in high profile athletics programs at specific types of institutions.
3. All Division I programs represented 56.5% of CAATE-accredited programs and account for 2546 students, representing 65.3% of all athletic training students.
4. Total enrollment per program ranged from 0 (excluded from the analysis) to 63 students. The highest enrolled program was not a Power 4 institution.
5. 69.1% of programs reported stable or increasing enrollments, a positive change from last year’s 45.9% of programs; 6.9% reported decreasing enrollments; 22.0% of programs reported unstable enrollment; 1.9% reported it was too soon in their program’s existence to assess enrollment stability.
6. Consistent with last year’s findings, there were no statistically significant differences in average program enrollment for programs who had an accelerated option (mean = 21.0 students) as compared to those who do not have an accelerated option (mean = 20.4).
7. 41% of programs reported having target enrollment numbers provided to them by their institution. The most common mechanisms for how targets were determined were 1) calculating the financial break-even point for operating costs (n=68) and 2) based off of previously existing undergraduate programs (n=36).
8. There were no statistical differences in enrollment between those program that had target enrollment numbers set for them and those who set their own target.
9. Programs who reported target enrollment numbers are collectively operating at 71.1% capacity.
10. Based on the reported enrollments, we anticipate a reported increase of 20% more students eligible to sit for the BOC examination in 2026 (2157 students) than in 2025 (1805 students). Using return rate estimates to account for nonresponding programs, we project that student enrollment numbers will be 2157 students in 2025 and 2485 in 2026.

# Background and Methods

Last year, based on conjecture about the shortage of ATs entering the profession and concerns over the enrollment in professional master's programs, we distributed a quick 5-question poll to all MSAT program administrators to develop our first ever [enrollment benchmark report](#).

We repeated this data gathering this year, adding questions to assess if the program has enrollment targets and, if so, what the target enrollment was, who set it, and the variable used to set the target. We hope that this information will assist program administrators in strategic planning.

## Data Management

We obtained a list of professional master's degree programs from the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education website's search page (<https://caate.net/Search-for-Accredited-Programs>). From here we extracted a list of 258 programs. We removed 18 cases because they taught out their program or did not accept their first class by the Fall 2024 semester, yielding a sample size of 240. Of this group, 195 (81.2%) responded.

**Overall Response Rate: 81.2%**

## Response Rate by Athletic Division

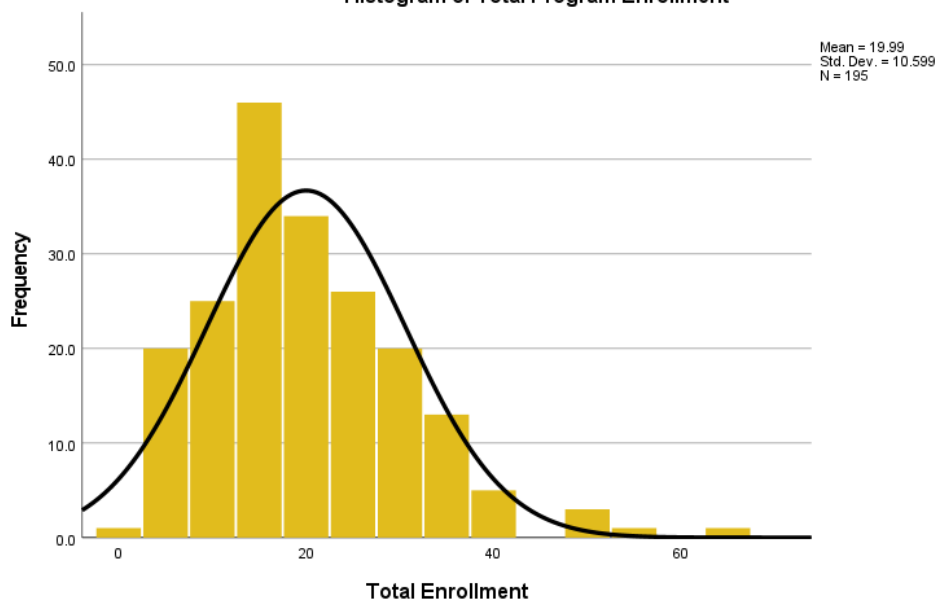
| Division              | Count      | Responding | Rate         |
|-----------------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| NCAA Division 1* (D1) | 76         | 67         | 88.2%        |
| "Power Four" (P4)     | 34         | 29         | 85.3%        |
| "Group of Five" (G5)  | 24         | 18         | 75.0%        |
| NCAA Division 2 (D2)  | 46         | 33         | 71.7%        |
| NCAA Division 3 (D3)  | 55         | 46         | 83.6%        |
| NAIA                  | 5          | 2          | 40.0%        |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>240</b> | <b>195</b> | <b>81.2%</b> |

\* Division 1 institutions not classified as Power Four or Group of Five

## DATA COLLECTED

- Students in the class of 2025
- Students in the class of 2026
- (2025+2026=Total Enrollment)
- Number of years the program has existed at the master's level
- If an accelerated track was offered by the institution
- Enrollment stability
- If target enrollments were established and how they were determined.

Histogram of Total Program Enrollment



# Program Enrollment By Athletic Division

|                     | Total               | D1                  | P4                   | G5                  | D2                  | D3                  | NAIA        |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------|
| Number              | 195                 | 67                  | 29                   | 18                  | 40                  | 46                  | 2           |
| Total Students      | 3899                | 1272                | 856                  | 396                 | 602                 | 741                 | 32          |
| % of All Students   | 100%                | 32.6%               | 22.0%                | 10.2%               | 15.4%               | 19.0%               | 0.8%        |
| Maximum             | 63                  | 63                  | 56                   | 41                  | 51                  | 35                  | 20          |
| Average<br>(95% CI) | 20.0<br>(18.6-21.6) | 19.0<br>(16.3-21.7) | 29.5<br>(25.61-33.4) | 22.0<br>(17.3-26.7) | 18.2<br>(15.1-21.4) | 16.1<br>(13.7-18.5) | 11.3<br>--- |
| Std Dev             | 10.6                | 11.1                | 10.3                 | 9.5                 | 8.9                 | 8.1                 | ---         |
| IQ Range            | 13                  | 12                  | 10                   | 17                  | 8                   | 11                  | ---         |
| Minimum             | 0                   | 2                   | 4                    | 7                   | 6                   | 0                   | 12          |

