



Who Should Read

Cabinet Leaders

Future-Focused Scenario Planning Workshop

Craft bold, market-informed strategy based on a multiplicity of potential futures

Community College Executive Forum

3 Ways to Use This Resource

- Exercise strategic thinking muscles
- Align college strategy with the needs and challenges of tomorrow
- Create institutional strategy that is responsive to market forces

Facilitator's Guide

Exercise Summary: Immerse participants in a future scenario that looks dramatically different than the present. Then, have participants work together to craft a strategic enrollment management strategy that allows them to be successful in the imagined future world.

Exercise Time: One hour, including share out

Exercise Goal: To force participants to think about a future state that is radically different from the present, and craft an enrollment strategy that allows them to be successful in that future world.

Learning Outcomes: By the end of the exercise, participants should be able to:

- Visualize and imagine a dramatically different future world and articulate the impact on their institutions
- Outline an approach for how to remain solvent (in terms of enrollments) in such a disruptive environment
- Understand the value of strategic enrollment management planning, and have a strong sense for why it's important to consider a multiplicity of future and external states when crafting enrollment plans

Role of the Facilitator: Introduce and describe each section to the participants:

- Scenario: This is a projection of what a possible future may look like. It includes hypothetical data, trends, and predictions around a single narrative. Participants should treat all of this information as guaranteed, and use it to generate additional predictions/consequences based off of the scenario (~15 minutes).
- Scenario Implications: This is where participants should record what other predictions/assumptions/consequences they believe will arise from the proposed scenario. Participants should think about how various political, social, economic, regional, and behavioral patterns may look different in this future world (~10 minutes).
- Strategic Enrollment Management Planning: This is where participants answer the broad question of "so what do we do?" Participants should use these questions as a jumping off point for brainstorming and recording ideas for how to remain solvent and successful in the future world. Participants' ideas and strategies should all be directly tied to the scenario and participants should be prepared to defend their ideas in the context of the scenario (~15 minutes).
- Strategy Share Out: Groups will nominate a single spokesperson to share the answers to questions 1-3 (on the last page) with the larger group (~20 minutes)

Help participants engage with the scenario presented, and quell any initial objections to the likelihood or plausibility of the scenario.

Encourage participants to think creatively about how they might create strategy for such a dramatically different (and potentially risky) world. Encourage participants to abandon current constraints/status quo practices and brainstorm ne-in-kind ideas or solutions.

Challenge assumptions or statements that reflect the belief that the future world/institution will work similarly as the current one (e.g., encourage participants to think about how systems such as shared governance may have changed in light of future events).

Do's and Don'ts:

- **Do keep track of time.** Suggested activity times are located at the top of each page, but it is your responsibility to move participants along
- **Do** encourage participants to be as creative as possible with their ideas or strategies, and then work backwards (toward realism) from there. Promote a "nothing is off the table" approach
- **Do** advise participants to think beyond the specific data presented to think about other potential consequences of the future scenario
- **Do** encourage group members to adopt a single institutional persona (e.g., a rural college in the Midwest) to answer the strategic enrollment management questions
- **Do** look out for disengagement with the scenario or rejection of the activity based on personal aversion to the scenario presented
- **Do** make sure that the conversations/responses to the SEM planning questions explicitly reference the scenario and outline specific strategies or initiatives that address the future realities

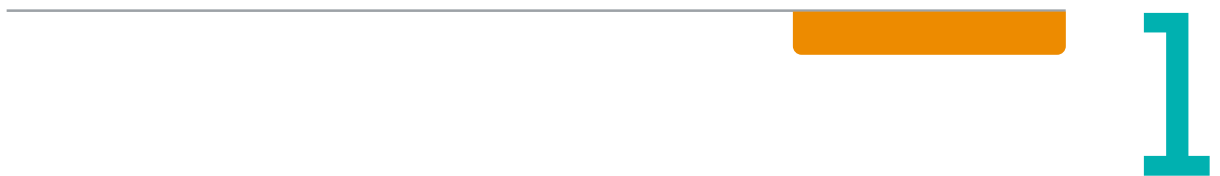
Facilitator's Guide (continued)

Do's and Don'ts Continued:

- **Do** play the role of the helpful skeptic when participants are crafting their enrollment plans. Bring up possible obstacles that could arise in the future scenario
- **Do** encourage participants to think about the world outside of higher ed when crafting their enrollment strategies. How does this scenario affect/interact with the broader economy, society, and political environment?
- **Don't** answer questions about further data/information. Instruct participants to rely on what is provided, and make assumptions or educated guesses about what is not provided
- **Don't** allow participants' uncertainty about the likelihood of future events (e.g., what will the political environment look like?) prevent them from making decisions. If it comes down to it, force participants to make a "best guess" about what the world will look like, and base their decisions off of that



