

California | Economic Impact and Benefits of University of Phoenix: Graduate Trends and Performance

The education provided by University of Phoenix attracts a unique student body because it is easily accessible and available to a broad range of students who would not otherwise have access to a formal higher education. These students include minority groups, first-generation college students, persons without the means of transportation to a campus setting, and student professionals whose work schedules would render a more traditional education inconvenient if not impossible. A University of Phoenix education is convenient not only because of the myriad of campus locations – 39 in California – but also because 100 percent of the coursework may be completed online. Online courses may be attended any time of day, and technical support is available from the University 24/7.

Online v. On-campus:

- In 2008, 8,592 or 74.2 percent of students attended physical University of Phoenix campuses throughout the state, while the remaining 2,989 or 25.8 percent of students completed their degrees online.
- The number of online student graduates grew at an average annual rate of 41.1 percent between 2000 and 2008, whereas graduates of physical campus locations increased at an average annual rate of 9.1 percent.
- This trend highlights the growing demand for an online education in California, and University of Phoenix's increasing success in serving that demand.

Access and Growth:

- University of Phoenix recorded rapid and steady overall growth in graduates since 2000. As new campus locations opened and the number of online students grew, the total number of graduates increased from 4,476 students in 2000 to 11,581 students in 2008, comprising an overall annual growth rate of 12.6 percent.
- The University of Phoenix curriculum is rare in its high level of application to industry practices. Degree programs are designed to be highly transferable to on-the-job skills. One manifestation of this characteristic is the rapidly increasing number of associate's degrees awarded in recent years.
- From 2000 to 2008, associate's degrees, which historically trailed bachelor and master's degrees awarded, grew at the rate of 100.4 percent per year. Moreover, the annual growth rate in the most recent three-year period was 160.5 percent for associate's degrees. In 2008, associate's degrees represented 15.7 percent of all degrees awarded, whereas in 2000, they represented only 0.2 percent of all degrees awarded. University of Phoenix is meeting a strong demand for associate's degrees in California, successfully preparing students for the workforce by providing them with core technical skills in a particular program area, facilitating their ability to contribute to the workforce.

- From 2000 to 2008, University of Phoenix awarded 69,306 degrees in California. Of these, 63.2 percent were bachelor's degrees, 32.8 percent were master's degrees, 3.8 percent were associate's degrees, and less than 1 percent were doctoral degrees.
- During this time period, master's degrees grew at an average rate of 11.8 percent annually and bachelor's degrees grew at 9.4 percent annually.

Race and Ethnicity:

- Consistent with the University of Phoenix objective to serve a unique demographic, the historical trend shows that minority groups comprise a growing share of graduates over time, with 2007 being the first year in which minority groups outnumbered white or Caucasian graduates.
- Approximately 34.1 percent of all degrees awarded statewide between 2000 and 2008 were awarded to minority students. In the most recent year, 2008, approximately 37.0 percent of degrees awarded statewide were to minority students.
- The specific major ethnic groups with the fastest rate of growth over the nine-year period from 2000 to 2008 were Hispanic, Latino or other Spanish origin at 18.7 percent annually, followed by black or African-American at 11.6 percent annually.
- University of Phoenix in California has a more diverse student body than the University of California. From 2000 to 2008, the share of African-Americans at University of Phoenix was 11 percent compared to 3 percent in University of California schools.
- During this same time period, Hispanics comprised 12.6 percent of the graduates from University of Phoenix in California compared to 11.8 percent of the student body in University of California schools.

Academic Performance:

- The academic performance of University of Phoenix's California students may be measured against national norms utilizing the Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP), an assessment developed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS). MAPP is designed to assess students' general education outcomes in order to improve the quality of instruction and learning that takes place at a given institution or program, and to document an institution's effectiveness against other institutions for purposes of accreditation.
- In 2008, 4,967 University of Phoenix students voluntarily completed the MAPP, 430 of whom resided in California. The mean MAPP score for the University's 430 California students was 440.79, out of a maximum possible score of 500 points, which is comparable to national averages for students in institutional peer groups.