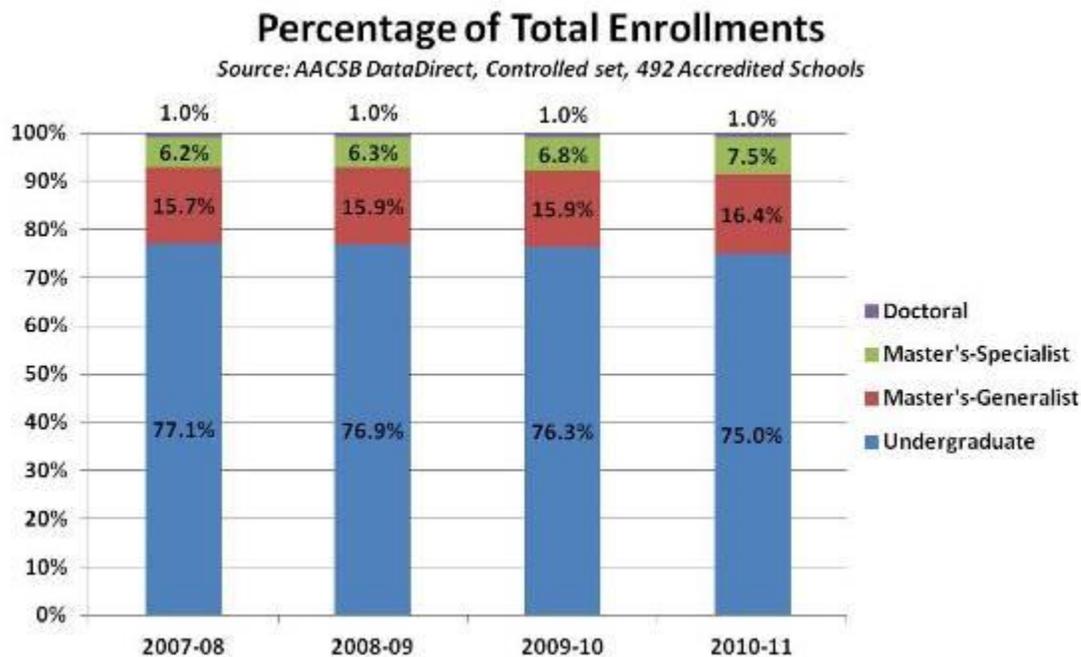


Comparing Enrollment Trends at AACSB-Accredited Schools for Undergraduate, Master’s, and Doctoral Levels

Currently business school enrollments are a popular topic in higher education and across the media, and as discussions occur, it is important to know that the numbers being evaluated are comparable data figures. In this data visualization, AACSB examines enrollment trends at the undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral levels to evaluate the percent of total enrollment each level maintains, and to gauge if there has been an increase or decrease in the number of students attending at each level.

For this article, we utilized a controlled data set by limiting the data that is analyzed to only AACSB-accredited schools that participated in the annual *Business School Questionnaire* (BSQ) in each academic year from 2007–08 to 2010–11. These 492 schools provided data in all years, so comparing across the set can give us a better, and statistically comparable, view of how the larger enrollment trends actually play out in our accredited schools.

Overall, the total enrollment reported across these schools has not shown a significantly large change, but has continued a slow growth. However, upon closer inspection, the education level distribution of those enrolled students has been shifting.



[Source: AACSB Business School Questionnaire (BSQ) through AACSB Data Direct]