Scenario #1: The Demographic Cliff



Scenario: The Demographic Cliff

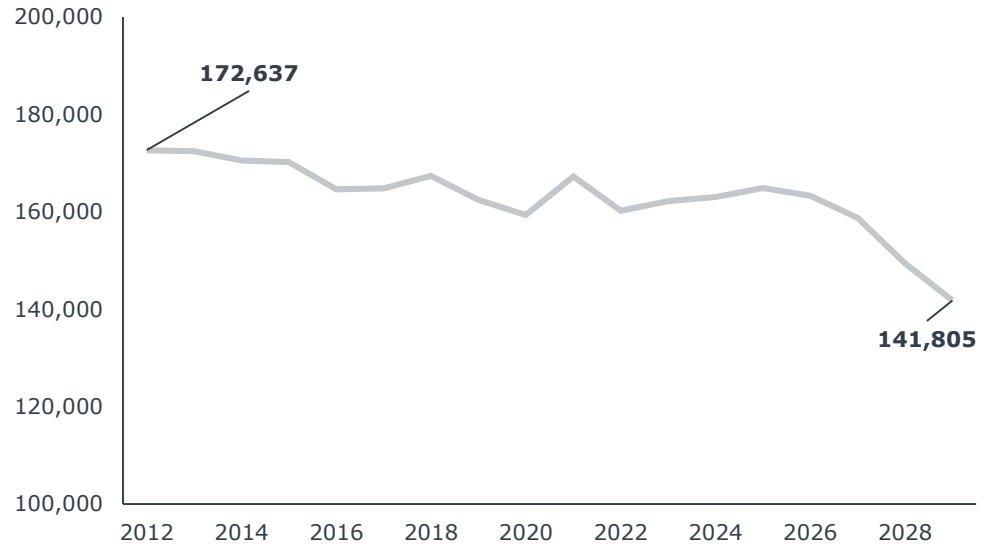
Scenario in Brief:

In contrast to the predictions of some economists, the U.S. economy remains strong throughout the 2020's and is able to avoid any serious downturn. As a result, unemployment hovers around 4%, and adults eschew higher education in favor of the workforce. This trend, combined with the forecasted drop-off in high school graduates has a significant negative impact on community college enrollments.

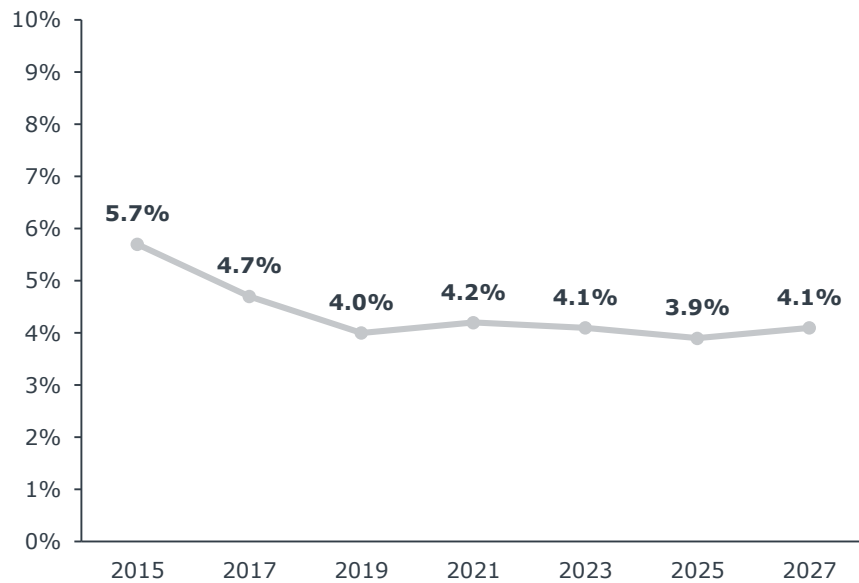
At the same time, states continue to advocate for the expansion of dual and concurrent enrollment programs. Continuing a trend seen at the end of the 2010's, dual enrolled students represent the most reliable enrollment pipeline for most community colleges.

