

Published Tuition and Fees at New England Public Colleges and Universities, 2017-18

Introduction

In New England and across the U.S., it has never been more critical to hold a postsecondary credential to be able to fully participate in the workforce and earn a sustainable wage. According to research at the Georgetown University Center for Education and the Workforce, roughly 90% of the jobs available in four of the nation's five current fastest growing occupational clusters require some form of education beyond high school.¹ The same study estimates that 63% of all jobs available nationwide in 2018 require a postsecondary degree. As a result, employers will need approximately 22 million new employees with a postsecondary degree.

However, in recent years the cost of a college degree has risen precipitously – oftentimes becoming prohibitively expensive for far too many Americans to attend college. As postsecondary education becomes increasingly important for the vitality of New England's economy and its workforce, the growing cost of higher education has garnered substantial critical attention from the public and from policy makers. New England's public colleges continue to be the most affordable and financially accessible option for most individuals in the region. Their primary mission is to serve each of their state's residents. Tuition and fees at public colleges are of particular interest to both students and state policymakers.

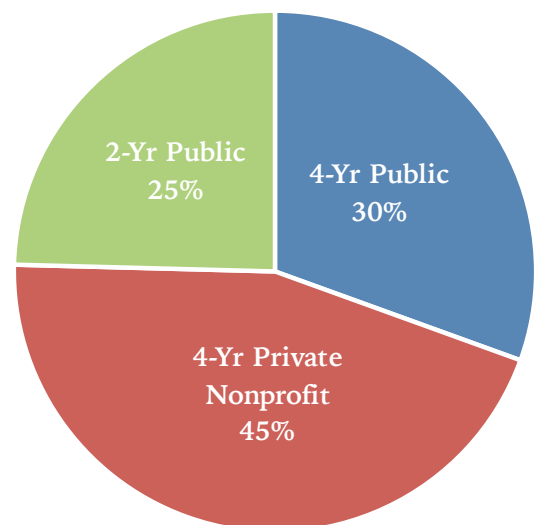
New research from the National Center for Education Statistics reveals that a majority of students and parents tend to overestimate the out-of-pocket cost of tuition and fees, yet the perception of affordability is strongly linked to an individual's future plans for higher education.² As a result, published tuition and fee rates play a significant role in students' and their families' decision about which college to attend or whether to ever pursue a college degree. This brief takes an in-depth look at the tuition and required fees published by public two- and four-year postsecondary institutions in New England.

How Many Students Enroll at Public Institutions in New England?

Roughly **436,000 undergraduate students** enrolled at public two- and four-year postsecondary institutions across New England in fall 2016. From 2015 to 2016, **enrollment at New England's public colleges declined by 1.8%, or by 8,036 fewer undergraduates.**

Of the undergraduates in the region, **one-quarter enrolled at two-year public colleges**, and nearly **one-third enrolled at four-year public colleges.**

While the share varies widely by state, **the majority (55%) of postsecondary students in New England enrolled at public two- and four-year institutions** in fall 2016. The remainder (45%) enrolled at *private* four-year institutions in the region.



1. Carnevale, Anthony P., Nicole Smith, Jeff Strohl (2010). *Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2018*, Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce: <https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/help-wanted/#report>.
2. Velez, Erin Dunlop and Laura Horn (2018). *What High Schoolers and Their Parents Know About Public 4-Year Tuition and Fees in Their State*, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics: <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019404.pdf>.

What is the Price of Tuition and Fees at Public Institutions Before Financial Aid?

Before financial aid, in-state tuition and fees cost students an average of \$5,193 at two-year public institutions and \$11,596 at four-year public institutions.

