

## Overview: Distance Education and Workforce Development Reports

NC-SARA contracted with the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) to create a new Distance Education and Workforce Development Report for each SARA member state. The goal for these reports is to better help states identify how distance education can be used to meet workforce needs, as well as to identify gaps in state offerings.

These reports incorporate [NC-SARA data](#) on exclusively distance education enrollment and out-of-state learning placement activity, data from IPEDS on distance education programs offered, state educational attainment measures, and workforce development data provided by Lightcast (formerly Emsi Burning Glass). For questions about this report please contact NC-SARA at [data@nc-sara.org](mailto:data@nc-sara.org).

Please note that states may report figures other than those included in this report due to differing methodologies; please refer to the higher education system or state higher education agency for more information.

### Definition of Terms:

**Distance Education:** Education that uses one or more types of technology to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor synchronously or asynchronously.

**Distance Education Program:** A program for which all the required coursework for program completion can be completed entirely via distance education courses.

**Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment (EDEE):** Students who are solely taking coursework via distance education.

**Out-of-State Learning Placement (OOSLP):** Supervised field experiences such as, but not limited to, clinical rotations, internships, or student teaching, offered by SARA-participating institutions in locations outside their home state.

### About NC-SARA

The National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) is a nonprofit organization that helps expand students' access to educational opportunities and ensure more efficient, consistent, and effective regulation of distance learning programs.

Today, more than 2,400 institutions participate SARA across 49 member states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands all voluntarily participate in SARA.

### About NCHEMS

The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) is a private nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to improve strategic decision making in postsecondary education for states and institutions in the United States and abroad. Its work has touched on topics across a wide spectrum of public policy: strategic planning to finance and resource allocation to the development of new educational delivery models. Throughout its more than 50 years, NCHEMS has been a resource for turning data into usable knowledge for leaders and policymakers at all levels.

# Puerto Rico

## Distance Education and Workforce Development

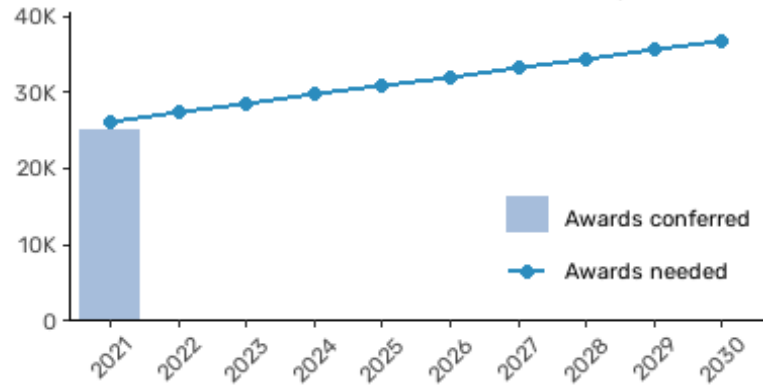
### Educational Attainment and the Workforce

Puerto Rico has not defined a specific educational attainment goal. In order for 60% of Puerto Rico's population aged 25 to 64 to possess at least an Associate's degree by 2030, awards from Puerto Rico institutions will need to increase by 4.0% annually.

The industries projected to be Puerto Rico's largest overall in 2030 are Retail Trade, Government, and Health Care and Social Assistance, and the ones projected to grow by the largest percentage are Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, Accommodation and Food Services, and Construction.

This document summarizes how distance education may contribute to meeting Puerto Rico's workforce needs.

