

Chapter VI. Education and Training Statistics: Completions, by Field of Study

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), U.S. Department of Education, collected data in fall 2006 on the number of awards, degrees, and certificates completed during 2005–06, by type of educational program and detailed field of study through the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Web-based data collection system. These data, covering the period from July 1, 2005, to June 30, 2006, are presented in table VI–1. NCES surveyed institutions of higher education that offered awards at the bachelor’s degree level and higher, institutions with 2-year programs, and public and private institutions with programs of less than 2 years. The 2000 version of the Classification of Instructional Programs was used to categorize the data.

About 3.9 million postsecondary awards and degrees were earned during the 2005–06 academic year, an increase of about 923,000, or 31 percent, from 10 years earlier. Formal degrees earned included: 737,000 associate degrees; 1.6 million bachelor’s degrees; 629,000 master’s degrees (including 22,000 postbaccalaureate certificates); 72,000 doctoral degrees (including 15,000 postmaster’s certificates); and 91,000 first professional degrees (including 1,000 first professional certificates). In addition, there were 363,000 nondegree formal awards for the completion of 1- to 4-year curricula during 2005–06, along with 379,000 awards for the completion of programs of less than 1 year. Both levels of awards saw moderate growth from 10 years earlier, with 1- to 4-year awards increasing by 13 percent and awards of less than 1 year by 21 percent. More than a third of both types of awards were earned in the field of health professions and related clinical sciences, with significant numbers also earned in personal and culinary services; mechanic and repair technologies/technicians; and business, management, marketing, and related support services.

About 737,000 associate degrees were earned during 2005–06, an increase of 31 percent from 10 years earlier. Three disciplines accounted for almost two-thirds of the degrees: liberal arts and sciences, general studies, and humanities; health professions and related clinical sciences; and business, management, marketing, and related support services. According to the middle alternative set of the most recent NCES projections, which uses a base year of 2004–05, the number of associate degrees earned is expected to grow by 9 percent through 2016–17.

Some 1,583,000 bachelor’s degrees were earned during 2005–06, up about 34 percent from 1995–96. Business, management, marketing, and related support services accounted for about 21 percent of these degrees, while social sciences contributed 9 percent and education another 7 percent. Disciplines experiencing

rapid growth over the past 10 years include computer and information sciences and support services (up about 100 percent); parks, recreation, leisure, and fitness studies (up about 85 percent); and visual and performing arts (up about 76 percent). NCES projects that the number of bachelor’s degrees earned will grow by another 26 percent from 2004–05 to 2016–17.

Master’s degrees earned totaled 606,000 in 2005–06, about 48 percent more than in 1995–96. More than half were earned in the fields of education and business, management, marketing, and related support services. These fields also accounted for the majority of gains in master’s degrees earned over the last 10 years, with education degrees increasing by 70,000 (66 percent growth) and business, management, marketing, and related support services degrees increasing by 58,000 (61 percent growth). NCES projects the number of master’s degrees earned to grow by 35 percent from 2004–05 to 2016–17. Data presented in table VI–1 include about 22,000 postbaccalaureate certificates earned in 2005–06, primarily from education programs.

The number of new doctoral degrees, 57,000, increased in 2005–06 by 27 percent from 10 years earlier. The most popular disciplines for doctoral degrees were education, engineering, health professions and related clinical sciences, and psychology, which together totaled more than half of all doctoral degrees and postmaster’s certificates earned. NCES projects the number of doctoral degrees earned to grow by 32 percent from 2004–05 to 2016–17. Data presented in table VI–1 include about 15,000 postmaster’s certificates earned in 2005–06, primarily from education programs.

The number of first professional degrees earned totaled approximately 89,000 during 2005–06, about 15 percent more than in 1995–96. Forty-nine percent were earned in legal professions and studies, 44 percent in health professions and related clinical sciences, and the remainder in theology and religious vocations. NCES projects the number of first professional degrees earned to grow by 30 percent from 2004–05 to 2016–17. Data presented in table VI–1 include about 1,000 first professional certificates earned in 2005–06, primarily from health professions and related clinical sciences programs.

Information on obtaining data on postsecondary education from NCES is available on the Internet. Visit the NCES site (<http://www.nces.ed.gov>) for the Digest of Education Statistics, IPEDS data from previous years, data from other statistical series, and more information on projections of education statistics.