From the National Student Clearinghouse: Preliminary Data on 2021 Undergraduate Enrollments

October 26, 2021: Nationally, total fall undergraduate enrollment across all sectors of higher education continues to decline. Much of the witnessed decline in enrollment can be attributed to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated economic fall-out. However, even before the onset of the pandemic, enrollment in postsecondary education was experiencing dips caused by a myriad of factors, including the increasing cost of postsecondary education. Despite the decrease in enrollment in all sectors over the past few years, highly selective private institutions continue to see an increase in their enrollment. This year these institutions saw a growth of 4.3%, which brought them back up to pre-pandemic levels. In stark contrast, the institutions that are often most accessible to students – two year public institutions – saw the most drastic decline in enrollment at -5.6%. The declines reported in 2020 were more extreme than those reported in 2021. This is indicative of the fact that students might slowly be returning to postsecondary education, albeit at a lower rate than 2019. However, as many students and families still struggle to recover from the last two years, it is more important than ever to support policies and practices that provide affordable, high quality postsecondary education for all students. Read below to see some of the key takeaways from this first iteration of the Clearinghouse's data collection.

"With 50.5% of institutions, representing 8.4 million students reporting, as of September 2021, total undergraduate enrollment has dropped by 3.2% since Fall 2020. In total, enrollment has fallen 6.5% since Fall 2019.

Other takeaways include:

- Total Freshmen enrollment declined by 3.1% in 2021 (compared to 9% decline in 2020).
  - The most drastic Freshmen declines came from community colleges, followed by public four-year institutions.

- Enrollment declines were most prominent among white & Black freshmen (-8.6% and -7.5% respectively).

- Male enrollment has dropped by -9.3% whereas Female enrollment has declined by -5.3% between 2019-2021.
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