



DATA UPDATE:  
**Teacher  
Preparation  
Program Trends**  
2010-11 to 2020-21

*Jacqueline E. King, Ph.D.*

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[aacte.org](https://aacte.org)



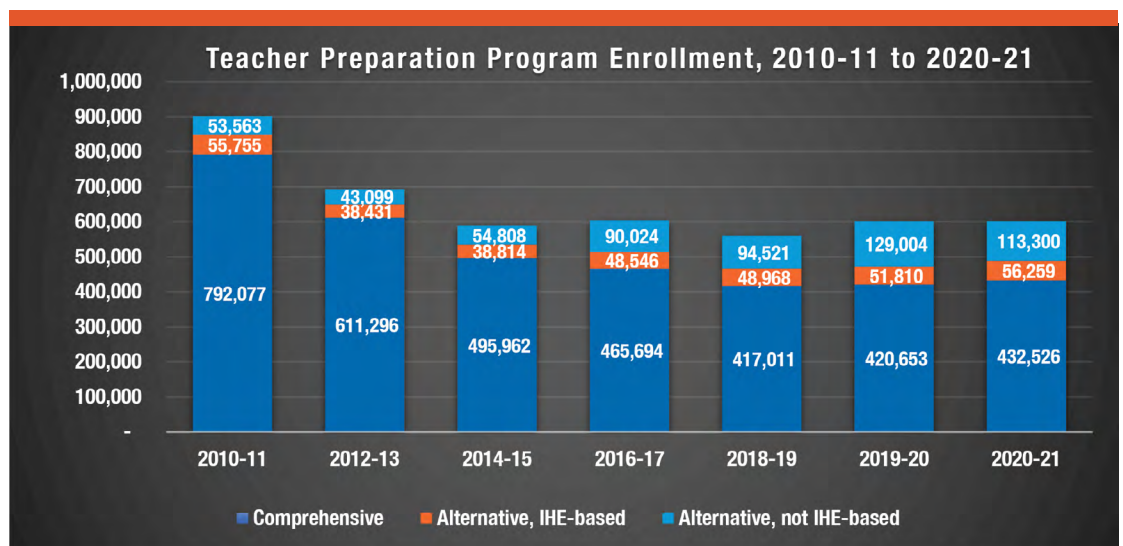


AACTE regularly summarizes the latest federal data on educator preparation programs for its members. This issue brief updates information presented in previous AACTE publications, including [Colleges of Education: A National Portrait \(Second Edition\)](#) and recent issue briefs on alternative preparation programs offered by [institutions of higher education \(IHEs\)](#) and [other organizations \(non-IHEs\)](#). This data update reports on information collected over 10 years through the U.S. Department of Education’s Title II data series on programs that prepare candidates for initial teacher licensure. A companion data update provides the latest information on all levels and types of undergraduate and graduate degree completion in the field of education from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). See the complete catalogue of recent [AACTE publications](#) for an array of reports describing the broader field of educator preparation.

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## Teacher Preparation Program Enrollment

After precipitously declining during the first half of the 2010s, total enrollment in teacher preparation programs has stabilized in recent years at approximately 600,000 teacher candidates annually. However, the distribution of that enrollment across program types has continued to shift as enrollment in non-IHE-based alternative programs has more than doubled and enrollment in IHE-based comprehensive programs has declined by 45%.



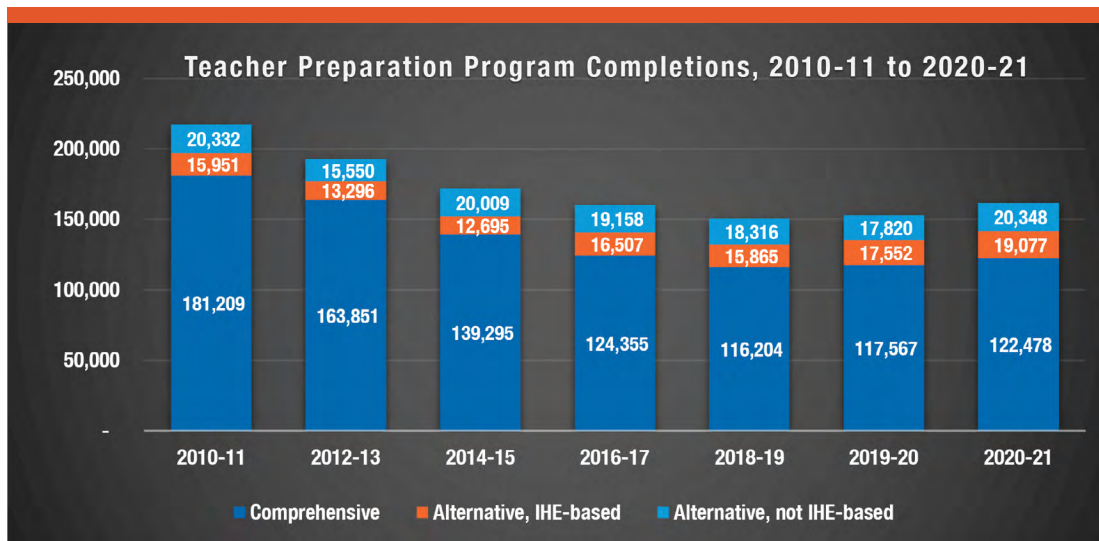
One piece of good news is that enrollment in comprehensive and IHE-based alternative programs appears to have stabilized, and even grew modestly from 2018-19 to 2020-21 despite the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. Conversely, enrollment fell during the pandemic at non-IHE-based alternative programs.