However, four-year colleges facing similar demographic challenges dramatically expand their marketing efforts, specifically targeting dual-enrolled high schoolers. Thus, while the proportion of high school students enrolled at two-year colleges rises across the 2020's, the rate at which they matriculate to two-year schools declines, placing community colleges in a near no-win situation. An urgent ongoing challenge that remains is how to cultivate existing enrollment streams to provide long-term financial sustainability.

High School Graduate Population Projected to Attend Community College
Higher Education Demand Index (HEDI), Regional Outlook



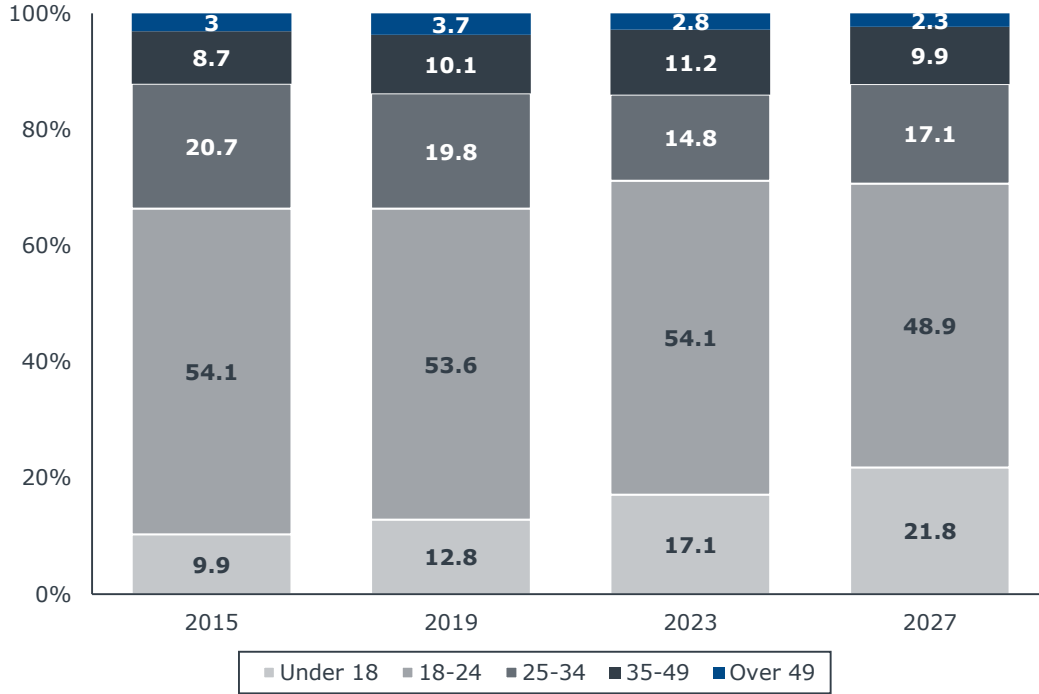
National Unemployment Rate
EAB Projections, 2015-2027



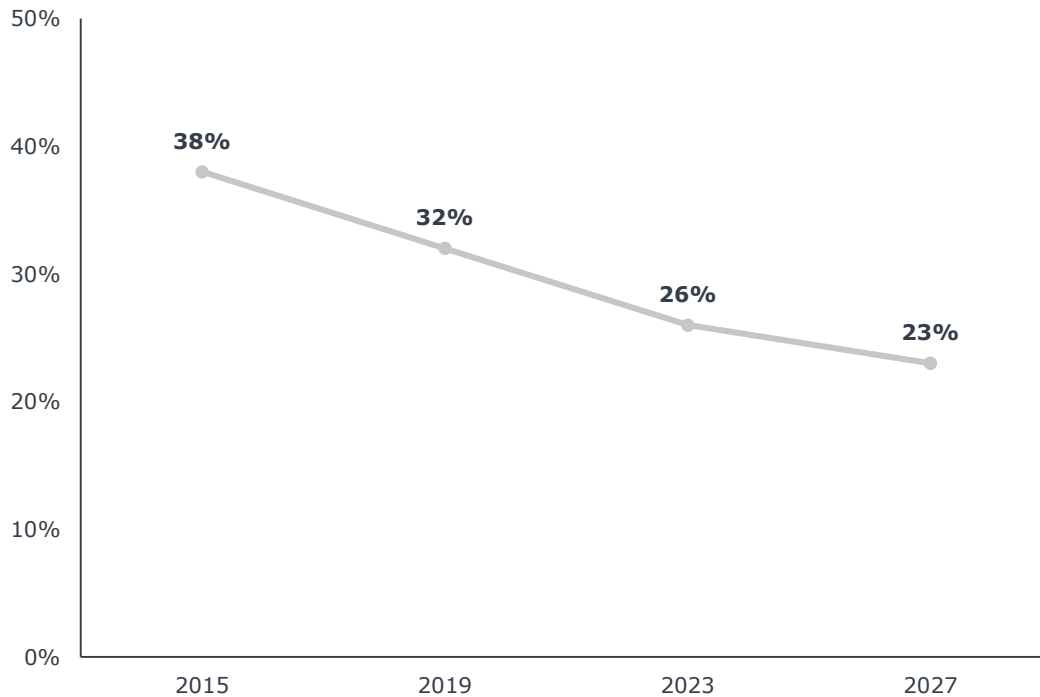
Source: Grawe, *Demographics and the Demand for Higher Education*, 2018, EAB interviews and analysis.

