

Career Education in Tennessee

A factbook detailing the status
of for-profit higher education in
Tennessee



The CECU Research Foundation, a subsidiary of Career Education Colleges and Universities (CECU), prioritizes funding and executing credible research regarding school outcomes and comparisons of how for-profit career colleges fare in comparison to their peer institutions in other sectors of higher education.

The information presented in this factbook uses the most recent data available through NCES along with relevant published reports that provide additional perspective.

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Director of Policy and Research | CECU

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Student Outcomes

For-profit colleges and the workforce

2022 - 2023 school year

For-profit colleges in Tennessee disproportionately contribute to the workforce in a wide range of fields including skilled trades, beauty and wellness, allied health, and more.

Profession	Total degrees conferred (2022-23)	Percentage of degrees/ certificates conferred by for-profit schools
Heavy Equipment Maintenance Technology/Technician	155	87.7%
Aesthetician/Esthetician and Skin Care Specialist	926	81.1%
Medical/Clinical Assistant	850	78.2%
Barbering/Barber	184	75.5%
Cosmetology/Cosmetologist, General	1415	63.7%
Pharmacy Technician/Assistant	254	63.0%
Dental Assisting/Assistant	387	58.7%
Vehicle Maintenance and Repair Technologies/Technicians	1316	36.5%
Automobile/Automotive Mechanics Technology/Technician	569	29.9%
Airframe Mechanics and Aircraft Maintenance Technology/Technician	114	20.2%
Truck and Bus Driver/Commercial Vehicle Operator and Instructor	538	18.4%
Welding Technology/Welder	1202	17.6%

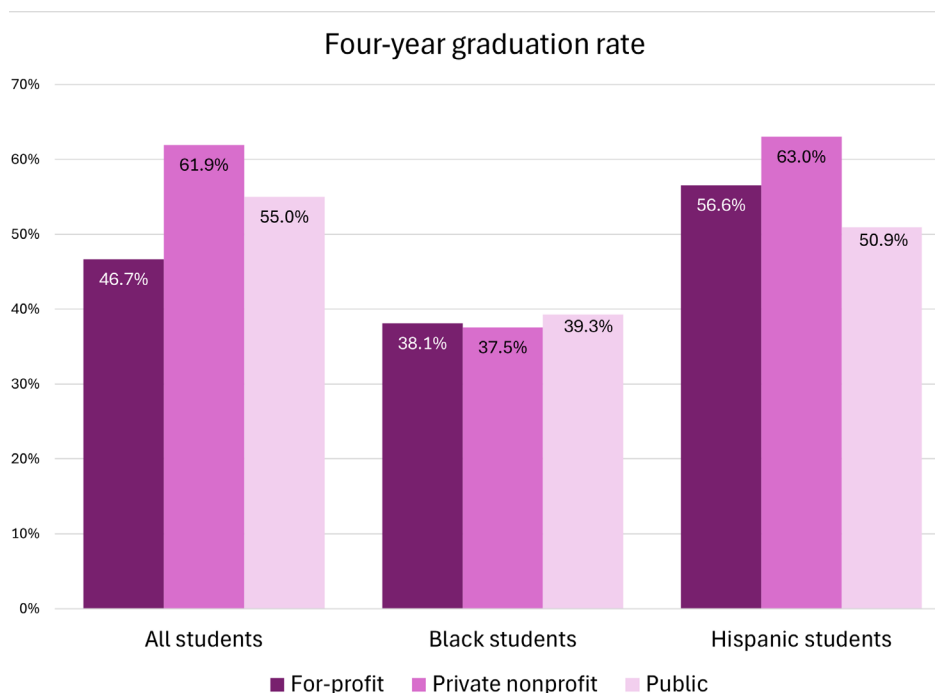
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2024 (provisional data), Fall Enrollment component.

Four-year graduation rates

2022 - 2023 school year

Four-year graduation rates at for-profit colleges in Tennessee are generally lower than those at public and private nonprofit colleges, but for-profit colleges do show strong performance among Black and Hispanic students. For-profit colleges had the second-highest graduation rate for Hispanic (56.6%) and Black (38.1%) students, just behind private nonprofit colleges. Both for-profit and private nonprofit colleges had higher graduation rates for Hispanic and Black students than public colleges.

Lower overall graduation rates may be impacted by the strong presence of four-year online degrees offered by for-profit institutions. These online degree programs can offer a flexible way to get a four-year degree for nontraditional students who often have families, a full time job, and other responsibilities. Online and distance learning can present its own challenges regardless of institutional control, therefore students should be cognizant of their own abilities to thrive in that particular academic environment.



NOTE: Values shown here are 150% graduation rates, representing the percentage of students that graduated within 6 years of entry to the institution. Data represents the 2017 entry cohort of students.

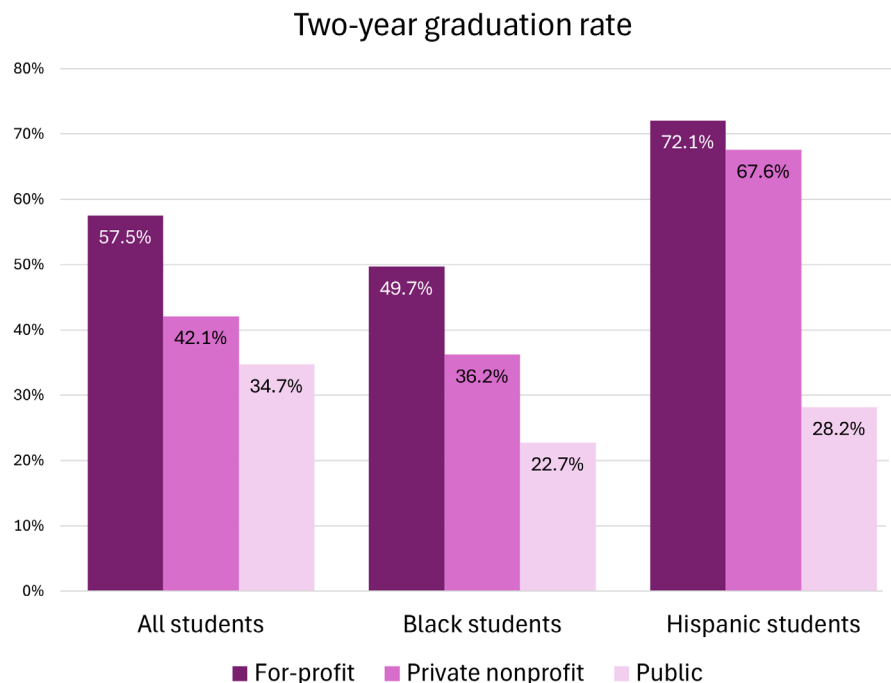
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2024 (provisional data), Graduation rate component.