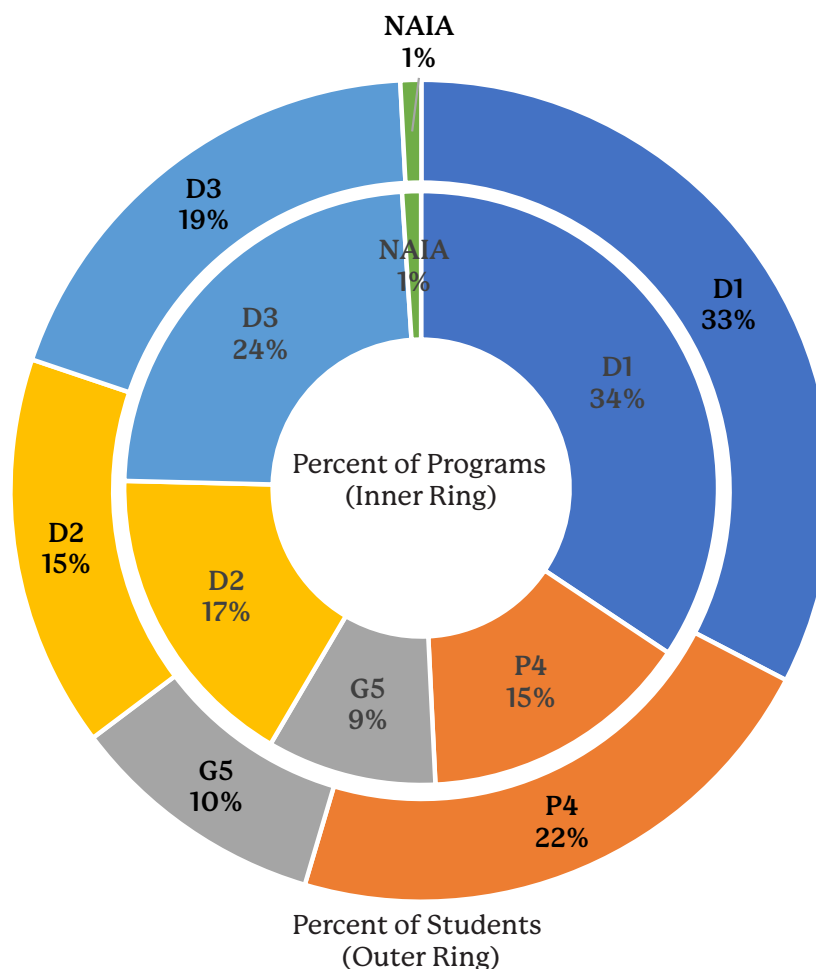
\* P4 programs have a statistically significant higher enrollment than other Divisions

There is no statistically significant difference between D1, G5, D2, and D3 enrollment

--- 95% CI for NAIA could not be calculated due to a low N

For ALL Division 1 programs (D1+P4+G5), there were a total of 114 programs with a total enrollment of 2546 students (mean =  $22.1 \pm 11.5$  students; 95% CI = 20.0-24.3). The median enrollment is 21 students. These institutions represent 56.5% of all CAATE-accredited programs in the US and 65.3% of all stu-

