

# Benchmarking of Residency-Based Higher Education Models

Prepared for The Evergreen State College

April 2020

In the following report, Hanover Research presents the results of a benchmarking analysis of residency-based higher education models, specifically highlighting trends in low-residency degree options and their effects on enrollment at six competitor institutions in the United States.



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## Competitor Profiles

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# Executive Summary

## Benchmarking of Residency-Based Higher Education Models

### Recommendations

Based on an analysis of low-residency offerings at six competitor institutions in the United States, Hanover recommends that The Evergreen State College (Evergreen):

- 1 Consider a “scenario testing” survey to establish whether Evergreen’s prospective student population has a clear demand for this type of residency model.

Based on the experiences of benchmarked competitors, a move to a dual-residency model does not always yield a significant increase in student enrollment. Notably however, these formats continue to proliferate at benchmarked institutions, and they may have contributed to stabilized enrollment rates at some competitors. Given the mixed-to-negative nature of the available enrollment evidence and the large interest in flexible formats from prospective and current students, Evergreen should withhold a reorganization to this model until it can establish whether its own prospective student population has a clear demand for these types of formats.

- 2 Begin with programs in creative writing, psychology, education, and sustainability if it chooses to pursue a dual-residency model.

These academic fields are the most common among low-residency programs at benchmarked competitors, which suggests they are well-suited to this format and to the likely student audience.

### Fast Facts



1/6

Number of benchmarked institutions that **experienced a significant enrolment increase** after beginning the shift to a dual-residency model



4/6

Number of benchmarked institutions with a **primary focus on traditionally-delivered degree programs**

### Key Findings

**Most benchmarked institutions did not switch to a dual-residency model in a single year.** Instead, competitors have generally built-out their online and low-residency options over several years, and in most cases these remain the minority of their total programming.

**Competitors rarely offer programs through both low-residency and traditional delivery.** Taken together, just 22.3 percent of competitors’ low-residency programs are also available in traditional formats – with most competitors sporting very little overlap between the modalities. In most cases, competitors’ low-residency programs were less than one-third as numerous as the corresponding number of traditional programs.

Drexel University is unique in offering nearly all its online programs through a campus format as well, while Prescott College is rare in offering the entirety of its programs through low-residency delivery.

**Dual-residency models rarely produce significant enrollment changes in the following years.** More often, as benchmarked institutions began to expand their low-residency portfolios, enrolment either remained steady or experienced modest decline. Indeed, only Chatham University saw a significant increase in FTE enrolment (13.4 percent from 2011 to 2018).

**Not all experts see self-directed, low-residency programs as a sustainable format.** Despite their evident academic quality, some experts believe that low-residency programs may be squeezed-out by their less resource-intensive fully-online peers. These programs do not require student trips to campus (and accompanying travel expenses and time-off requests) or the extra institution-facing costs involved in creating effective in-person interactions or paying faculty for face-to-face teaching. Low-residency programs are also less readily scalable than fully-online degrees, given limited classroom space and facilities.

**The most common low-residency bachelor’s and master’s programs are in psychology, education, creative writing, sustainability, and counseling.** Among benchmarked competitors, these fields each account for at least four different low-residency programs. Low-residency certificates are most often in education-related fields.