Two-year graduation rates

2022 - 2023 school year

For-profit colleges in Tennessee show the strongest outcomes at the two-year level, outperforming public and private nonprofit colleges with a 57.5% overall graduation rate, a 72.1% Hispanic graduation rate, and a 49.7% Black graduation rate.

On the other hand, graduation rates at public two-year colleges lagged significantly, with a graduation rate of just 34.7% compared to 57.5% at for-profit colleges. For Black and Hispanic students, the graduation rate at public colleges was approximately half that at for-profit colleges.



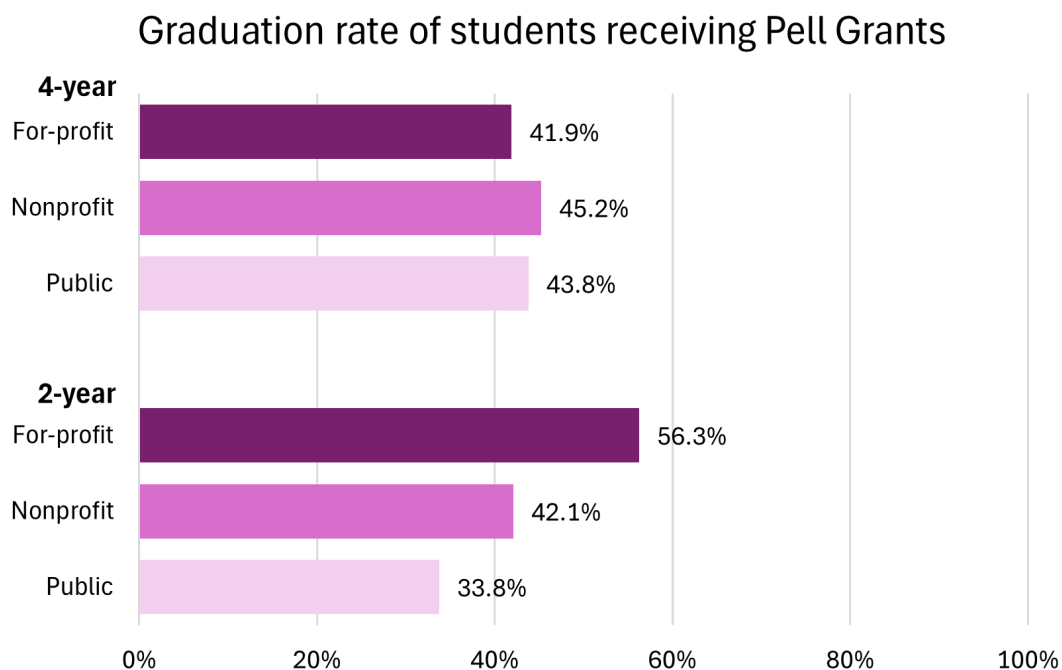
NOTE: Values shown here are 150% graduation rates, representing the percentage of students that graduated within 3 years of entry to the institution. Data represents the 2019 entry cohort of students.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2024 (provisional data), Graduation rate component.

Graduation rate of students receiving Pell Grants

2022 - 2023 school year

Looking only at students who received Pell Grants in Tennessee, for-profit colleges again show a strong performance when evaluating two-year graduation rates, with the highest graduation rate of Pell Grant recipients (56.3%) compared to public (33.8%) and private nonprofit (42.1%) colleges.



NOTE: Outcome data for Pell Grant recipients is not available at the less-than-two-year level. Data presented here represent 150% graduation rates.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2024 (provisional data), Graduation rate component.