## Distribution of Students and Programs by Athletic Division

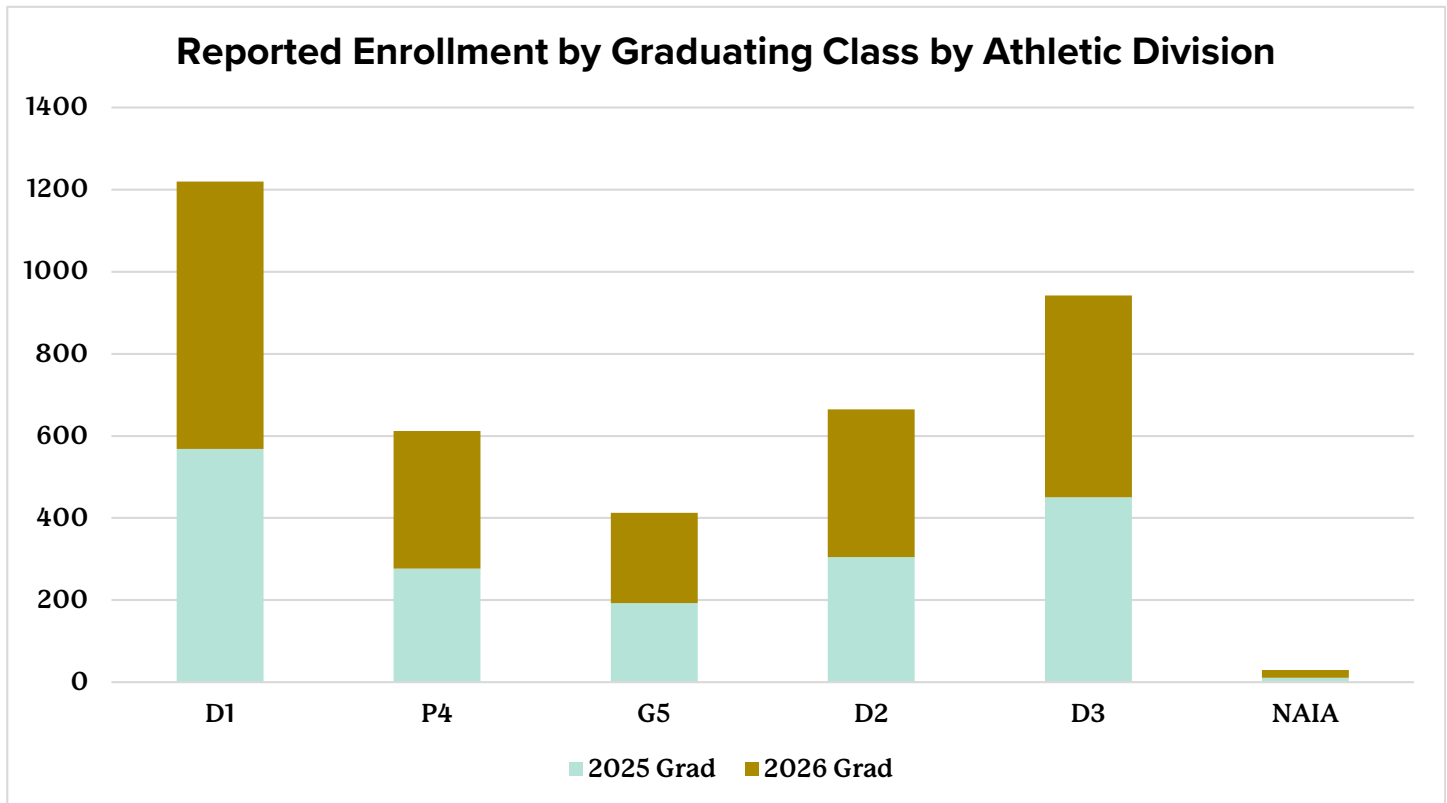


# Reported and Estimated Graduates

| Division     | Num        | Reported<br>2025 Grads | Estimated<br>2025 Grads | Reported<br>2026 Grads | Estimated<br>2026 Grads | % Increase<br>2024-2025* |
|--------------|------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Division 1   | 67         | 568                    | 660                     | 652                    | 758                     | +14.8%                   |
| Power 4      | 29         | 277                    | 324                     | 335                    | 392                     | +20.9%                   |
| Group of 5   | 18         | 193                    | 235                     | 220                    | 268                     | +14.0%                   |
| Division 2   | 33         | 305                    | 386                     | 360                    | 456                     | +18.0%                   |
| Division 3   | 46         | 451                    | 533                     | 491                    | 580                     | +8.9%                    |
| NAIA         | 2          | 11                     | 18                      | 19                     | 30                      | +72.7%                   |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>195</b> | <b>1805</b>            | <b>2157</b>             | <b>2077</b>            | <b>2485</b>             | <b>+15.1%</b>            |

\* Percentage is based on the actual number reported.

The number of students reported to graduate in 2026 (1805 students) relative to 2026 (2077 students) increased by 272 students. Using estimated enrollments to account for nonresponding programs, we project an increase of 328 (+15.2%) students from 2025 to 2026.



# Enrollment Stability

| Division     | Decreasing Enrollment | Stable Enrollment | Increasing Enrollment | Unstable Enrollment | Too Early to Determine |
|--------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| Division 1   | 5                     | 10                | 26                    | 10                  | 3                      |
| Power 4      | 0                     | 9                 | 12                    | 2                   | 0                      |
| Group of 5   | 0                     | 3                 | 9                     | 2                   | 0                      |
| Division 2   | 2                     | 7                 | 10                    | 9                   | 0                      |
| Division 3   | 4                     | 5                 | 17                    | 12                  | 0                      |
| NAIA         | 0                     | 0                 | 2                     | 0                   | 0                      |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>11 (6.9%)</b>      | <b>34 (21.4%)</b> | <b>76 (47.8%)</b>     | <b>35 (22.0%)</b>   | <b>3 (1.9%)</b>        |

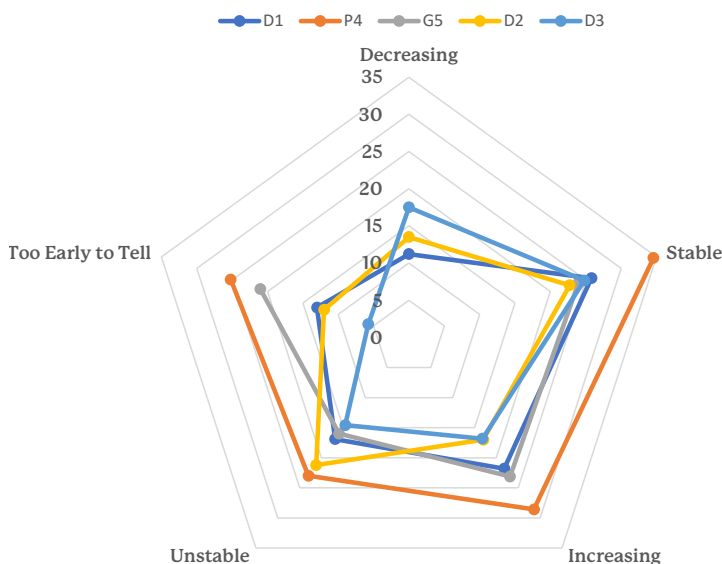
## Interpretation:

110 (69.1%) of programs have stable or increasing enrollment; 46 (28.9%) of programs have decreasing or unstable enrollment.

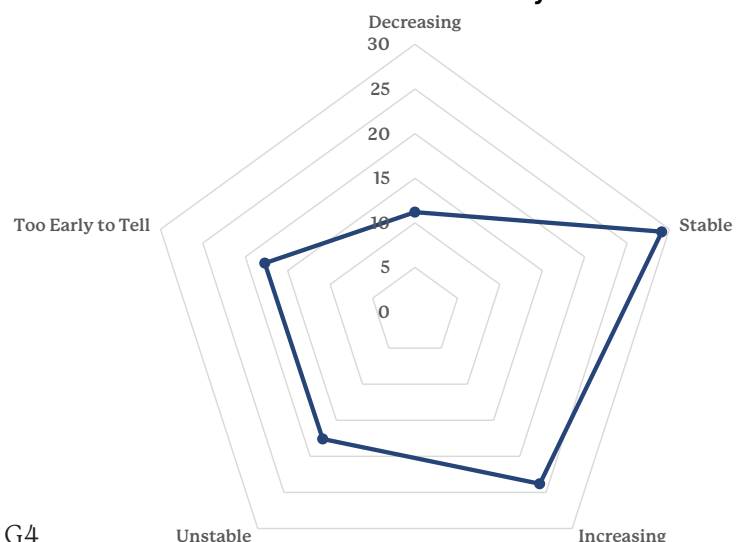
Decreasing enrollment decreased by 1.3 percentage points, Stable Enrollment increased by 12.7 points; Increasing enrollment increased by 10.6 points; Unstable enrollment decreased by 2.6 points. Too early to determine decreased by 19.4 percentage points.

**Note:** “Stable enrollment” does not necessarily imply that the program has reached its target enrollment (financial “breakeven point”) or enrollment capacity. This is addressed later in this report.