## Teacher Preparation Program Completions

Trends in program completion largely — but not completely — mimic trends in enrollment. After declining in the first part of the decade, the number of candidates completing comprehensive and IHE-based alternative programs stabilized and has grown modestly in the most recent years despite the pandemic. Notably, at comprehensive programs, the 10-year decline in completions (-32%) has not been as severe as the decline in enrollment (-45%), suggesting that these programs have improved retention. Likewise, IHE-based alternative programs have shown a 20% increase in completions with an only 1% gain in enrollment. Dramatic enrollment growth in the non-IHE alternative preparation sector notwithstanding, the number of candidates completing these programs has been stable, with no appreciable growth since 2010-11.



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## Teacher Preparation Programs

Despite the decline in enrollment, the number of teacher preparation programs has been largely stable during the decade. There has been a modest (-2%) drop in the number of comprehensive programs and growth in the number of both IHE-based (18%) and non-IHE-based (13%) alternative programs. The total number of programs of all types grew by 3% between 2010-11 and 2020-21.

The number of comprehensive teacher preparation programs has not changed significantly, but there has been a sizable shift in the size of those programs. Between 2010-11 and 2020-21, the number of comprehensive programs with fewer than 100 students rose by 64%, from 376 to 618. The number of comprehensive programs with 100 or more students declined by 25%, from 1,094 to 817. Even more concerning is the number of very small programs; nearly 200 comprehensive programs had fewer than 25 enrolled students in 2020-21, more than double the number of very small programs in 2010-11.





## Non-IHE Alternative Teacher Preparation Programs

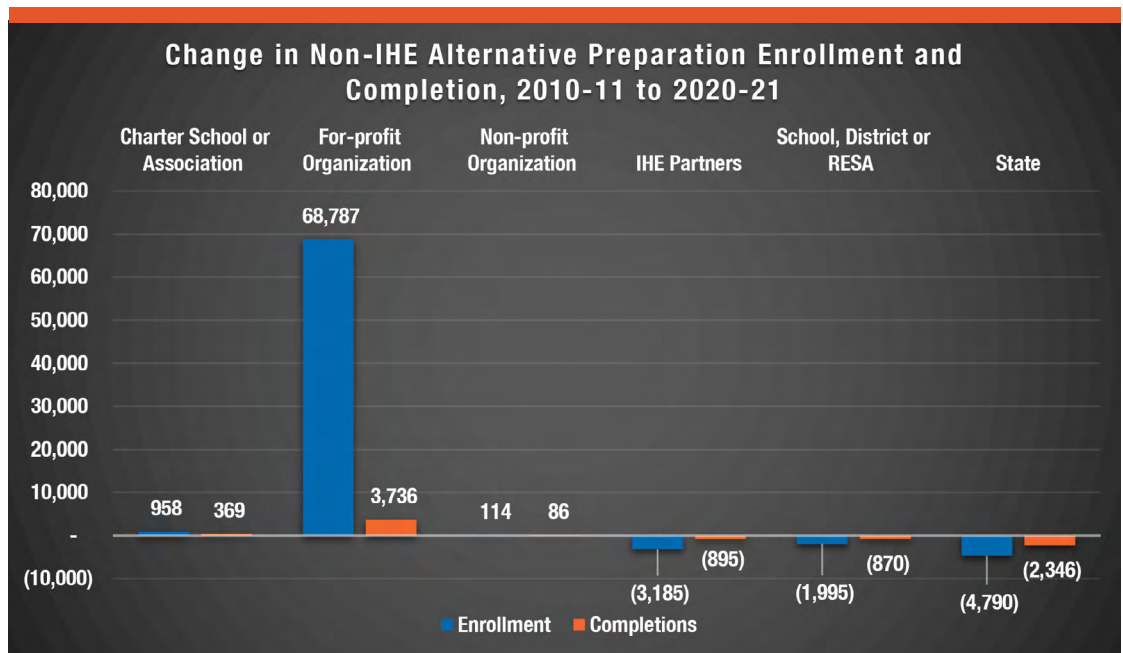
In addition to monitoring trends in teacher preparation that occurs at colleges and universities, AACTE tracks the non-IHE alternative preparation sector. For a complete review, see [Trends in the Alternative Teacher Certification Sector Outside Higher Education](#). This issue brief updates some of the information provided in that report.

Several types of non-IHE organizations sponsor alternative teacher preparation programs, including the following:

- local and national non-profit organizations
- for-profit companies
- schools, school districts, and regional education service agencies (RESAs)
- state education agencies
- charter schools or associations

The U.S. Department of Education also includes in the non-IHE category a small number of partnerships between IHEs (primarily community colleges) and school districts.