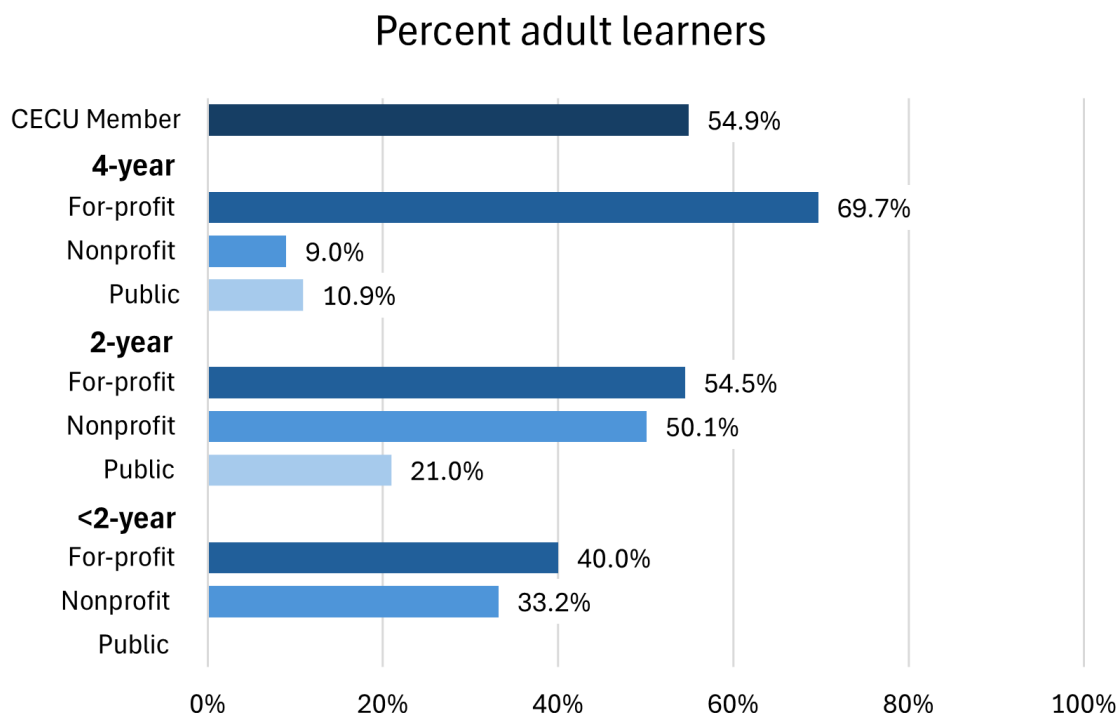
Student Profile

Adult learners

Fall 2023

Adult learners in Tennessee (classified as undergraduate students age 25 and older) face increased obstacles compared to their younger peers and often require a specific learning environment. For-profit colleges enrolled the highest percentage of adult learners among four-year schools (69.7%), two-year schools (54.5%), and less-than-two-year schools (40.0%).

Fifty-five percent of students enrolled at CECU member schools were 25 years or older in the 2023-24 school year.



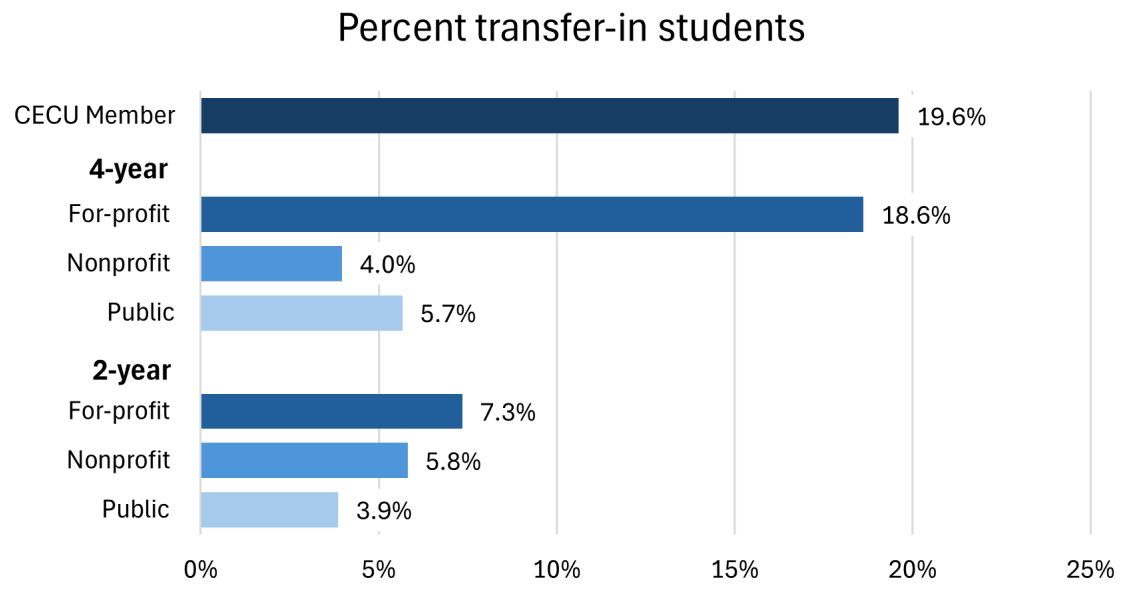
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2024 (provisional data), Fall Enrollment component.

Transfer-in students

Fall 2023

Students do not always find success at an institution, either due to a poor fit at their original college of choice, a change in priorities, or challenging life circumstances. That said, at the four-year level, for-profit colleges in Tennessee are the top choice to transfer into (18.6%), followed by a public college (5.7%), and a private nonprofit college (4.0%). At the two-year level, for-profit colleges are again the top choice to transfer into (7.3%), followed by private nonprofit colleges (5.8%) and public colleges (3.9%).

Nearly 20% of students at CECU member schools transferred in from another college.



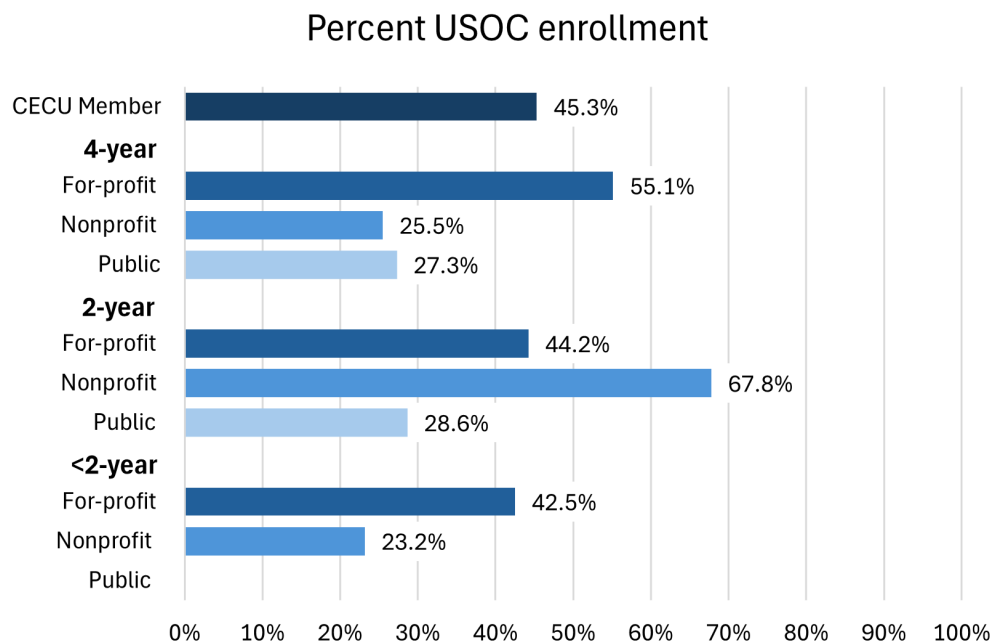
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2024 (provisional data), Fall Enrollment component.