## Average Enrollment by Enrollment Trend

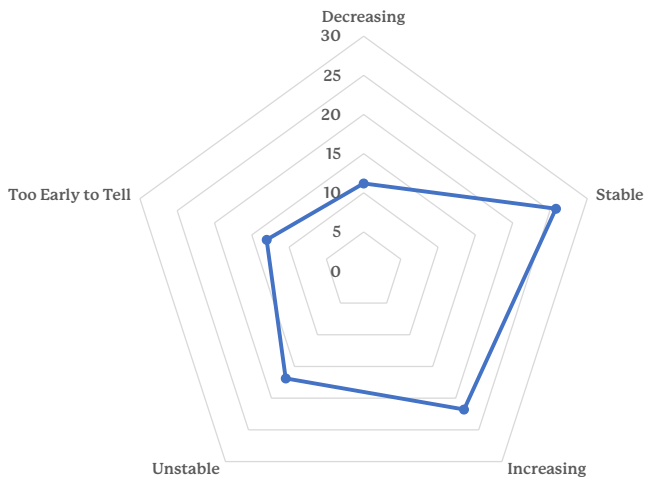


## ALL Division 1 Enrollment by Trend

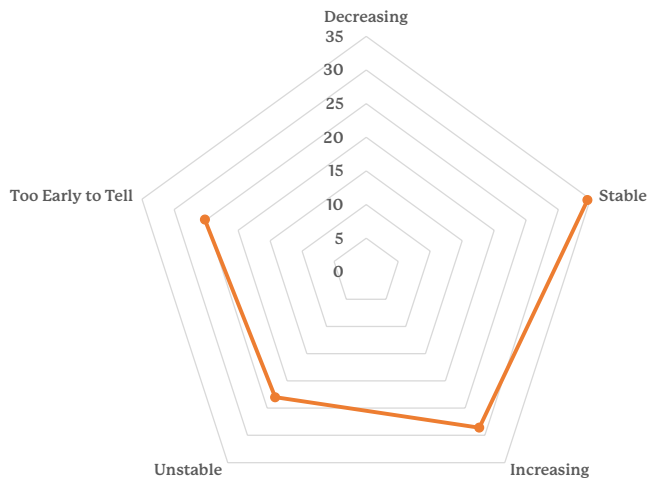


All Division 1 = D1 + P4 + G4

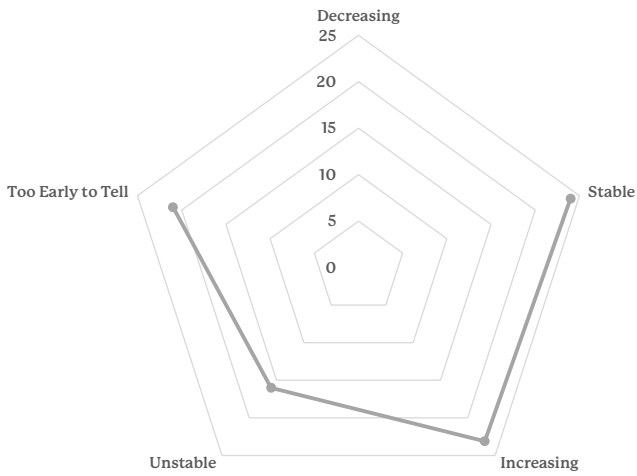
**Division 1 Enrollment by Trend**



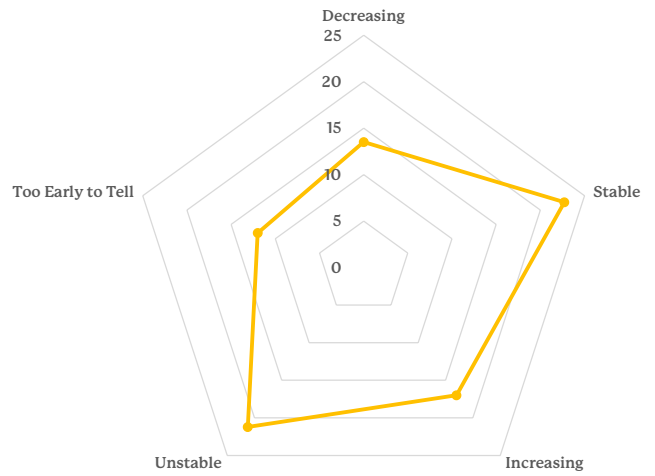
**Power 4 Enrollment by Trend**



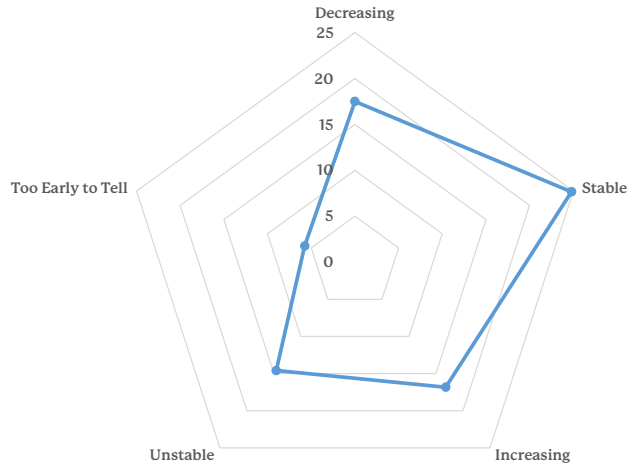
**Group of 5 Enrollment by Trend**



**Division 2 Enrollment by Trend**



**Division 3 Enrollment by Trend**





# Accelerated Programs

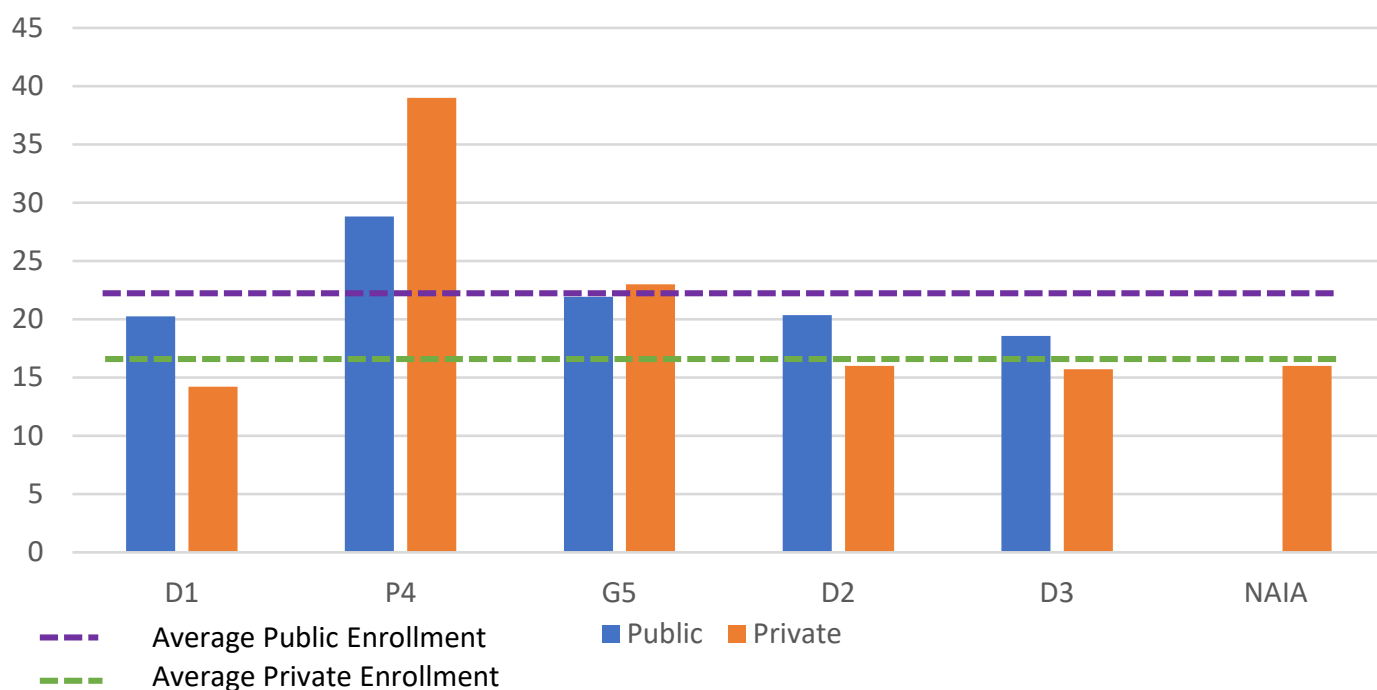
|              | Accelerated Program |             | No Accelerated Program |             |            |
|--------------|---------------------|-------------|------------------------|-------------|------------|
| Division     | Number              | Enrollment  | Number                 | Enrollment  | Difference |
| Division 1   | 44 (65.7%)          | 19.7        | 22 (32.8%)             | 17.7        | 2.0        |
| Power 4      | 13 (44.8%)          | 31.5        | 15 (51.7%)             | 27.7        | 3.8        |
| Group of 5   | 10 (55.6%)          | 21.5        | 8 (44.4%)              | 22.6        | -1.1       |
| Division 2   | 24 (72.7%)          | 17.8        | 7 (21.2%)              | 21.6        | -3.8       |
| Division 3   | 38 (82.6%)          | 15.7        | 4 (8.7%)               | 20.75       | -5.1       |
| NAIA         | 1 (50.0%)           | 20.0        | 1 (50.0%)              | 12          | 8.0        |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>130 (66.7%)</b>  | <b>21.0</b> | <b>57 (13.9%)</b>      | <b>20.4</b> | <b>0.6</b> |