**Award Production Needed to Meet Puerto Rico's Attainment Goal by 2030**



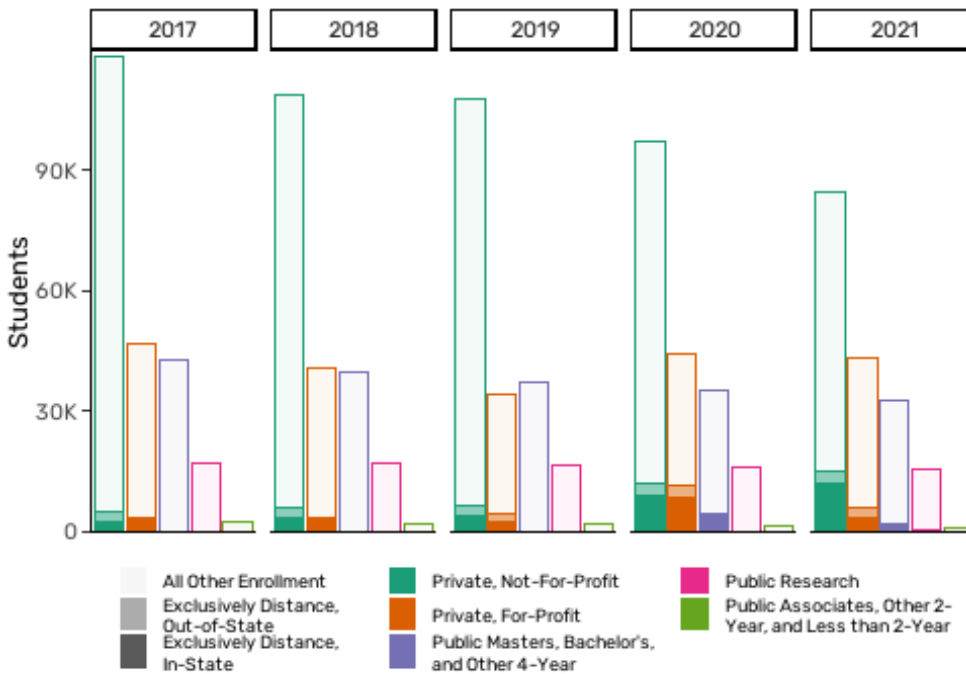
Sources: IPEDS, U.S. Census Bureau, Lumina Foundation, Georgetown Center for Education and the Workforce

### College Enrollment and Distance Education

How much exclusively distance education enrollment is taking place at Puerto Rico colleges and universities?

#### Puerto Rico Enrollment by Fall Term

Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment vs. Total Enrollment



In line with nationwide trends, overall college and university enrollment in Puerto Rico has declined; there were 51,067 fewer students in Fall 2021 compared to Fall 2017. The number of students attending exclusively via distance education, however, grew from 8,615 (4% of enrollment) in Fall 2017 to 11,469 (6% of enrollment) in Fall 2019. The pandemic accelerated this trend, and Fall 2021 exclusively distance education enrollment was 23,190 (13% of enrollment). Of those attending exclusively via distance education in Fall 2021, 76% were in-state students from Puerto Rico. This represents an increase from 2019, when the percentage was 55%.

In Fall 2021, the sector with the highest percentage of exclusively distance education students was Private, Not-For-Profit, while Public Research was lowest.

Source: IPEDS

When reading the chart above, note that the darker bands represent exclusively distance education enrollments.

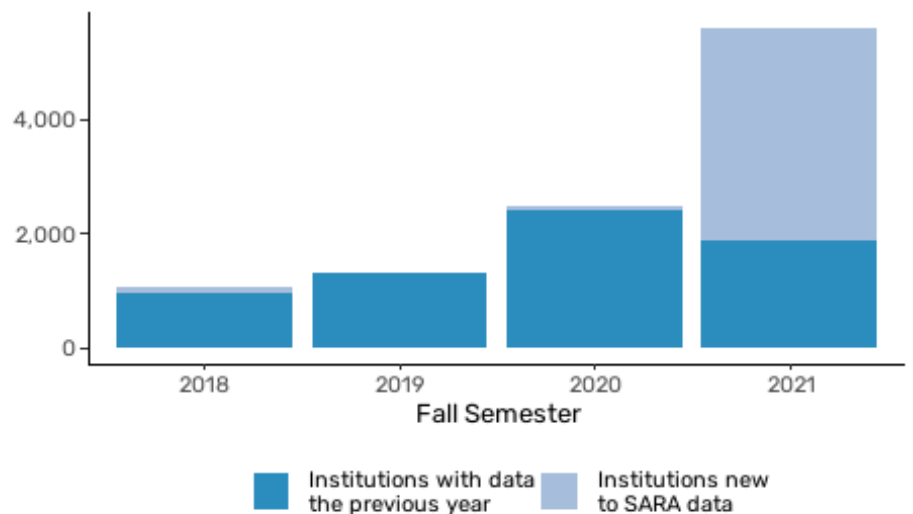
## How many Puerto Rico students are studying via distance education at out-of-state institutions?

The number of students from Puerto Rico who study at out-of-state institutions exclusively via distance education has also increased over time.