Underrepresented students of color

Fall 2023

Underrepresented students of color (USOC) include students that are American Indian/Alaskan Native, Black, Hispanic, Pacific Islander/Hawaiian, and of Two or More Races. These students have traditionally been underrepresented and underserved by the higher education system, but in Tennessee, four-year and less-than-two-year for-profit colleges in Fall 2023 served the largest percentage of these students compared to other institutions at the same level. At the four-year level, 55.1% of students were USOC, followed by less-than-two-year colleges (42.5%).

Sixty-two percent of students at CECU member schools are underrepresented students of color.



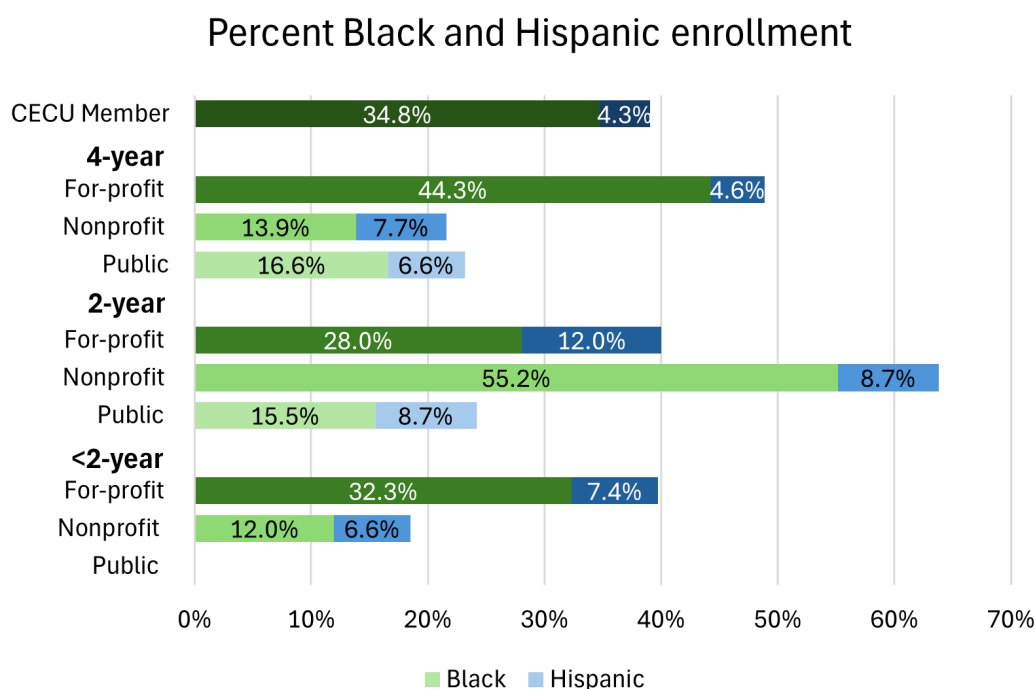
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2024 (provisional data), Fall Enrollment component.

Black and Hispanic students

Fall 2023

For-profit colleges in Tennessee consistently enroll a higher percentage of Black and Hispanic students compared to public and private nonprofit institutions at the same level. Black enrollment at for-profit for-year colleges (44.3%) was higher than that of public (16.6%) and private nonprofit (13.9%) colleges. At the less-than-two-year level, for-profit colleges again enrolled the highest percentage of Black students (32.3%). Hispanic enrollment was highest at for-profit colleges at the two-year (12.0%) and less-than-two-year (7.4%) levels.

Thirty-five percent of students at CECU member schools were Black and 4.3% of students were Hispanic.



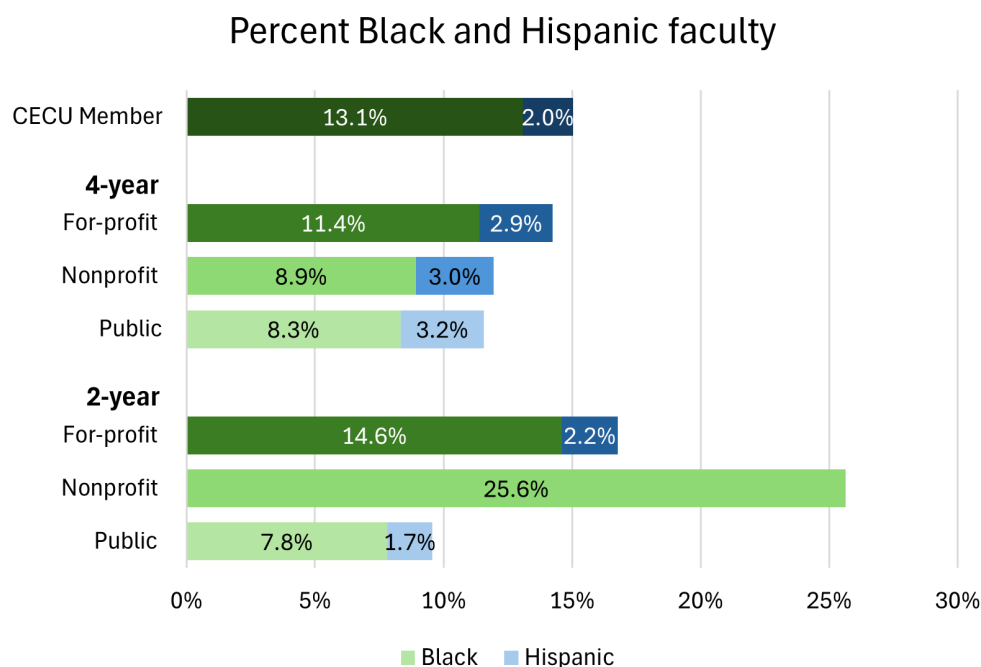
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2024 (provisional data), Fall Enrollment component.

Black and Hispanic faculty

Fall 2023

The higher overall percentage of Black and Hispanic students at for-profit college in Tennessee is well matched by a higher percentage of Black and Hispanic faculty at these colleges. Four-year for-profit colleges have the highest percentage of Black faculty (11.4%). Two-year for-profit colleges have the highest percentage of Hispanic faculty (2.2%).