There is no statistically significant difference between the enrollment of programs that have an accelerated pathway and those who do not, either in total or by athletic division. This was consistent with last year's report.

Although there are no differences in enrollment, this is not to imply that accelerated tracks are not useful. These results may be skewed by the relative youth of many MSAT programs.

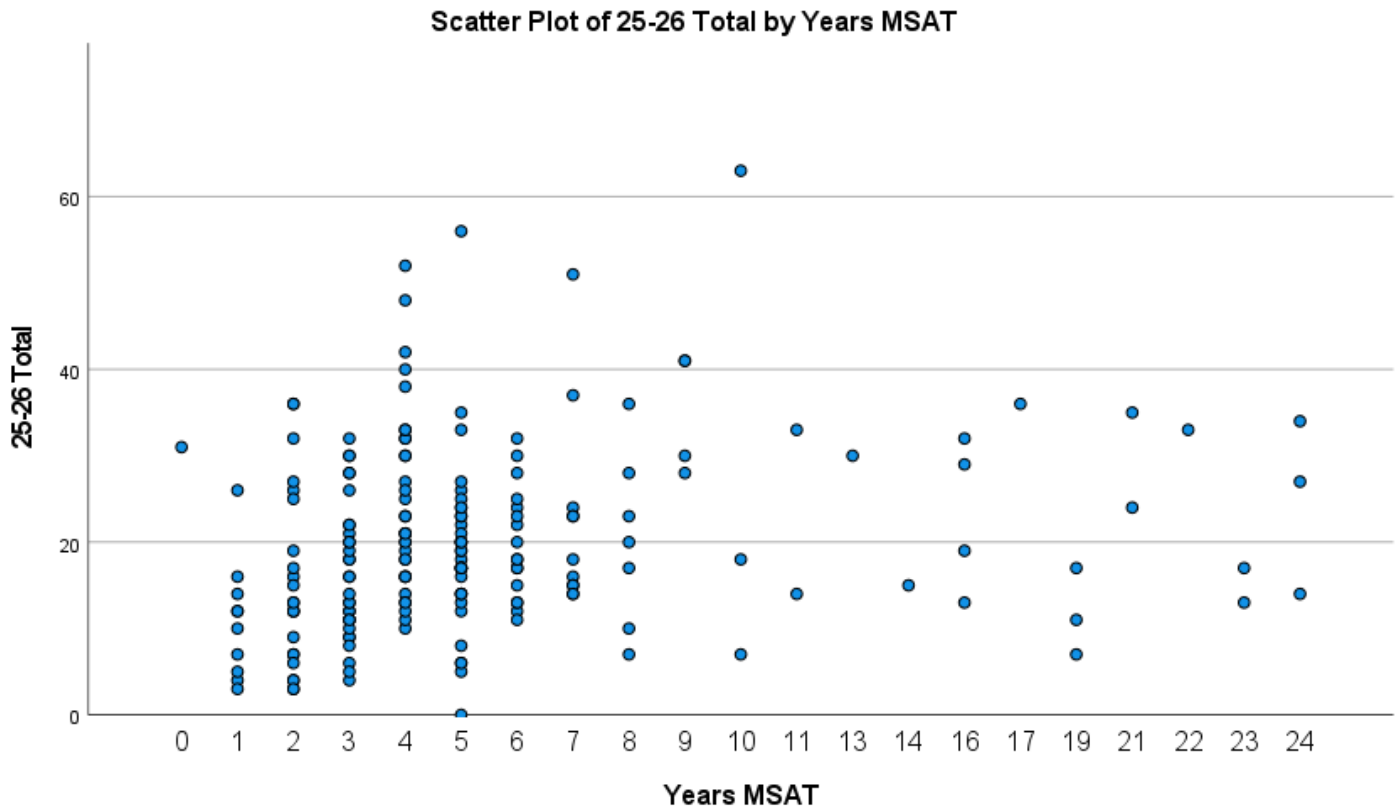
# Public vs. Private Institution Enrollment

## Average Enrollment Public/Private by Classification



Although there was NOT statistically significant differences between public and private institutions for D1 and P4 classifications, as a group there was a statistically significant difference between the enrollment in public and private institutions.

# Program Age and Enrollment



Programs aged from 0 (first year) to 24 years, mean =  $5.8 \pm 4.9$  years.

There is a statistically significant ( $r^2 .028$ ,  $p < .005$ ) correlation between the age of the MSAT program and total student enrollment.