Scenario: The Demographic Cliff

Age of Students Attending Two-Year Colleges
EAB Projections, 2015-2027



Proportion of Dual Enrolled Students Who Matriculate to Community College
EAB Projections, 2015-2027



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, EAB interviews and analysis.

1. Scenario Implications for Community Colleges

First, establish a profile for your group’s hypothetical institution (e.g., a rural, technical college with approximately 5,000 FTE):

Below are the implications of the proposed scenario, as reflected in the data and information presented. Beneath these, list out the future predictions/assumptions you’ve made about what this future world looks like. Consider the educational, economic, social, and political environments in which this scenario would be a reality.

- 1 Enrollments at public two-year institutions decline rapidly in the second half of the 2020’s, due to the low birthrates during the Great Recession
- 2 The national economy remains strong, and unemployment rates are sustained at a very low level
- 3 As adults choose the workforce over higher education, community colleges are forced to rely on a larger proportion of dual enrolled students, at a lower return
- 4 To offset their own enrollment declines, four-year colleges increase their marketing efforts targeted at dual enrolled high schoolers, resulting in decreasing matriculation rates at community colleges

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2. Strategic Enrollment Management Planning

As a group, use the implications, as well as the data presented to answer the questions below regarding your institution's enrollment strategy.

1 What markets will we prioritize as new recruits? Consider factors such as age, location, demographics, and work experience.

2 What enrollment-related partnership will we prioritize, and what will be the structure of that relationship?

K/12

Higher Ed

Industry/Employer

Other: _____

3 What must change about our current approach?

4 What is the value proposition of our institution in the future scenario?

3. Strategy Share Out

Nominate a spokesperson for your group to briefly share the answers to the below questions with the larger group.

1 In a few sentences, what is our enrollment strategy given the aforementioned scenario? What must we do as an institution to ensure our sustainability in this future world?

2 What is one decision or action that will have to be done differently to be successful in this future scenario?

3 What did we as a team have to do in order to successfully complete this exercise (e.g., approach a problem differently)?



Scenario #2: Free Public Higher Education



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Scenario: Free Public Higher Education

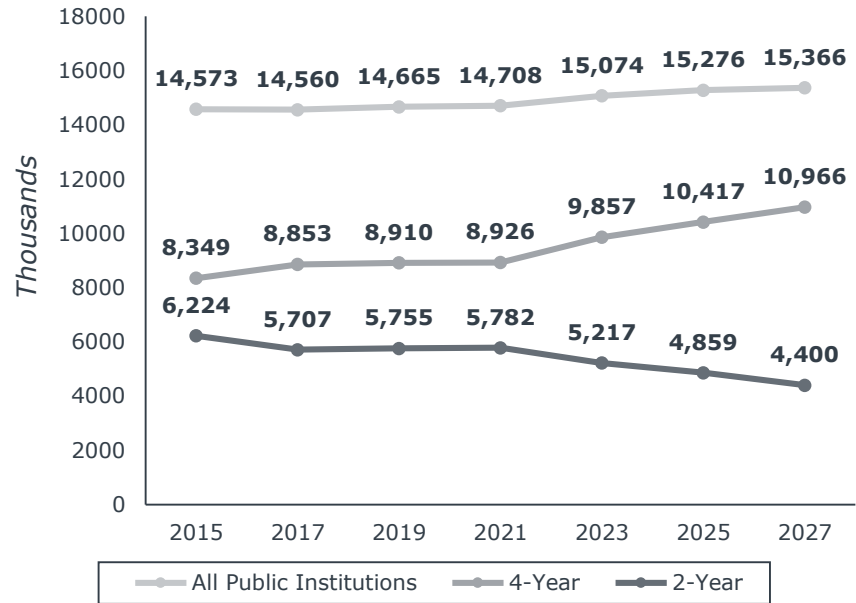
The Scenario in Brief:

Spurred by a progressive wave in the 2020 presidential election, in 2022 the federal government adopts a plan to eliminate the costs of tuition and fees at all two- and four-year public colleges (up to six years per student).