During the last decade, most types of non-IHE alternative programs have either seen enrollment and completions decline or grow modestly. For-profit companies are the notable exception, with enrollment growth of nearly 69,000 students, or more than 400%, between 2010-11 and 2020-21. Completions from for-profit providers have not kept pace with this explosive growth, rising by 3,700 students or 57%. This increase was offset by fewer completions at other types of non-IHE programs, resulting in no net increase in completions over the decade for the non-IHE sector as a whole.



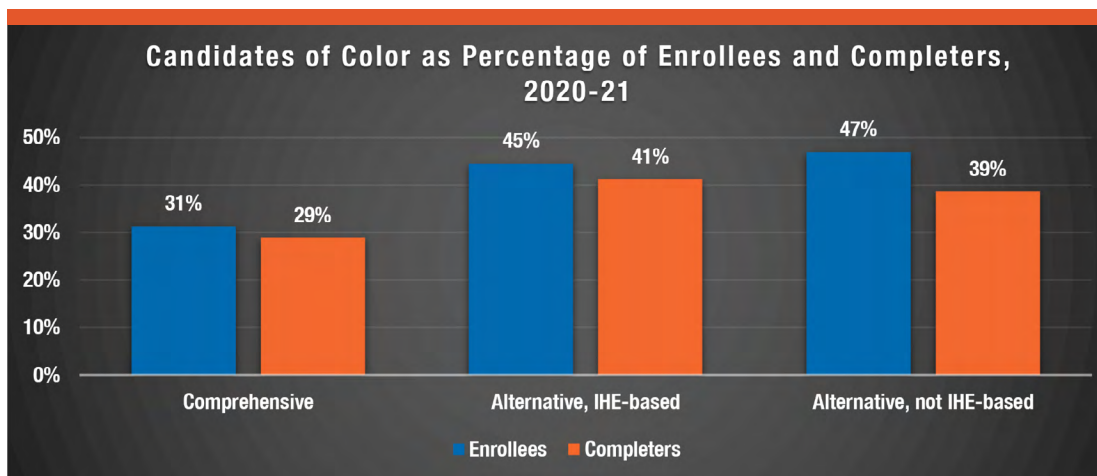
## Teacher Candidate Characteristics

Because of changes in the Title II data collection that took effect in 2018-19, it is not possible to directly compare the demographic characteristics of teacher candidates in 2020-21 to pre-2018 cohorts. Instead, this issue brief focuses on candidate characteristics in 2020-21 only.

The Title II data collection includes information on the gender and race/ethnicity of teacher preparation program enrollees and completers. In 2020-21, 75% of enrollees and 77% of completers were female; 23% of enrollees and 22% of completers were male. The remaining candidates either did not report their gender or reported “other.”

As described in other AACTE publications, teacher candidates are not as diverse in terms of race and ethnicity as the PK-12 students they will serve. Almost two-thirds (65%) of teacher preparation program enrollees were white in 2020-21, as were 69% of those who completed programs in that year. Among enrollees, Latino/a candidates made up the next largest group at 17%, followed by African Americans (11%), Asian/Pacific Islanders (4%), multiracial candidates (3%), and Native Americans (1%). Among completers, the share who were Latino/a and African American dropped to 15% and 8%, respectively.

Alternative programs, whether run by IHEs or other organizations, attract a more diverse group of candidates than comprehensive programs. Candidates of color make up 40% or more of enrollees and completers at alternative programs, compared with approximately 30% at comprehensive programs. However, these results should be interpreted with caution because 25% of enrollees at non-IHE-based alternative programs do not report their race or ethnicity. The percentages reported here exclude those candidates. At comprehensive and IHE-based alternative programs, 7% of candidates did not report their race or ethnicity.



Among students of color, enrollment patterns vary. African American candidates are most likely to choose alternative programs; almost half (48%) enroll in alternative programs, with 32% choosing non-IHE-based programs. Native American candidates are the least likely to choose alternative programs at 18%. Overall, 28% of candidates choose alternative programs. Notably, the number of Latino/a candidates enrolled in comprehensive programs (63,555) was more than double the number of African American candidates (30,608).







## Summary

This data update includes some good news regarding enrollment and completions at comprehensive and IHE-based alternative teacher preparation programs. During the last several years, enrollment and completions have stabilized, and even grew modestly during the pandemic.

Enrollment at non-IHE alternative programs has grown much more rapidly, driven by a significant increase in enrollment at for-profit non-IHE alternative providers. However, the enrollment increase in these programs has not resulted in more teachers prepared for initial licensure.

Progress on diversifying the pool of individuals entering the teaching profession is mixed. In 2020-21, 35% of all teacher preparation program enrollees and 31% of program completers were students of color. Among teacher candidates of color, Latino/a individuals are the largest sub-group at 15% of total enrollees. Enrollees at alternative programs are more diverse than at comprehensive programs, with African American candidates particularly inclined to choose these programs; however, these programs have not shown an increase in completions during the last decade.