CECU member schools employed 13.1% Black faculty and 2.0% Hispanic faculty.



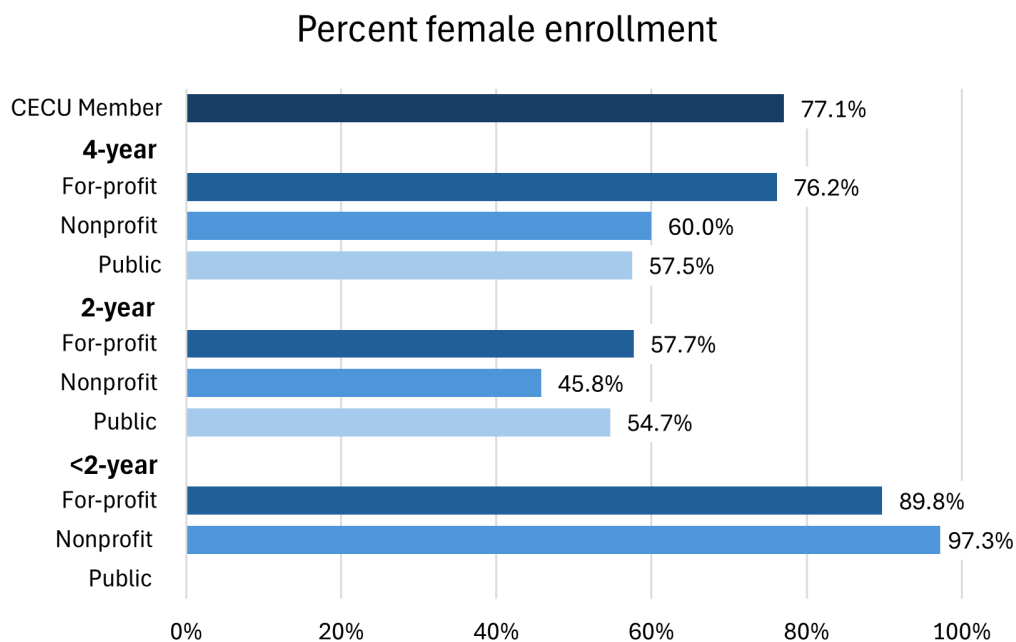
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2024 (provisional data), Fall Enrollment component.

Female enrollment

Fall 2023

Over half of the students enrolled in most sectors of higher education in Fall 2023 in Tennessee identified as female (with the exception of two-year nonprofit colleges). At the four-year and less-than-two-year levels, for-profit colleges led the way in female enrollment with 76.2% and 57.7% female enrollment at each respective level.

CECU member schools averaged 77.1% female enrollment among all institutional sectors.



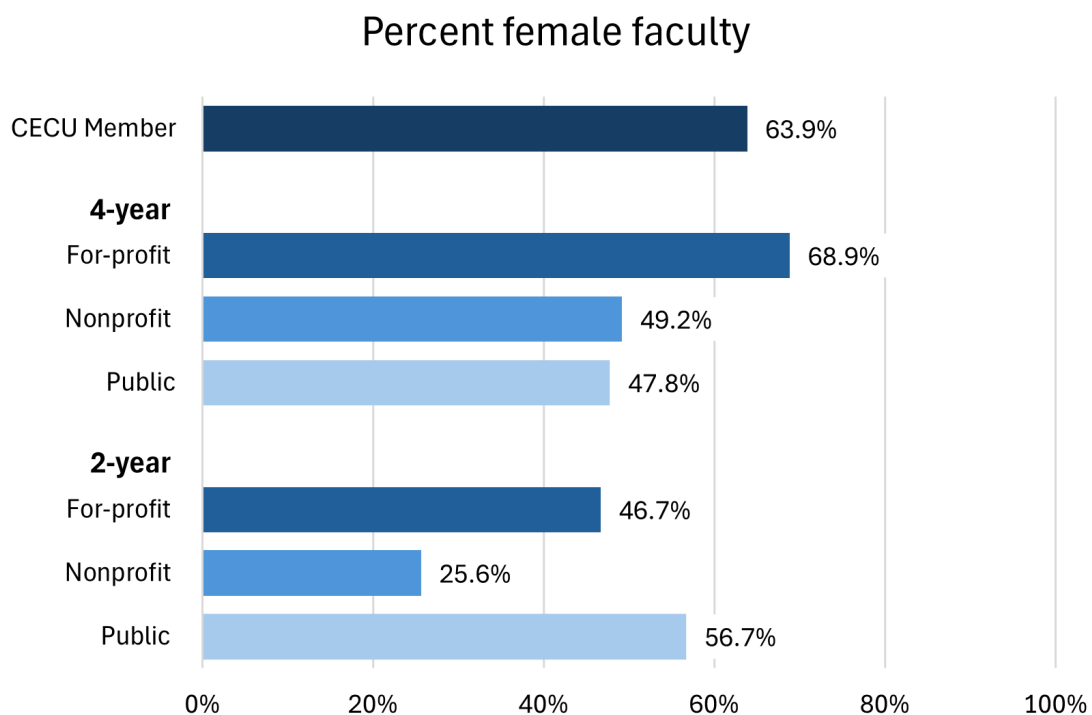
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2024 (provisional data), Fall Enrollment component.

Female faculty

Fall 2023

The higher percentage of female students at for-profit colleges in Tennessee is well matched by high percentages of female faculty at these colleges. Four-year for-profit colleges have the highest percentage of female faculty with 68.9%. Two-year for-profit colleges employ 46.7% female faculty.

CECU member schools employ one of the highest percentages of female faculty compared to individual sectors, employing 63.9% females.