# Research Questions and Methodology

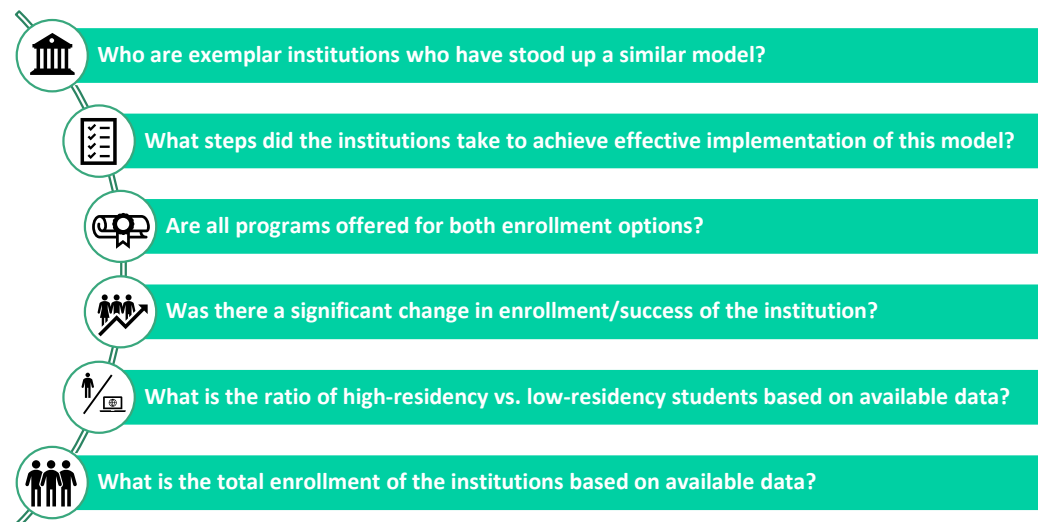
## Benchmarking of Residency-Based Higher Education Models

### Methodology

To assist Evergreen as it considers restructuring its organization to include both high-residency and low-residency enrollment options, Hanover conducted a secondary benchmarking of current institutions who employ similar models and how they have effectively do so. Specifically, the report attempts to highlight effective practices to scale this type of model to bring enrollment to about 4,000 students, as well as to potentially establish reasonable expectations for enrollment between the two options.

The following analysis is based on a review of information drawn from institutional websites as well as publicly available data sources. Hanover selected the six competitor institutions included in this analysis based on a manual search for institutions with similar models to Evergreen's proposed enrollment options.

### Research Questions



### Competitor Institutions

Institution	Location	Programs
Goddard College	Plainfield, VT	<a href="#">Academics</a>
Antioch University	Culver City, CA Yellow Springs, OH Keene, NH Santa Barbara, CA Seattle, WA	<a href="#">Low-Residency Programs</a>
Chatham University	Pittsburgh, PA	<a href="#">Online Degrees</a>
Drexel University ( <i>College of Art and Sciences</i> )	Philadelphia, PA	<a href="#">Online and Low-Residency Degrees</a>
Naropa University	Boulder, CO	<a href="#">Low-Residency Degree Programs</a>
Prescott College	Prescott, AZ	<a href="#">All Degrees</a>

### Overview

**Low-residency programs are delivered using a range of particular formats.**

The first low-residency program in the United States was [developed](#) by Goddard College in 1963, and since that time these programs have proliferated both in number and type. For example, while Goddard's programs tend to be of the "Self-Directed" variety (see right), other institutions have explored alternative options to serve working professionals (or other groups that would not be interested in pursuing a traditional degree).

The [vision](#) for these residency models, particularly among liberal arts institutions, was to avoid the "low-quality," "low-rigor" perception that was applied to many asynchronous online programs. Instead, non-traditional students (e.g., full-time professionals, parents, and other schedule-conflicted learners) could access flexible coursework while still benefiting from "frequent, substantive interaction with instructors and peers to study theoretical and critical underpinnings of a subject while contributing important work to nonprofits, communities and small businesses."

**Not all experts see self-directed, low-residency programs as a sustainable format.**

Though many experts [testify](#) to the academic quality of low-residency programs, there are some that doubt whether these programs can survive the dual pressure from traditional campus and fully-online alternatives. For example, some experts worry that given the choice, students will shirk low-residency degrees in favor of ones that can be earned without several trips to campus (and the accompanying travel expenses and time-off requests). Others point out that low-residency programs "are more resource-intensive to design and deliver," because creating effective in-person interactions requires considerable thought and planning. Faculty also need to be paid for their face-to-face teaching, and not all institutional costs for residencies are likely to be covered by student payments.

Low-residency programs are also less readily scalable than fully-online degrees, given the limited classroom space and facilities at host institutions.