# Target Total Program Enrollment

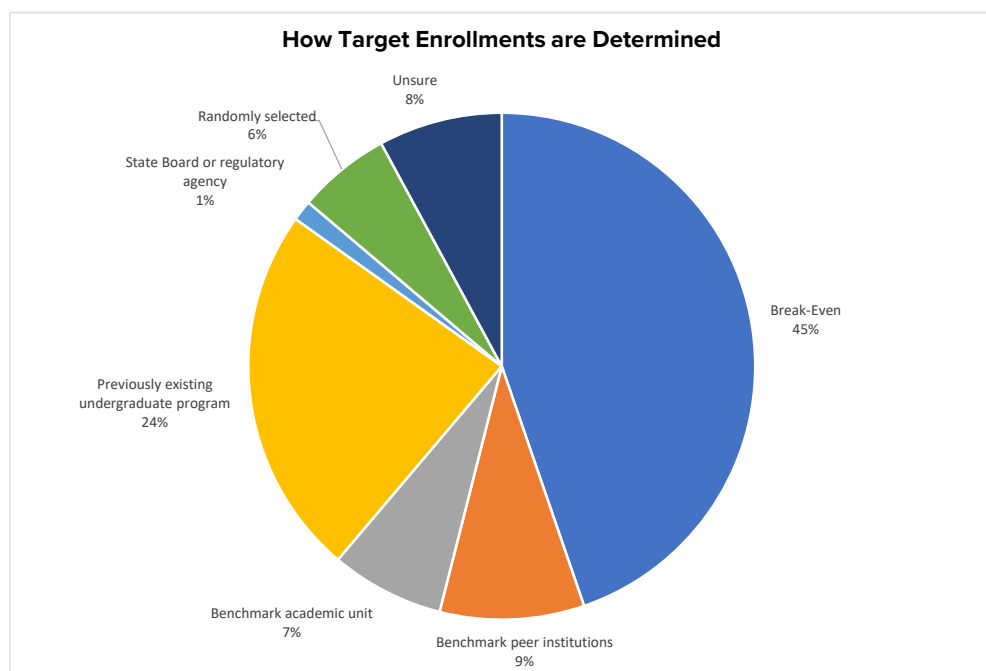
| Target Enrollment? | N  | Target Enrollment (Std Deviation) | Actual Enrollment | % Capacity | Avg Capacity |
|--------------------|----|-----------------------------------|-------------------|------------|--------------|
| Yes                | 80 | 2330 ±11.3                        | 1656              | 71.1       | 71.1         |
| No                 | 32 |                                   | 677               |            |              |
| Set own            | 77 | 2157 ±11.2                        | 1485              | 68.8       | 68.8         |
| Unsure             | 5  |                                   | 78                |            |              |

There was no statistically significant difference in the target enrollment and actual enrollment between those institutions who had the target enrollment set for them versus those who established their own target.

For all institutions with a set target enrollment, programs are operating at 70% of their target.

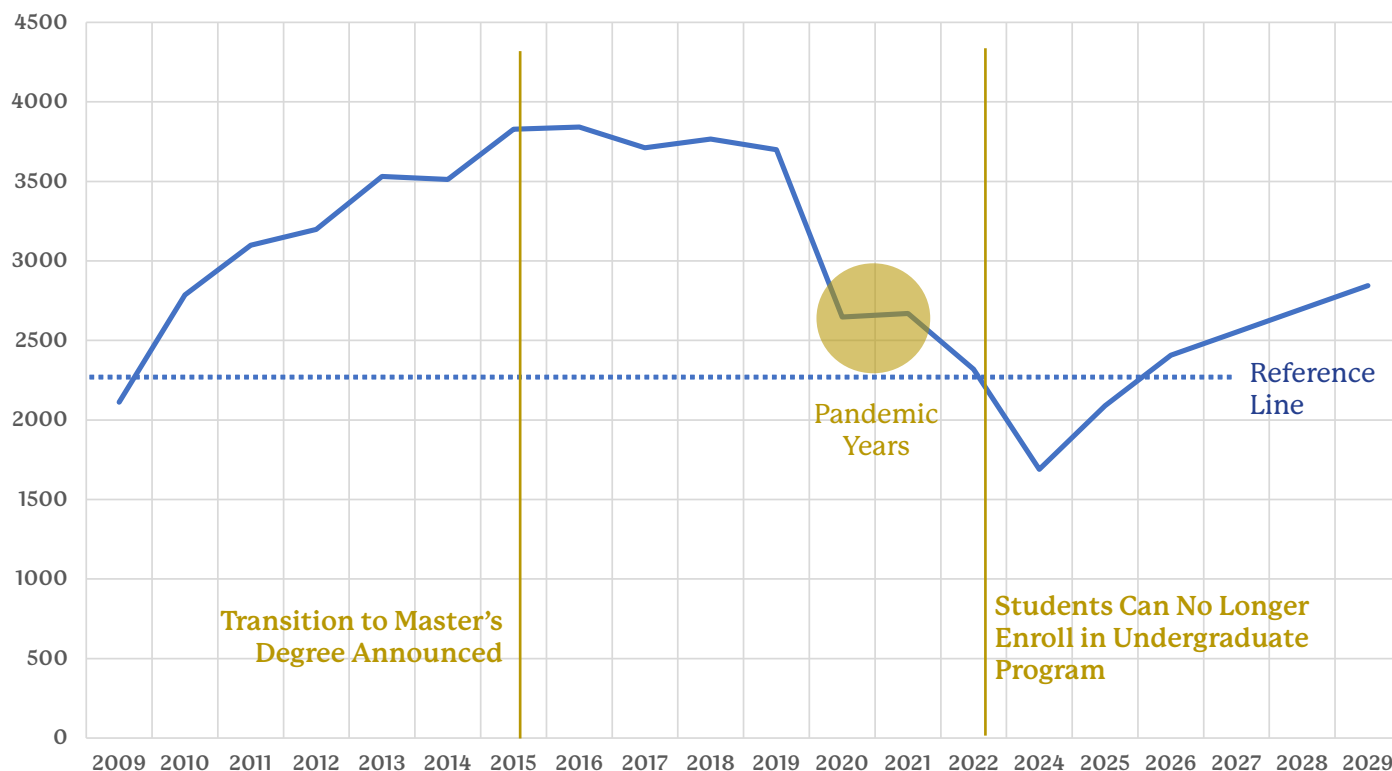
| How Target Was Set (Multiple Responses Allowed) | N  | Total Enrollment | Avg Enrollment |
|---|----|------------------|----------------|
| Financial break-even                            | 68 | 1189             | 18.9           |
| Benchmark peer institutions                     | 14 | 269              | 19.2           |
| Benchmark academic unit                         | 11 | 211              | 19.2           |
| Previously existing undergraduate program       | 36 | 627              | 17.4           |
| State Board or regulatory agency                | 2  | 30               | 15.0           |
| Randomly selected                               | 9  | 164              | 18.2           |
| Unsure  | 12 | 268              | 22.3           |

Multiple write-in responses indicated that the target was based on the number of available clinical sites/preceptors, faculty, and classroom space.