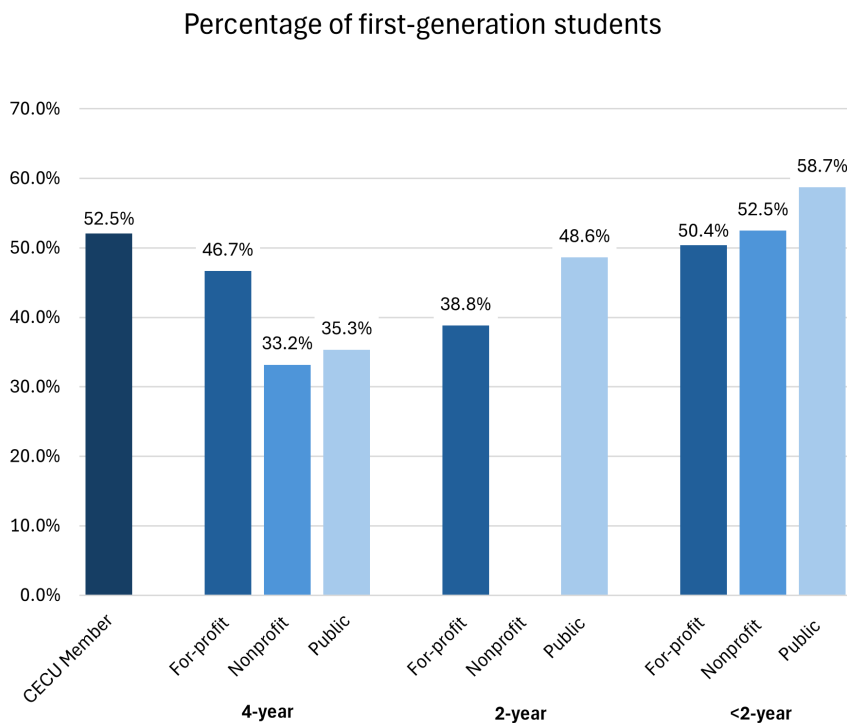
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2024 (provisional data), Fall Enrollment component.

First-generation students

Fall 2023

For-profit colleges in Tennessee served a large share of first-generation students in the 2022-23 school year. Four-year for-profit colleges served a greater percentage of first-generation students than their public and private nonprofit counterparts with 46.7% of their students being first-generation college students. At the less-than-two-year level, public colleges had the highest percentage of first-generation students (58.7%), followed by nonprofit colleges (52.5%), and for-profit colleges (50.4%).

CECU member schools enrolled 52.6% first-generation college students.



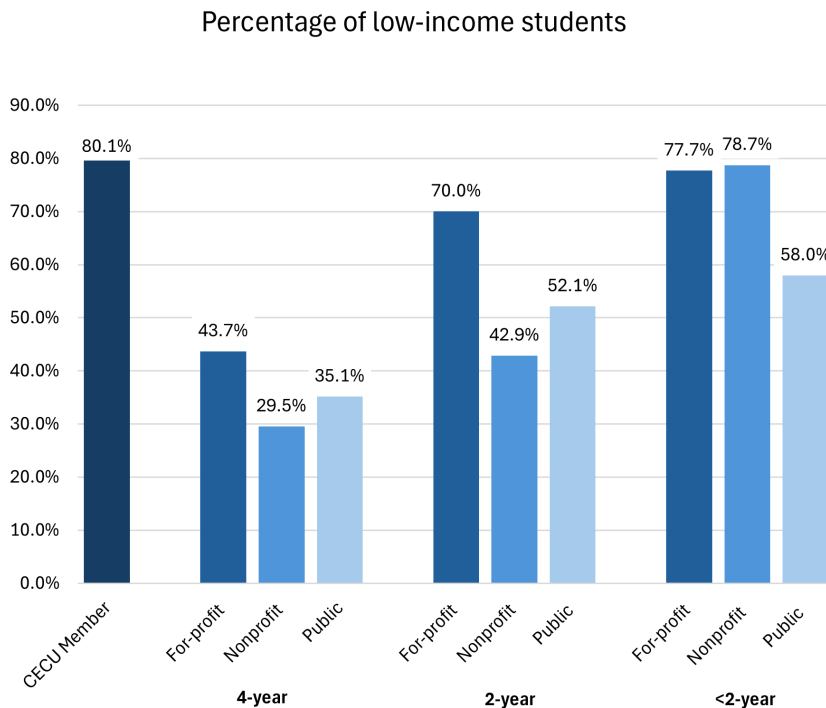
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, College Scorecard, Fall 2024.

Low-income students

Fall 2023

Low-income students in Tennessee (students with a family income below \$30,000) are another traditionally underserved population that finds educational opportunities at for-profit institutions. In the 2023-24 school year, for-profit colleges enrolled the highest percentage of low-income students among two-year (70.0%) and four-year (43.7%) colleges. For-profit colleges also enrolled the second-highest percentage of low-income colleges at the less-than-two-year level (77.7%).

CECU member schools enrolled 80.1% low-income students.



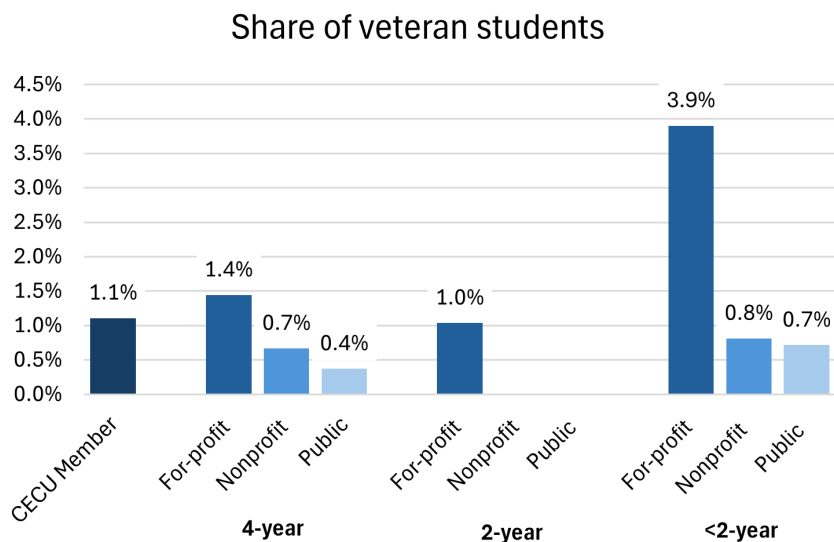
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, College Scorecard, Fall 2024.