### Types of Low-Residency Programs



#### Self-Directed Programs

- Typically involve brief in-person residencies with online coursework throughout the remainder of the semester.

#### Evening-Only Programs

- Combine online components with in-person evening classes, generally 1-2 days per week.

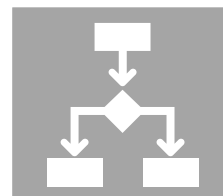


#### Weekend or Saturday Programs

- Typically combine online courses with in-person weekend requirements, generally every weekend while a course is in session.

#### Accelerated Programs

- Offer programs on an accelerated schedule (often using six- or eight-week modules) through a combination of online, weekend, evening, or in-person courses.



#### Flexible Programs

- Offer the option to complete coursework entirely online or through a combination of evening, weekend, online, or accelerated courses.

Source: [Hanover Research](#)

# General Trends

## Benchmarking of Residency-Based Higher Education Models

### Overview

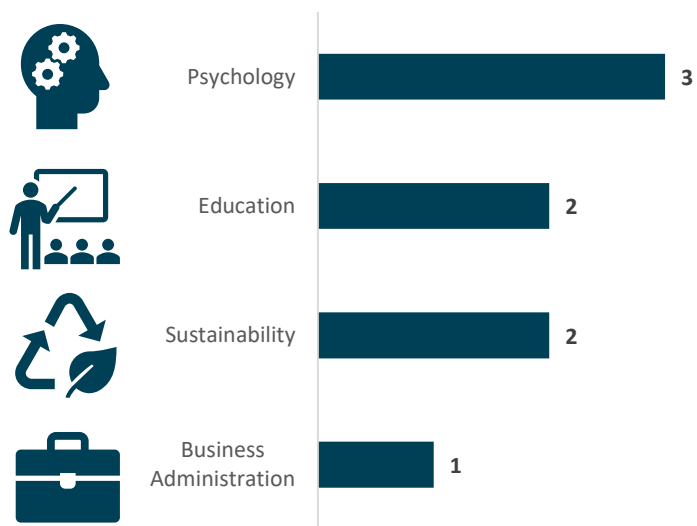
Based on benchmarked competitors, the most common low-residency bachelor's and master's programs are in creative writing, psychology, education, sustainability, and counseling.

These broader categories include a handful of more unique programs (e.g., *Ecopsychology*, *Mindfulness-Based Transpersonal Counseling*), but point to a general trend in the types of programs that are conducive to low-residency formats.

Certificate programs are most likely to be in education-related fields.