According to NC-SARA data, in Fall 2018, 1,071 Puerto Rico students were attending out-of-state institutions exclusively via distance education. In 2021, that number was 5,578, which was an increase of 421% over three years.

The NC-SARA data represents enrollments at over 2,300 institutions, or 67% of all postsecondary institutions that offer distance education. In the chart to the right, the light blue areas represent enrollments at institutions new to SARA participation – so any change is because of their inclusion, not an increase in students.

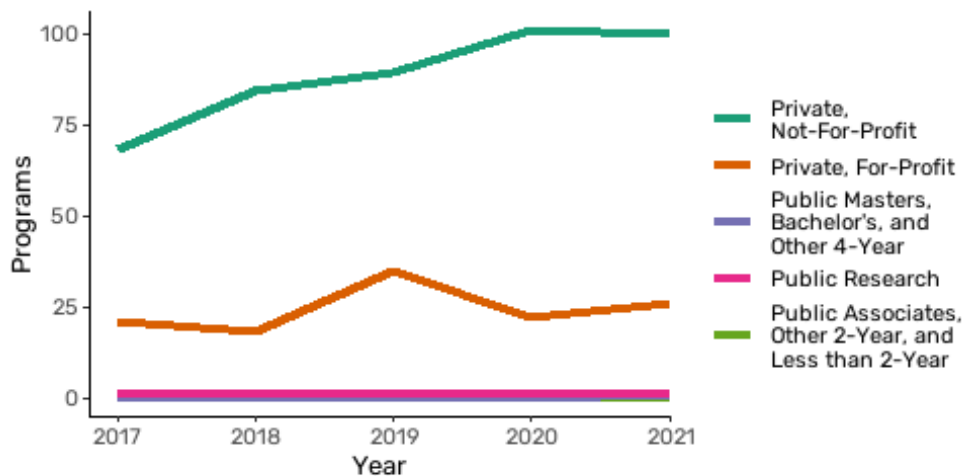
### Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment Puerto Rico Students at Non-Puerto Rico Institutions



Source: NC-SARA

## What are the distance education offerings from Puerto Rico institutions?

### Distance Education Programs at Puerto Rico Institutions Over Time For All Program Levels, by Sector



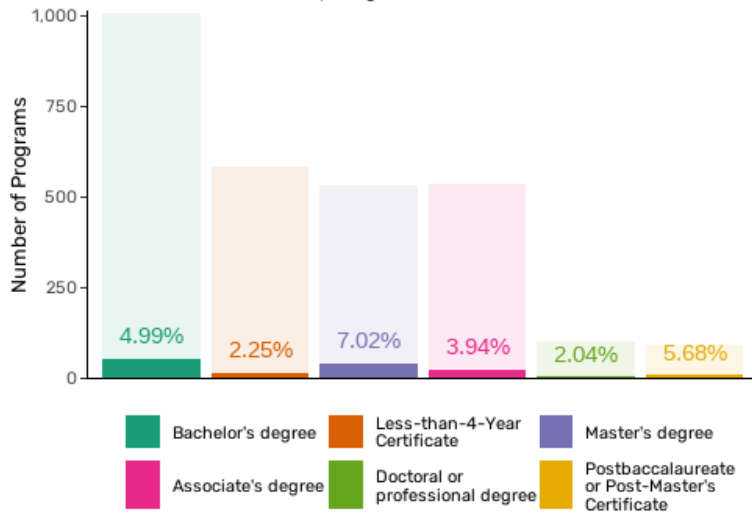
Source: IPEDS

Just as the number of distance education students has grown, the number of distance education programs has also grown, allowing students a wider variety of distance education options. A distance education program is defined as a program for which all the required coursework for program completion can be completed entirely via distance education courses.

In 2017, Puerto Rico colleges and universities offered 99 distance education programs. By 2021, that number had grown to 128, an increase of 29%. In 2021, the sector with the largest number of distance education programs was Private, Not-For-Profit, which offered 6% of its programs (100 programs) via distance education. Across all sectors, 20% of Puerto Rico institutions offered at least one program that could be completed entirely via distance education.

In 2021, Puerto Rico institutions offered distance education programs in 18 disciplines. These accounted for 5% of all programs offered by institutions in the state. The largest number of distance education programs were available at the Bachelor's degree level; there were 50 such programs across 16 Puerto Rico institutions. The programs most commonly offered via distance education were in Business, Management, Marketing, and Related Support Services.