Since the last academic year, average tuition and fees have increased 3% (\$164) at two-year public colleges and have decreased 2% (\$196) at four-year public colleges, spurred, in part, by a 14% decrease in tuition and fees at four-year colleges in Rhode Island in 2016-17. In the last five years, the cost of tuition and fees has increased 16% (\$734) at two-year colleges and 10% (\$1,001) at four-year colleges.³

Recent initiatives in New England have been implemented to mitigate the price of college, particularly for

traditionally underserved populations. For instance, Gov. Charlie Baker announced during his 2018 State of the Commonwealth Address that Massachusetts will allocate an additional \$7 million in college scholarship funding to cover the remaining tuition and fees balance of the state’s poorest community college students with an unmet

Average In-State Tuition & Required Fees in New England

	2017-18	Change from 2016-17	Change from 2012-13
Public Two-year Colleges	\$5,193	3%	16%
Public Four-year Colleges	\$11,596	-2%	10%

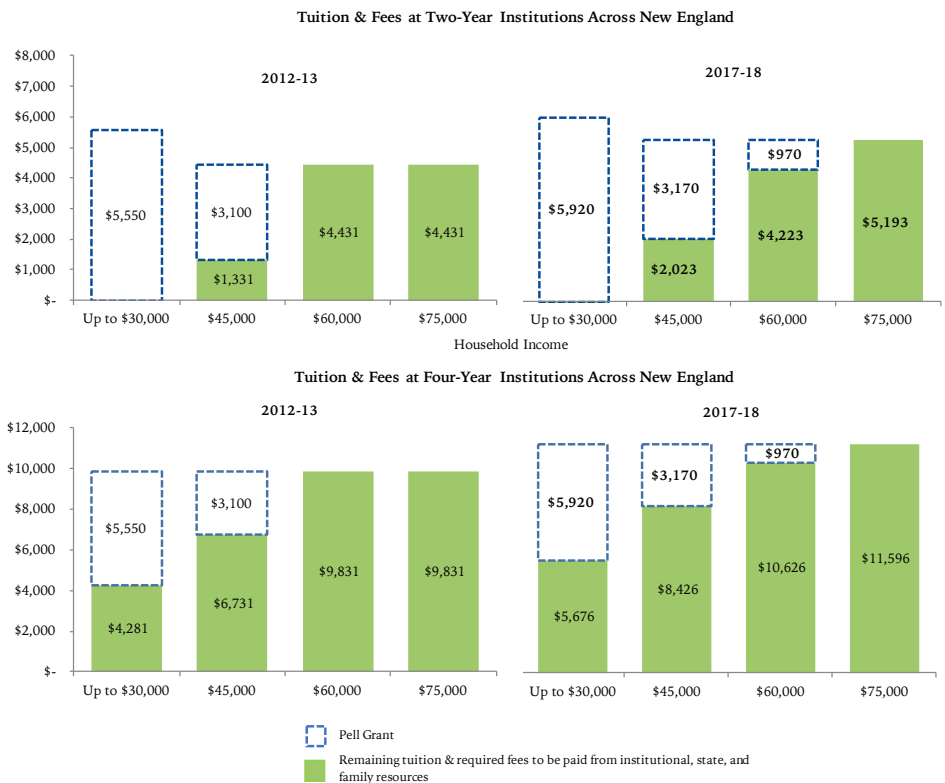
Note: Average tuition & required fees are published rates for two semesters of in-state full-time study. Dollar values are not adjusted for inflation and averages are not enrollment-weighted. These figures do not reflect any financial aid (e.g. grants, loans) or living expenses (e.g. room, board), which vary significantly between students.

Source: NEBHE analysis of data from New England institutions and state system offices.

How Much Do Public Colleges Cost in New England After Financial Aid?

Similar to the experience of buying a new car, published tuition and fees are only the “sticker price” and may lead students and parents to experience “sticker shock” and potentially overestimate the actual out-of-pocket cost of earning a college degree. In reality, few students pay the published rates. Financial aid plays a critical role in lowering the final amount students pay. The source and amount of financial aid varies significantly from student to student and from college to college, which can make estimating and tracking the price of college difficult.

Federal Pell Grants are one of the largest, least variable sources of financial aid. They are typically awarded to undergraduate students who exhibit exceptional financial need and have not yet earned an associate, bachelor’s, graduate, or professional degree. Unlike loans, these grants do not need to be repaid (except in a few rare circumstances).