# Workforce Implications

New Certificants by Year With Future Projections



Our 2024 projection on the number of new graduates underestimated the longitudinal trend. Using our estimated enrollments to account for nonresponding programs and assuming a 97% retention rate from admission to sitting for the exam (based on individual institution's rates), we now see an increase in the number of candidates sitting for the exam.

As projected, we saw an uptick in the number of candidates sitting for the examination in 2025, bringing us back to the 2022 decline level and to 2009 when we started seeing an influx of exam takers (reference line).

To develop a conservative estimate of the number of students who will be eligible to sit for the BOC examination beyond 2026, we took the we averaged the increase, and decreased that increase by half each year. More datapoints are required to make a more accurate projection.

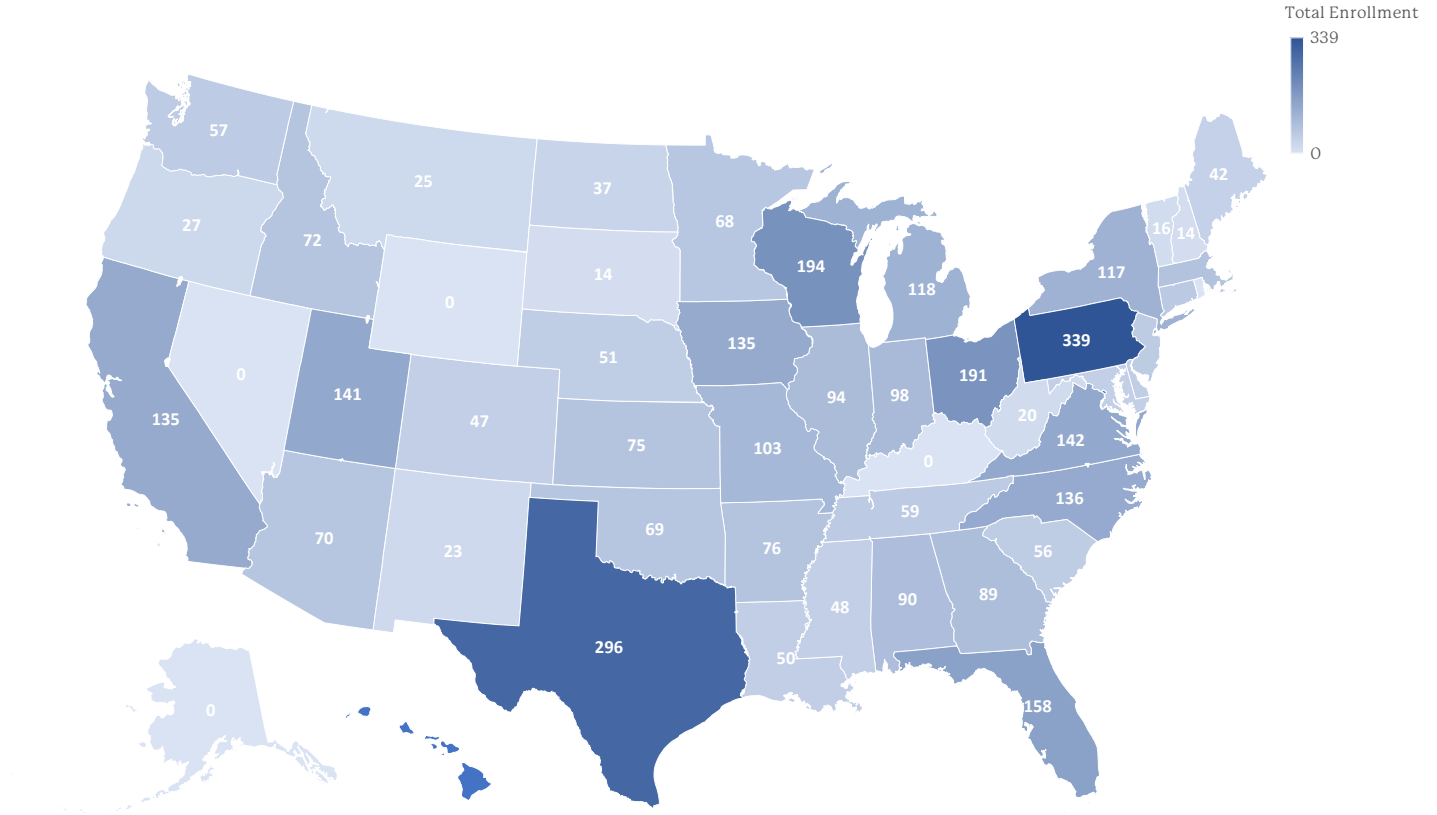
From a more aggressive viewpoint, the gap between the number of jobs available and the number of ATs to fill them should also boost enrollments in the near future. We anticipate that the number of open positions will lead to improved salaries (read: supply and demand). In turn, the ability to obtain a reasonably well-paying position upon graduation should lead to a continued uptick in program enrollments.

We recommend that the projected trend data be matched against data from the BOC regarding the number of ATs who give up their credential to determine a net increase or decrease in the number of ATs in the workforce.

**Note:** Data for certificants by year from 2009 to 2022 were obtained from the BOC's website (<https://bocatc.org/about-us/reports/annual-reports/archive>).