**Puerto Rico Programs Available via Distance Education, 2021**  
By Program Level



Source: IPEDS

**Five most common distance education programs in Puerto Rico, 2021**

Program Level	Discipline	Distance Education Programs
Bachelor's degree	Business, Management, Marketing, and Related Support Services	17
Master's degree	Business, Management, Marketing, and Related Support Services	16
Associate's degree	Business, Management, Marketing, and Related Support Services	12
Master's degree	Education	11
Bachelor's degree	Computer and Information Sciences and Support Services	10

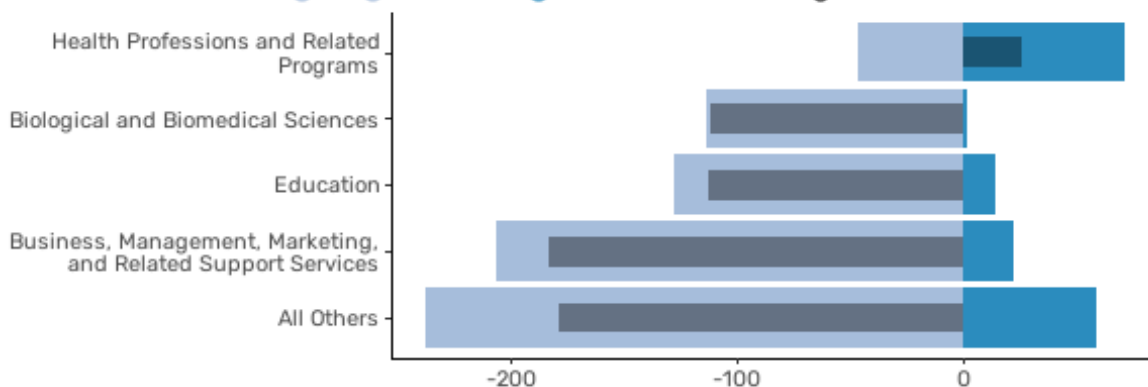
Source: IPEDS

## Out-of-State Learning Placements

These learning placements include supervised field experiences such as, but not limited to, clinical rotations, internships, or student teaching.

In 2021, 171 total incoming students (those attending institutions in other states) participated in learning placements in Puerto Rico, and 729 outgoing students attending Puerto Rico institutions participated in learning placements in other states. The higher number of outgoing students may indicate that there are limited job opportunities for new college graduates in Puerto Rico. It could also be a sign that many out-of-state students are attending Puerto Rico institutions (either via distance education or in person) but doing their learning placements back at home.