Note: Pell Grant eligibility is estimated based on a family of four with two dependent children and \$0 assets. Source: NEBHE analysis of data from New England institutions and state systems offices, U.S. Department of Education, and U.S. Census Bureau.

Because there is little variation in the Pell Grant amount awarded across institutions, as compared to other types of aid, the grant serves as a helpful tool to detect changes in tuition and fee prices over time and can provide policymakers with a better understanding of what students pay after aid.

Since 2012-13 across New England, increases in tuition and fees at community colleges (16%) and four-year public colleges (10%) have outpaced increases in the maximum Pell Grant (6.25%), leaving a widening gap for low- and moderate-income families to fill with additional institutional or state aid and/or family resources.

Published Tuition and Fees at Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts, 2017-18

In New England and across the U.S., it has never been more critical to hold a postsecondary credential to be able to fully participate in the workforce. Yet, in recent years the cost of a college degree has risen precipitously – oftentimes becoming prohibitively expensive for far too many Americans to attend college. New England’s public colleges are the most affordable and financially accessible option for most individuals in the region, and their primary mission is to serve each of their state’s residents. Published tuition and fee rates play a significant role in students’ and their families’ decision about which college to attend or whether to even pursue a college degree. This brief takes an in-depth look at the tuition and required fees published by public two- and four-year postsecondary institutions in Massachusetts.

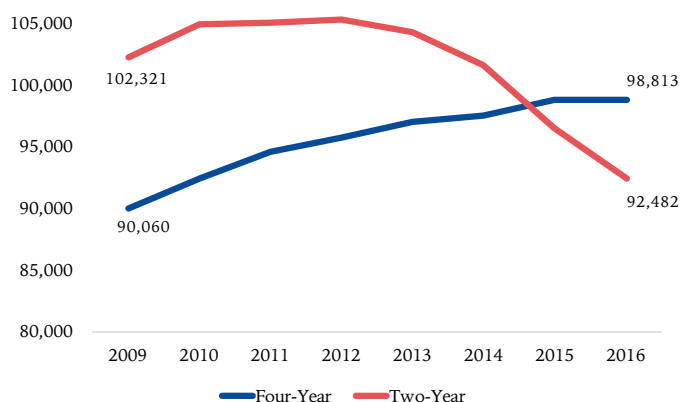
How Many Students Enroll at Public Institutions in Massachusetts?

In fall 2016, there were **191,295 undergraduate students** enrolled at public two- and four-year postsecondary institutions in Massachusetts.

Nearly half (52.3%) of undergraduates in Massachusetts were enrolled at public institutions.

Since 2009, **overall enrollment at Massachusetts’s public colleges has declined by 0.5%**. This figure is lower than the regional average decline of 2.6%. From 2009 to 2016, enrollment at four-year institutions increased by 9.7%, while enrollment at two-year colleges dropped by 9.6%.

Undergraduate Enrollment at Massachusetts Public Two- and Four-Year Institutions, Fall 2009-2016



Source: NEBHE analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Education.

Average In-State Tuition & Required Fees at Public Institutions

	2017-18	Change from 2016-17	Change from 2012-13
Two-year			
Massachusetts	\$6,131	4%	18%
New England	\$5,193	3%	16%
Four-year			
Massachusetts	\$11,420	4%	19%
New England	\$11,596	-2%	10%

Note: Average tuition & required fees are published rates for two semesters of in-state full-time study. Dollar values are not adjusted for inflation and averages are not enrollment-weighted. These figures do not reflect any financial aid (e.g. grants, loans) or living expenses (e.g. room, board), which vary significantly between students. Source: NEBHE analysis of data from New England institutions and state system offices.

What is the Price of Tuition and Fees at Public Institutions in Massachusetts?

At Massachusetts community colleges, average tuition and fees are 18% higher than the regional average. Tuition and fees at the state’s four-year institutions are on a par with the region, but they have risen more rapidly in Massachusetts than in New England.