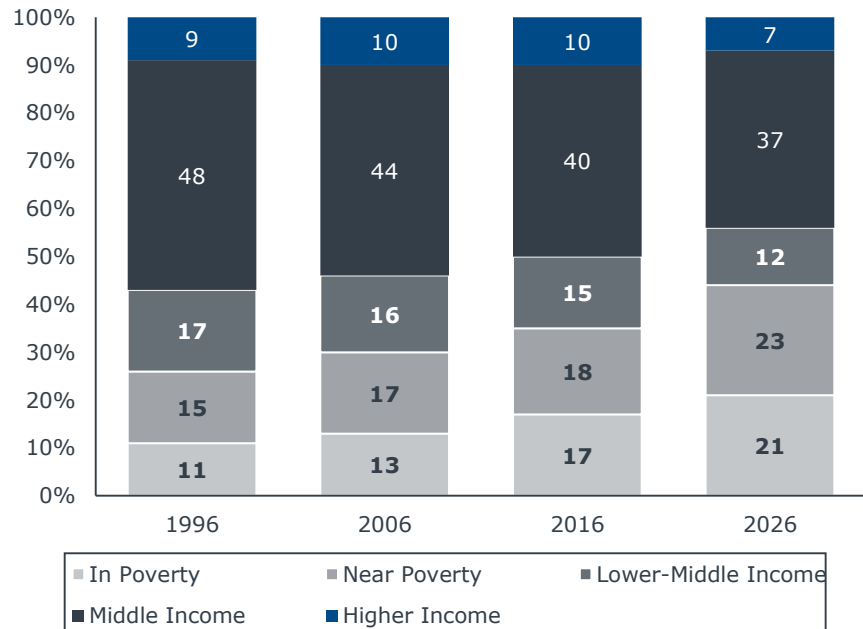
The program, funded by dramatic changes in tax policy, is extremely popular in its first year, resulting in a dramatic increase in students attending public higher education institutions. However, nearly all of this growth is consolidated in the four-year sector, as universities attract students who may have previously attended a two-year college because of affordability. In many regions (e.g., New England), public four-year institutions also lower their admissions standards in order to combat the steep regional demographic declines.

The share of low-income and academically underprepared students at public four-year institutions increases substantially, placing a strain on the social and academic services offered at these institutions. An urgent and ongoing challenge that remains is ensuring that with expanded access to higher education comes expanded opportunities for success.

National Enrollment in Public Higher Education Institutions
EAB Projections, 2015-2027



Economic Profile of Students Attending Four-Year Public Colleges
EAB Projections, 1996-2026

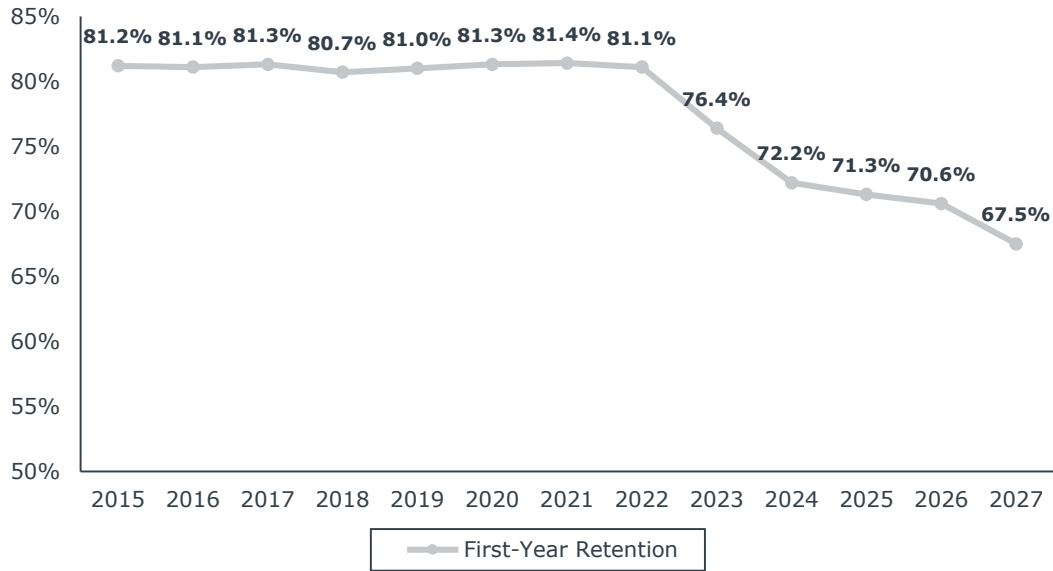


Source: National Center for Education Statistics; Pew Research Center; EAB interviews and analysis.