**Puerto Rico Outgoing, Incoming, and Net Learning Placements, 2021**

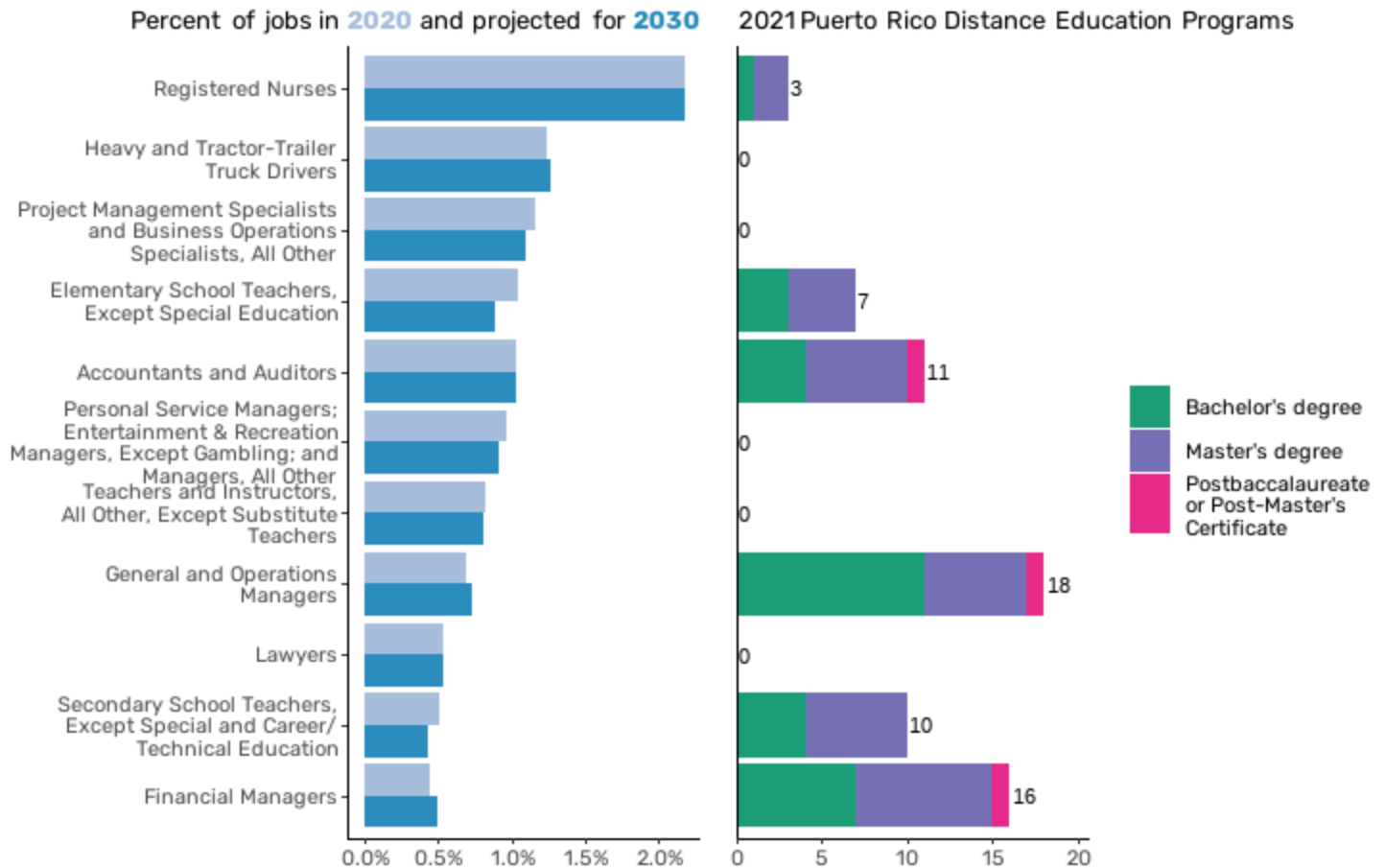


Source: NC-SARA

## Workforce Development

What are the top occupations in Puerto Rico that require a postsecondary credential or degree?

### Top Puerto Rico Occupations in That Require Some Postsecondary Education



Sources: Puerto Rico Department of Labor and Human Resources, IPEDS

A number of the largest occupations that require postsecondary education are expected to grow or remain fairly constant as shares of total employment over time, increasing the need for college-educated workers in Puerto Rico. Of these eleven occupations, Puerto Rico colleges and universities offer distance education programs at the typical entry level of education, or one level higher, in six of them.

The state's ten largest occupations requiring a postsecondary credential comprised 11% of Puerto Rico's total jobs in 2020. Among these occupations, the largest is Registered Nurses, and the one expected to grow by the largest percentage from 2020 to 2030 is Financial Managers.

#### Data Details:

- Enrollment data include institutions that do not participate in Title IV financial aid.
- The five most common distance education programs may include more than five programs if there are ties.
- In the data on outgoing distance education students, please note that a small amount of the increase in students is due to an increase in the number of institutions participating in SARA and therefore reporting data. Most of the light blue portion of the increase in 2021 was due to Ana G. Mendez University moving from Puerto Rico to Florida.
- Outgoing distance education data exclude students studying at institutions in California, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Guam, Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands and American Samoa.
- The out-of-state learning placements graph includes the top three programs, based on 2-digit CIP code, ranked by the number of incoming placements, the top three programs ranked by the number of outgoing placements, and the top three programs with the largest incoming vs. outgoing differences. In many cases, there is overlap in these lists. Data exclude incoming placements from institutions in California and the U.S. Territories listed above.
- The occupation graph includes the top 10 occupations that typically require a postsecondary credential or degree, based on 2021 data and 2026 projections. The top 10 for both time intervals are included, though there is significant overlap. Occupations are based on 6-digit SOC code and ranked by the number of jobs. All types of workers are counted, including those who are self-employed and those not covered by Unemployment Insurance. The distance education programs connected to these occupations are based on Lightcast's CIP-SOC crosswalk. Only programs at each occupation's typical entry level of education plus one level higher are included.