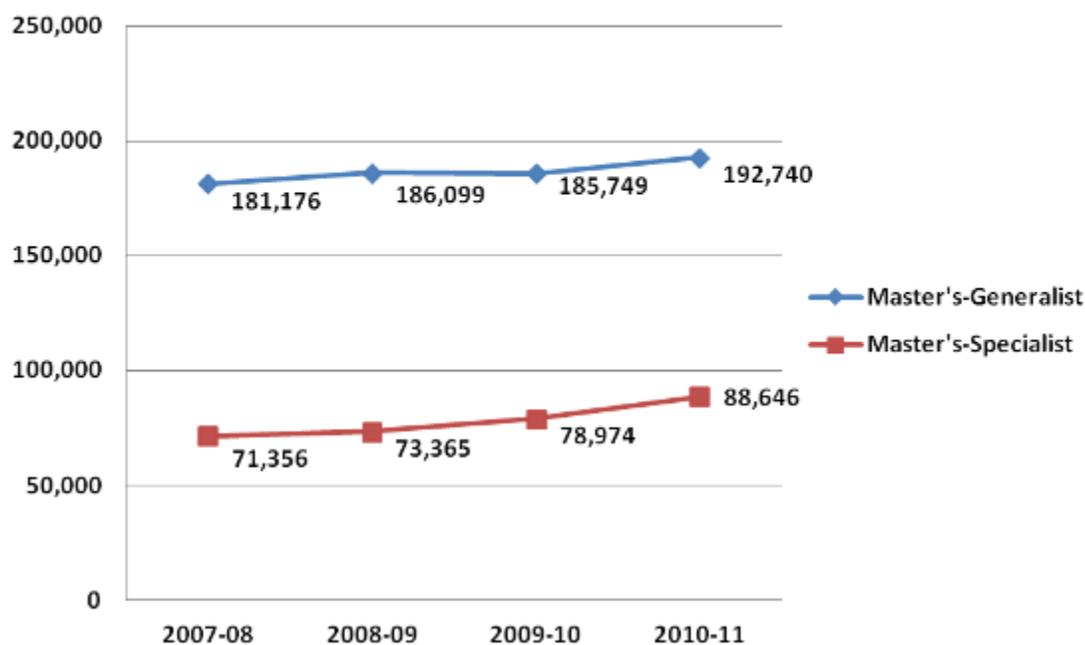
As demonstrated in Chart 1, in '07–08, 77.1 percent of students in this data set were enrolled in undergraduate programs, but by 2010, that number decreased to 75.0 percent. Over the same time span, the undergraduate enrollment count decreased by 1.2 percent from 892,062 to 881,337 students. Also, though increasing from 11,713 in '07–08 to 12,138 in '10–11, doctoral enrollment has maintained an approximate 1.0 percent of total enrollments across this time period.

When we take a closer look at figures for the master's level, enrollments levels at the controlled set of schools have increased 11.4 percent over the past four years. Additionally, as a percentage of total enrollment, all master's level enrollments account for 22 to 24 percent. This leads us to believe that the master's level programs are currently in a growth phase. This growth may be because people are choosing to go back to school during these tough economic times, or it could be attributed to students who are continuing their education immediately after receiving their undergraduate degree instead of trying to enter the difficult job market. This may change as the economy begins to turn around and companies begin hiring again, or it could signal a shift in the types of students who seek business degrees.

Enrollment increases at the master's level is a positive sign, and for most, the next logical question is whether the increases appear for both the master's generalist (MBA equivalent) and master's specialist program types. In both cases, the answer is yes. At the master's generalist level, as demonstrated below in Chart 2, there was a 6.4 percent increase in the number of students enrolled since '07–08 from 181,176 to 192,740 students, respectively. For specialized master's programs, the increase was more dramatic, with the number of students enrolled rising 24.2 percent from 71,356 to 88,646.

Enrollment—Master's Level

Source: AACSB DataDirect, Controlled set, 492 Accredited Schools



[Source: AACSB Business School Questionnaire (BSQ) through AACSB Data Direct]

While the proportional increases are less dramatic, at the generalist level, enrollments were 15.7 percent of the overall population in '07–08, but by '10–11 student enrollment had increased to 16.4 percent. Similarly, at the specialized level, the change grew from 6.2 percent to 7.5 percent.

Either way you evaluate the numbers, this controlled data set shows increasing enrollments at the master's level both in numbers, and as an overall percentage of total business school enrollments. Looking to the future, if this trend continues then the shift in student population could have longer term effect on business school choices for faculty hiring, program offerings, and course scheduling.