Scenario: Free Public Higher Education (cont'd)

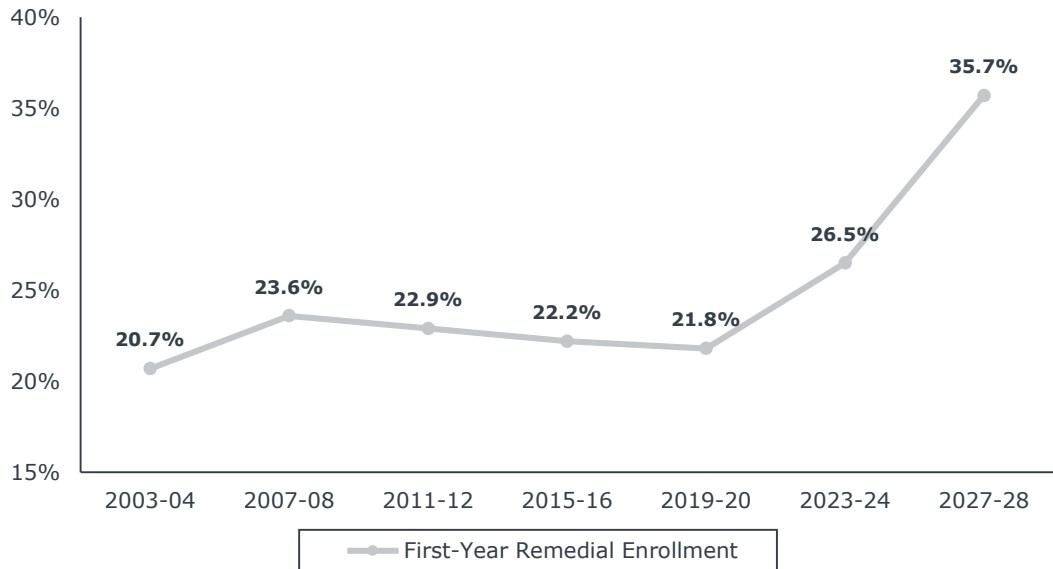
First-Year Retention Rates at Four-Year Public Institutions

EAB Projections, 2015-2027



First-Year Remediation Rates at Four-Year Public Institutions

EAB Projections, 2003-2027



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, EAB interviews and analysis.

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- 1 Enrollments at public two-year institutions decline rapidly after implementation of a national free public college law
- 2 Public four-year colleges serve a much more economically diverse—and low-income—population than in the past
- 3 First-year retention at public four-years dramatically declines after “free college” implemented
- 4 In order to offset the effects of demographic declines, four-year publics also lower their admissions standards. As a result, they see a sharp rise in academically underprepared students at their institutions

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Scenario #3: The Next Great[er] Recession



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Scenario: The Next Great[er] Recession

The Scenario in Brief:

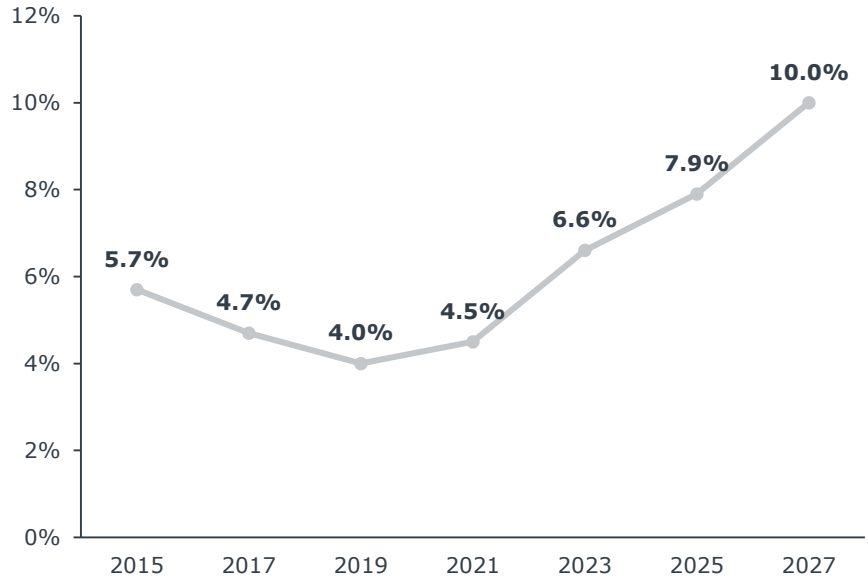
Escalating trade tensions and global market instability come to a head in the early 2020's, plunging the globe into its second economic recession in 15 years. Unemployment rates in the U.S. skyrocket to double digits by the end of the decade, a sign of the instability.