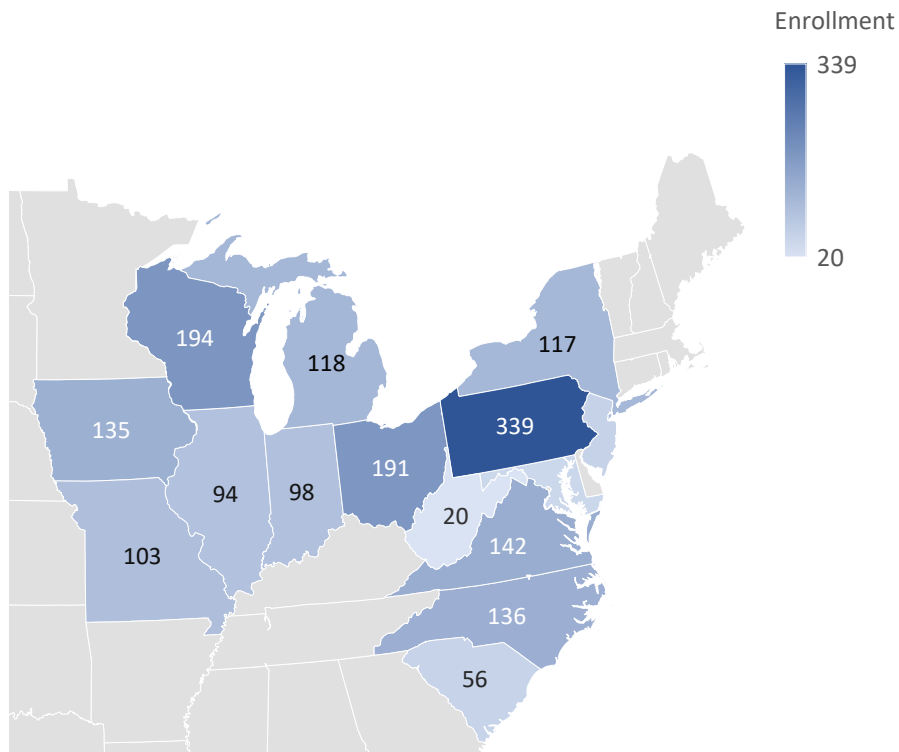
# Geographic Enrollment

Total Student Enrollment by State





## Student Enrollment Density

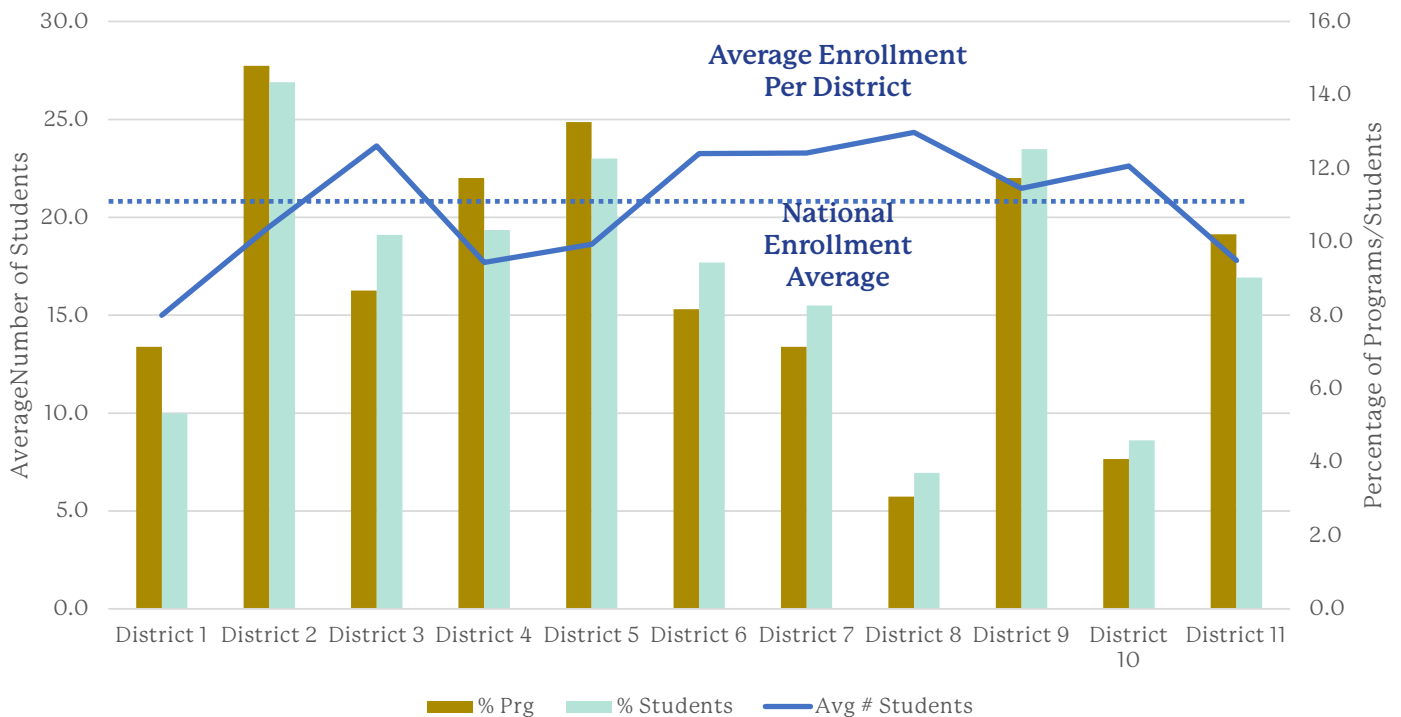


The rolling contiguous 16 states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Maryland (n=48), Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey (n=58), New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin account for 1,850 students or 46.9% of all students represented in this analysis.

## Student Enrollment by NATA District

| District     | Programs   | Total Students | Avg # Students | % Programs  | % Students  |
|--------------|------------|----------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|
| District 1   | 14         | 210            | 15.0           | 7.1%        | 5.3%        |
| District 2   | 29         | 566            | 19.5           | 14.8%       | 14.4%       |
| District 3   | 17         | 402            | 23.6           | 8.7%        | 10.2%       |
| District 4   | 23         | 407            | 17.7           | 11.7%       | 10.3%       |
| District 5   | 26         | 484            | 18.6           | 13.3%       | 12.3%       |
| District 6   | 16         | 372            | 23.3           | 8.2%        | 9.4%        |
| District 7   | 14         | 326            | 23.3           | 7.1%        | 8.3%        |
| District 8   | 6          | 146            | 24.3           | 3.1%        | 3.7%        |
| District 9   | 23         | 494            | 21.5           | 11.7%       | 12.5%       |
| District 10  | 8          | 181            | 22.6           | 4.1%        | 4.6%        |
| District 11  | 20         | 356            | 17.8           | 10.2%       | 9.0%        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>196</b> | <b>3944</b>    | <b>20.1</b>    | <b>100%</b> | <b>100%</b> |

## Distribution of Students and Programs by NATA District



**Interpretation:** District 9 joins districts 3, 6, 7, 8, and 10 this year in having a greater percentage of students than they do programs, and have a higher average enrollment; likely indicating an adequate number of programs per student. Programs in districts 1, 4, 5, and 11 have a greater percentage of programs than they do students; likely indicated an excess of programs per student

## Thank You and Future Directions

We would like to thank the program administrators who responded to our survey. We plan on conducting this survey annually and address other questions that arise on an ongoing basis.

If you have questions regarding MSAT enrollment and/or trends, please email us or submit a request via [www.athletictrainingdata.com](http://www.athletictrainingdata.com) and we will do our best to answer it.

We appreciate your support!