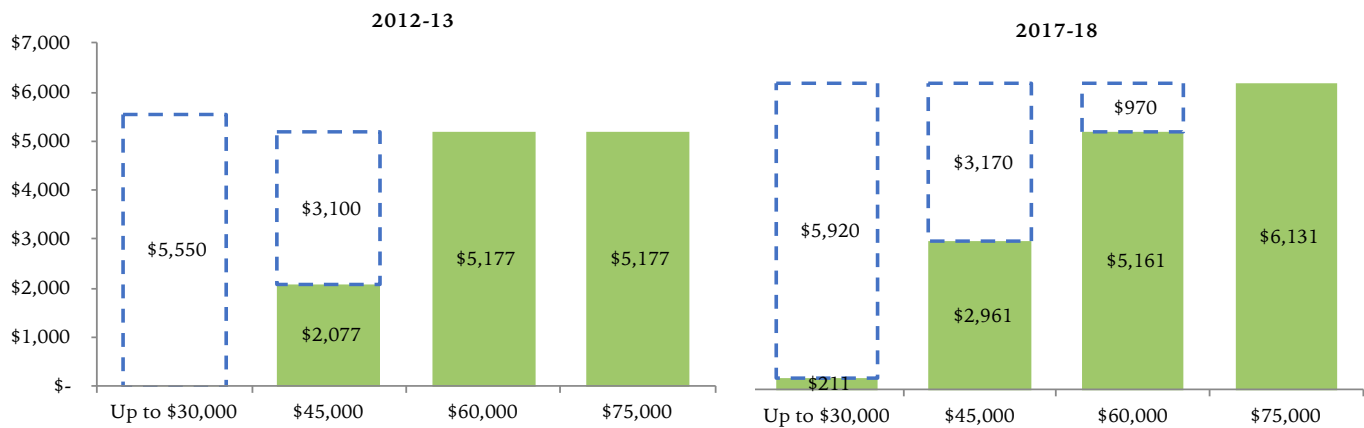
Massachusetts has the fastest rising cost of public higher education in the nation.

Bridgewater University ranks among the most expensive colleges in the U.S. for low-income students. In 2015-16, students from households with an income of \$0-\$30,000 were charged an average net price of \$15,805.

How Much Do Public Colleges Cost in Massachusetts After Financial Aid?

Published tuition and fee prices are, similar to the experience of buying a new car, only the “sticker price” and may lead students and parents to feel “sticker shock” and potentially overestimate the actual cost of higher education. In reality, few students pay the published rates. Financial aid plays a critical role in lowering the final amount students pay. The source and amount of financial aid varies significantly from student to student and from college to college, which can make predicting and tracking the cost of college difficult.

Tuition & Fees at Two-Year Institutions, Massachusetts



Tuition & Fees at Four-Year Institutions, Massachusetts



Note: Pell Grant eligibility is estimated based on a family of four with two dependent children and \$0 assets.

Source: NEBHE analysis of data from New England institutions and state systems offices, U.S. Department of Education, and U.S. Census Bureau.

Since 2012-13, increases in tuition and fees at Massachusetts’ community colleges (18.4%) and four-year public colleges (19.5%) have far outpaced increases in the maximum Pell Grant (6.25%), leaving a widening gap for low- and moderate-income students to fill with additional institutional or state aid and/or family resources.

In the 2018 State of the Commonwealth Address, Gov. Charlie Baker announced that Massachusetts will increase college scholarship funding by \$7 million so that the state’s poorest community college students with an unmet financial need can have the remaining balance of their tuition and fees fully covered.

During the 2018 legislative session, several bills aimed at tackling the rising costs of tuition and fees have been proposed. Among these proposals, the Joint Committee on Higher Education has drafted legislation (Resolve S.2469) that aims to offer tuition-, fee-, and debt-free education at Massachusetts public colleges and universities for in-state residents. The bill has been referred to the Senate Committee on Rules for review.