As in 2009, community colleges receive an enrollment boost during the downturn, as unemployed adults return to higher education in order to improve their job prospects. Two-year enrollments grow by nearly 1.5 million during the 2020s, which almost entirely offsets the predicted loss of 18-year-old college-going students.

While the surge of adult enrollments brings immediate relief to the cash-strapped two-year sector, colleges find themselves serving an increasingly low-income student population. The proportion of students financially eligible for federal Pell grants hovers near 50% by the end of the decade, a figure that federal lawmakers and economists view as simply unsustainable. As the recession shows no signs of abating as 2030 looms, federal lawmakers consider dramatic austerity measures, including suspending all federal financial aid. An urgent and ongoing challenge for two-year colleges is how to meet the needs of their students and their institutions in a bleak economic environment.

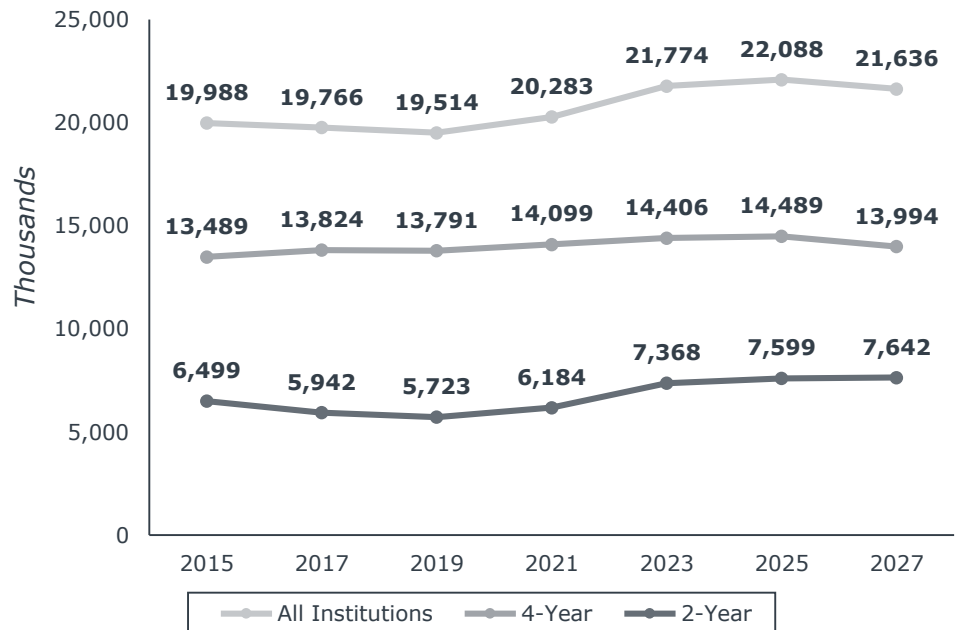
National Unemployment Rate

EAB Projections, 2015-2027



National Enrollment in Higher Education Institutions

