

TCSG Enrollment Trends from 2018-2023

by Jacob Dallas Main | March 2024

This report highlights the increase in enrollment at the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) since the conclusion of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the challenges presented by the global health crisis, TCSG colleges demonstrated resilience and adaptability, and have all but recovered from the enrollment declines that followed the pandemic.

College enrollment across the US took a significant hit in the first year of the pandemic. Undergraduate enrollment declined 4% between the spring and fall of 2020, with a striking 16.1% decline in first-year enrollment in the same period.[1] This number was even more striking at community colleges, which saw overall enrollment drop by 9.4% and first-year enrollment drop by 22.7% during this same time period.[2]

Overall college enrollment fell 2.4% from 2020-2021, another 3.1% from 2021-2022, and .5% from 2022-2023. In this same period of 2021-2022, community colleges averaged a decline of 10.1% from 2020-2021, 8.2% from 2021-2022, and had a .5% rebound from 2022-2023.[3]

TCSG colleges faced similar enrollment challenges, although of a lesser magnitude. Enrollment increased from academic year (AY) 2018-2020, rising from 137,208 to 143,750 students, but enrollment fell off sharply in AY 2021, dropping to 133,144—a decline of more than 7% over the course of the year, and of 5.68% from the spring to fall of 2020.[4] While this represents a significant reduction, it is a smaller decline than the aforementioned average

community college enrollment drop (-9.4%). [5] TCSG colleges experienced another, albeit much smaller, decline in AY 2022 as enrollment dropped by roughly 1.5% to 131,158 students.

The downward trend began to reverse course in the fall of 2022, when enrollment was more than 2% higher than fall of 2021. This trend continued in the spring and summer of 2023, when enrollment rose from 86,700 to 90,096 and 43,849 to 45,580 respectively. In short, the Technical College System of Georgia reported an enrollment increase of 3.75% in AY 2023.

[5] See footnote 1.



[1] [Fall 2020 Undergraduate Enrollment Down 4% Compared to Same Time Last Year - National Student Clearinghouse](#)

[2] TCSG administrative data

[3] [Current Term Enrollment Estimates | National Student Clearinghouse Research Center \(nscresearchcenter.org\)](#)

[4] TCSG enrollment reports can be accessed here: <https://www.tcsg.edu/about-tcsg/system-office-services/data-research/enrollment-graduates/>. TCSG's academic year runs from fall to summer. For example, AY2023 runs from fall 2022 through summer 2023.



Nursing enrollment also increased from AY 2020 to 2021, then declined the following year before experiencing another jump. Meanwhile programs like Aviation followed the overall patterns of decline year-to-year but began to recover in AY 2023.[7]

While overall TCSG is still below pre-pandemic levels of enrollment, it's worth noting TCSG's enrollment recovery over the last year represents an improvement over the national trend. Undergraduate enrollment in 2023 is still down by nearly 1.2 million students nationwide, with average national enrollment slipping by 0.5% again year over year in the spring of 2023.[8] TCSG, on the other hand, saw its enrollment increase by 3.75% over the 2023 academic year, with preliminary data trending toward continued enrollment growth in Fall Term AY 2024.

The Technical College System of Georgia was able to resist and offset pandemic enrollment declines through a robust and adaptable series of mitigation measures. The state of Georgia re-opened for business and lifted pandemic restrictions sooner than many other states, and TCSG colleges returned to face-to-face classes (albeit with strict social distancing protocols) quickly. In addition, TCSG used the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funds strategically to grow capacity for high-demand programs in concert with a concentrated enrollment push after the first year of the pandemic.

Program Highlights

While enrollment fell across the board with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, some programs of study were impacted more dramatically than others and some experienced a swifter recovery. Several high-demand programs, such as welding and CDL, have more students enrolled now than before the pandemic. For example, enrollment in TCSG Advanced Manufacturing programs declined during the early stages of the pandemic from AY 2020 to AY 2021 but has since grown. Welding programs had an even stronger rebound, declining only slightly in the early stages of the pandemic before growing to numbers larger than those prior to the pandemic. Commercial truck driving programs increased in enrollment in 2020 and 2021.

[6] [Enrollment & Graduates - TCSG | Technical College System of Georgia and Current Term Enrollment Estimates | National Student Clearinghouse Research Center \(nscresearchcenter.org\)](#). TCSG's academic year runs from fall to summer. The national averages use an academic year that runs from summer to spring. Regardless of these differences, TCSG is outpacing the national averages

[7] [Data and Research - TCSG | Technical College System of Georgia and TES0350](#)

[8] [Undergraduate losses slow -- but enrollment is still well below pre-COVID levels | Higher Ed Dive](#)