Veteran students

Fall 2023

For-profit colleges in Tennessee enroll a slightly higher percentage of veteran students than public and private nonprofit colleges at all institutional levels. Nearly 4% of students at less-than-two-year institutions are veterans. This difference may be due in part to a preference to pursue a career in the trades after military service. These careers offer the opportunity to learn on the job, and veterans have historically found success in seeking trade and healthcare careers, especially due to an overlap between their experiences in the military and the necessary skills for their target field.

In addition to the specific training of for-profit schools, veterans may prefer their offering of flexibility, accelerated programs, and strong student supports.



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, College Scorecard, Fall 2024.



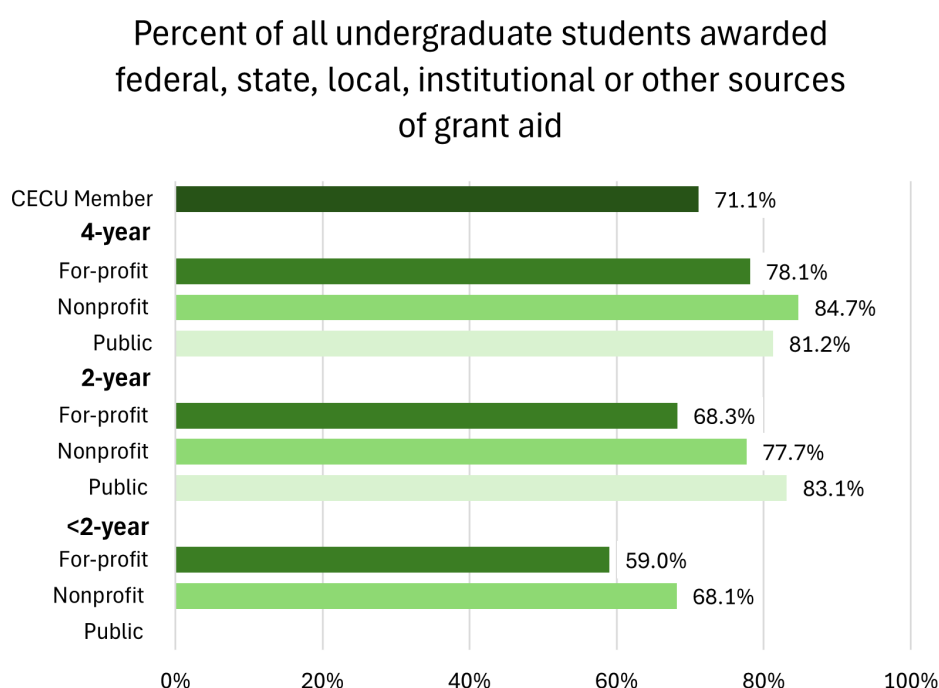
Financial Factors

Students awarded grant aid

2022 - 23 school year

Financial assistance is integral to the success of many students, particularly for those attending for-profit colleges as these students are more likely to come from low-income families (see page 15). Students at for-profit colleges in Tennessee tended to receive grant aid at a slightly lower rate than students at nonprofit and public colleges.

Seventy-one of students at CECU member schools received federal, state, local, institutional or other sources of grant aid.



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2024 (provisional data), Fall Enrollment component.

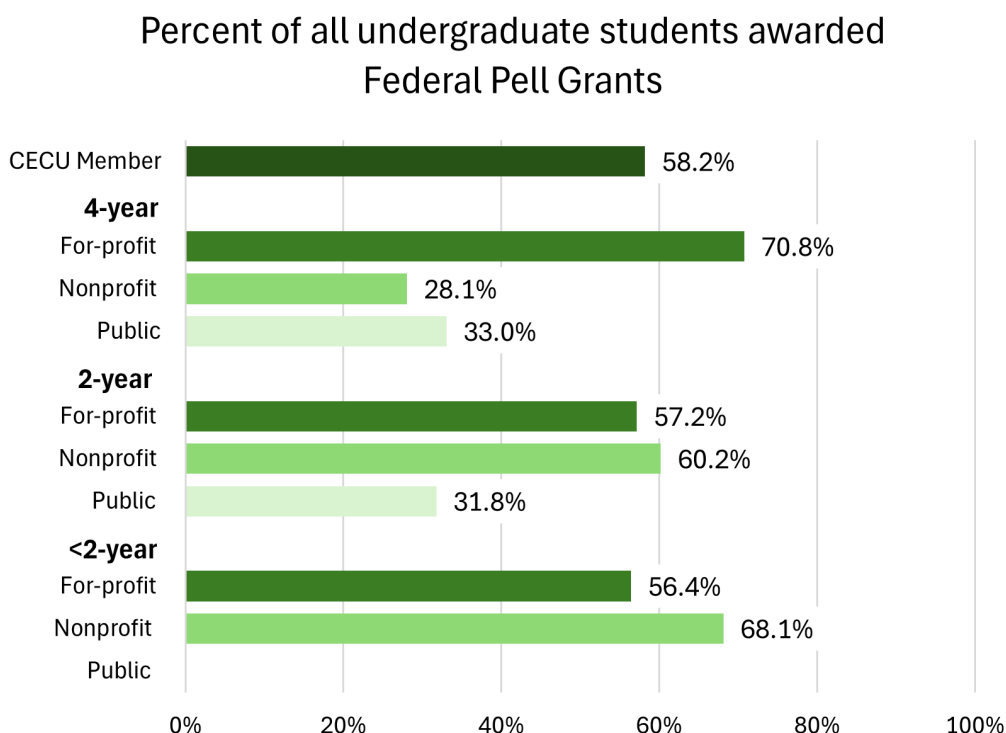
Students awarded Pell Grants

2022 - 2023 school year

Pell Grants are essential to students with a high degree of unmet financial need. Students whose families have a total income of up to \$50,000 may be eligible for the need-based funding, however most Pell Grant money is given to students with a total family income below \$20,000. Students at four-year for-profit schools in Tennessee are the top Pell Grant recipients with 70.8% of students receiving Pell Grants.