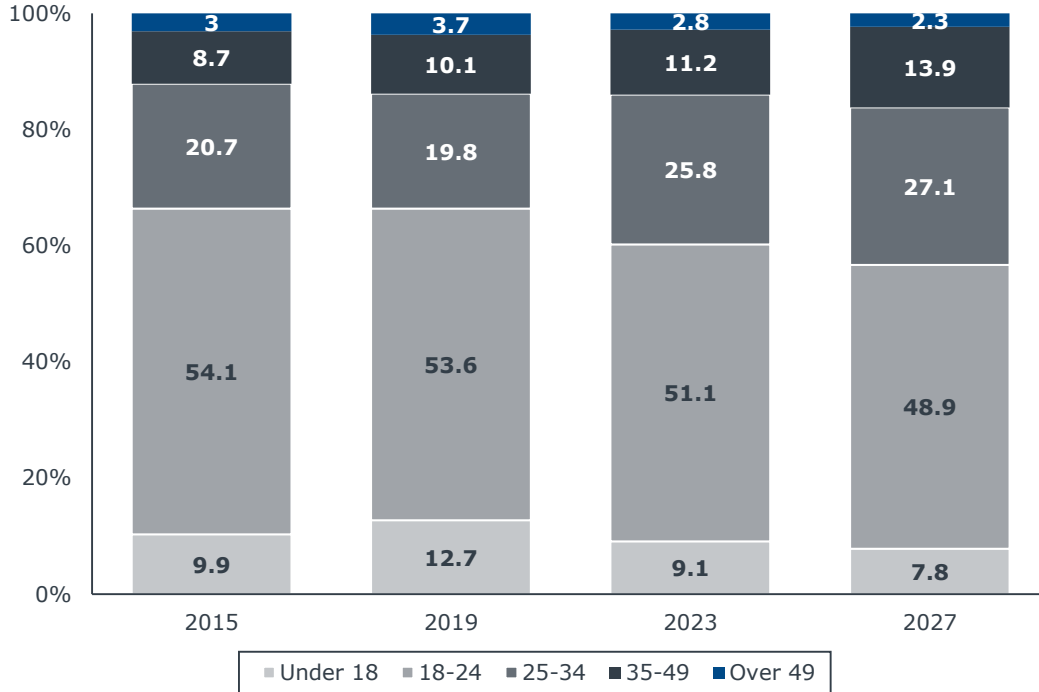
EAB Projections, 2015-2027



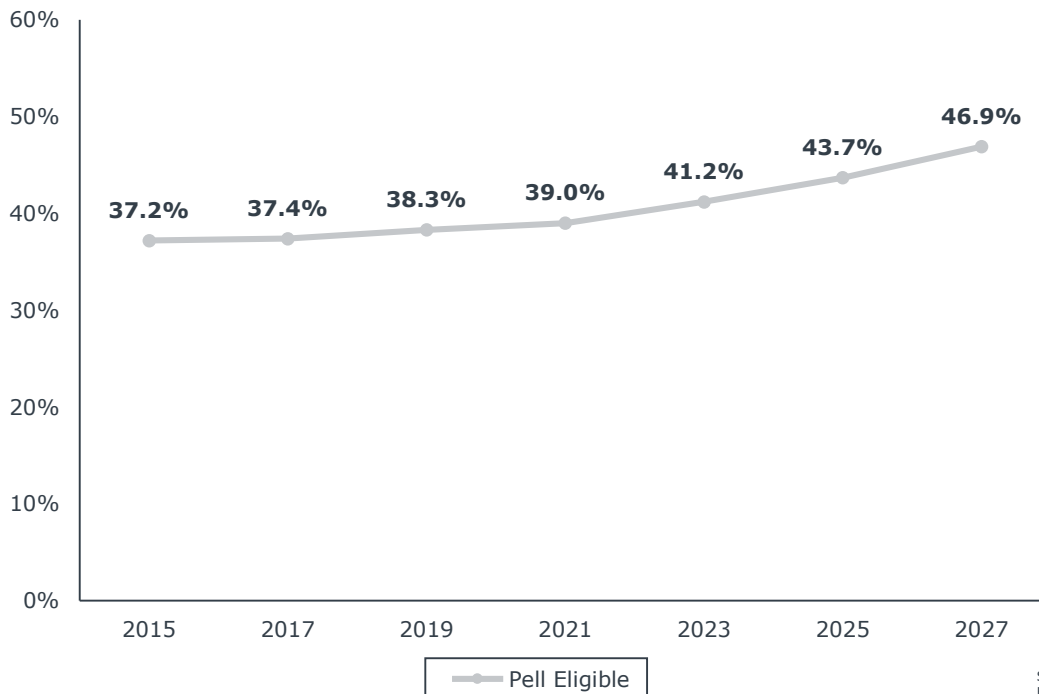
Source: National Center for Education Statistics, EAB interviews and analysis.

Scenario: The Next Great[er] Recession (cont'd)

Age of Students Attending Two-Year Colleges
EAB Projections, 2015-2027



Share of Two-Year College Students Who Are Pell-Eligible
EAB Projections, 2015-2027



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, EAB interviews and analysis.

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- 1 National unemployment rates will dramatically increase as part of an economic recession, beginning in 2020
- 2 Community college enrollments will increase, as unemployed workers return to college to gain new skills and credentials
- 3 The proportion of older (25 and up) students will rise, eventually representing over half of community college students by 2029
- 4 As a result of the economic crisis, the share of students who meet the financial requirement for Pell eligibility also rises, raising concerns about the sustainability of federal funding

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