For-profit colleges at the two-year and less-than-two-year levels had high percentages of Pell recipients with 57.2% and 56.4% of students at each respective level receiving Federal Pell Grants.

Fifty-eight percent of students at CECU member schools were awarded federal Pell Grants.



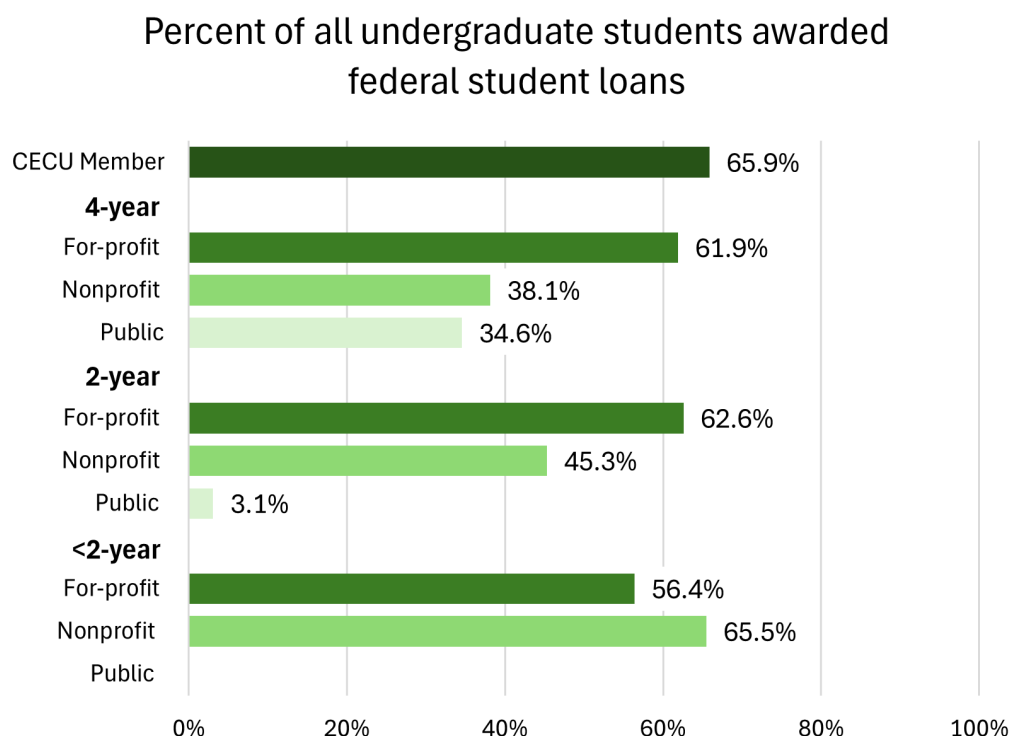
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2024 (provisional data), Fall Enrollment component.

Students awarded federal student

2022 - 2023 school year

Federal student loans allow students to attend college even if they couldn't secure sufficient grant aid or personal funding to completely cover the cost of a college education. At the four-year and two-year levels in Tennessee, students at for-profit colleges were most likely to be awarded a student loan (61.9% and 62.6% respectively) compared to public and private nonprofit colleges, likely due to the higher concentration of low-income students at for-profit colleges.

At the less-than-two-year level, students at less-than-two-year colleges were less likely to receive federal student loans (56.4% of students).



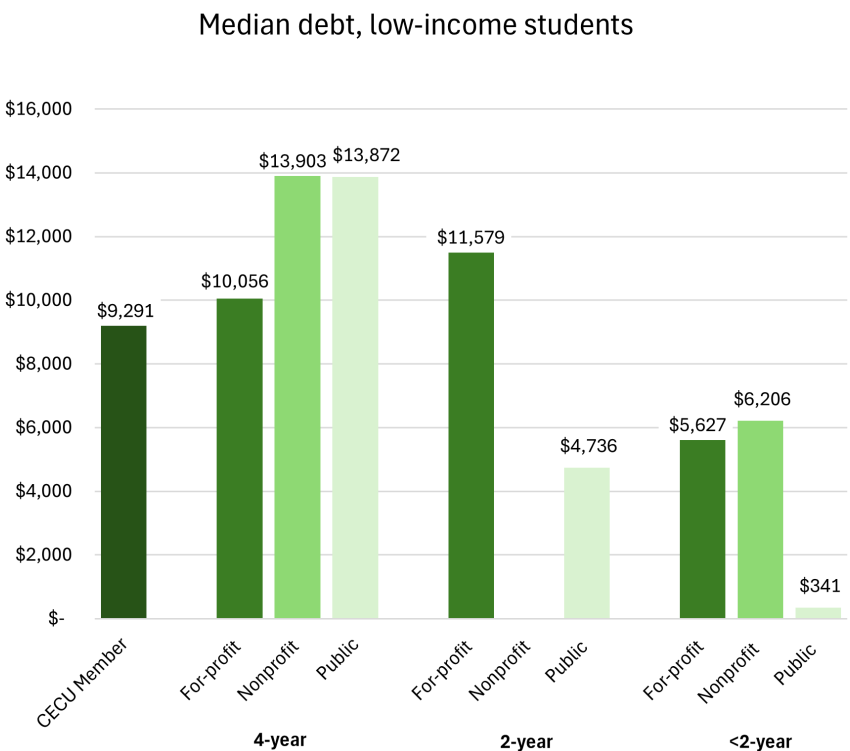
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2024 (provisional data), Fall Enrollment component.

Median debt, low-income students

2022 - 2023 school year

Low-income students at for-profit colleges in Tennessee see a lower median debt than students of private nonprofit colleges at the four-year and less-than-two year level. At the four-year level, students of for-profit colleges show a median student debt of (\$10,056) compared to that of students at private nonprofit colleges (\$13,903) and public colleges (\$13,872). At less-than-two-year colleges, students of for-profit colleges have a median student debt of \$5,627 compared to students of private nonprofit colleges (\$6,205).

Students of CECU member schools generally have low average student debt among students that are low-income (\$9,291).



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, College Scorecard, Fall 2024.



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