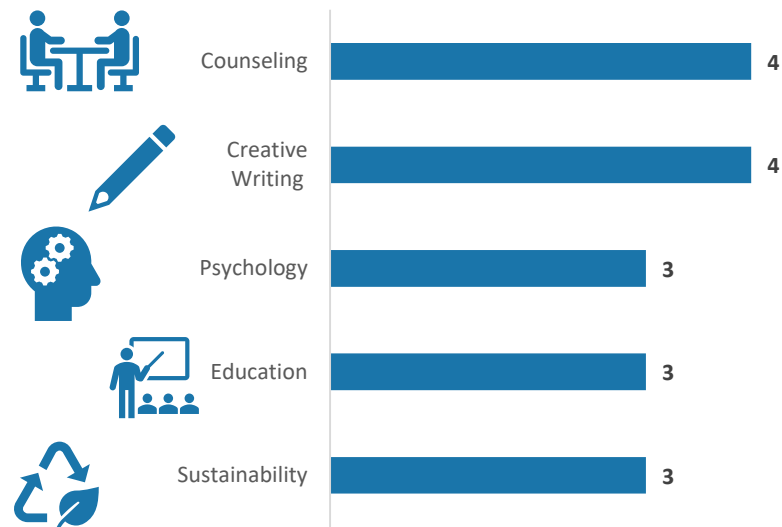
### Common Bachelor's Fields

Most frequent low-residency degree fields among benchmarked institutions



### Common Master's Fields

Most frequent low-residency degree fields among benchmarked institutions



Source: Institutional websites

# Profile: Goddard College

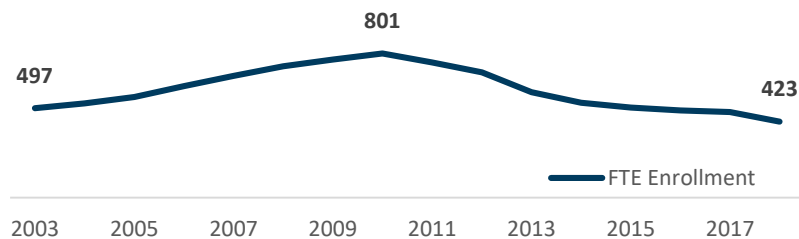
## Benchmarking of Residency-Based Higher Education Models

### Overview

Goddard College's shift to a low-residency model has met with mixed results.

In 2002, faced with a perilous financial situation, the college [shut down](#) its core residential programs to focus on its low-residency adult offerings (begun in 1963). This low-residency model is paired with an atypical curricular model analogous to Evergreen, [which](#) lacks traditional letter grades and has students "co-create" their curriculum each semester with advisers.

After initial success, the shift in model has not led to durable enrollment gains, and in 2018 the college was put on [probation](#) by its accreditor due to an unstable financial situation.



### Unique Residency Format


Residencies take place over eight intensive days, two times per year at the start of each semester.



Residencies are designed to be "a rich time of exploration, connection, and planning," and are followed by 16 weeks of independent work and reflection in collaboration with a student's faculty advisor.

Over the course of the semester, students work with advisors and peers in "close-knit advising groups" to create individualized study plans that describe their learning objectives for the semester, identifying "areas of study, personal goals, relevant resources, and avenues to achieve these goals."

### Fast Facts

Undergraduate		Graduate
0	Number of On-Campus Programs	0
8	Number of Low-Residency Programs	9
0	Number of Programs Available Low-Residency and On-Campus	0
	188 Total Enrollment	260

### Low-Residency Programs

Undergraduate	Graduate
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Individualized BA</li><li>BA in Health Arts &amp; Sciences</li><li>BA in Sustainability</li><li>BA in Education*</li><li>BA in Psychology</li><li>BFA in Creative Writing</li><li>BFA in Socially Engaged Art</li><li>--</li><li>Teacher Licensure</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Individualized MA</li><li>MFA in Interdisciplinary Arts*</li><li>MFA in Creative Writing*</li><li>MA in Social Innovation &amp; Sustainability</li><li>MA in Psychology</li><li>MA in Health Arts &amp; Sciences</li><li>MA in Education*</li><li>MA in Clinical Mental Health Counseling</li></ul>

\*Programs can take place at either Vermont or Washington locations, all other program residencies take place at the college's Vermont campus.



# Profile: Antioch University

## Benchmarking of Residency-Based Higher Education Models

### Overview

Antioch has been expanding its low-residency offerings over the last decade.

Starting in 2001, Antioch University [established](#) “a highly innovative low residency PhD Program in Leadership and Change.” Since then, the institution has rolled-out an increasing number of low-residency programs at its four nationwide campuses – in addition to spinning-off a dedicated online campus in 2015-16.

Based on [academic catalogs](#) from previous years, as well as recent university [announcements](#), this expanding low-residency portfolio includes some entirely new programs and others where Antioch has transitioned existing degrees which some online course options.

### Program Timeline


Selected low-residency programs by campus and year of launch



Source: Antioch University ([1](#); [2](#))

\*Due to having multiple campuses, Antioch offers a number of overlapping and similar degree programs.

### Fast Facts

Undergraduate		Graduate	
N/A*	Number of On-Campus Programs	N/A*	
0	Number of Low-Residency Programs	29	
0	Number of Programs Available Low-Residency and On-Campus	1	
	501	Total Enrollment	2,518

### “Fund for the Future”

Antioch is scaling up its distance-delivered offerings.



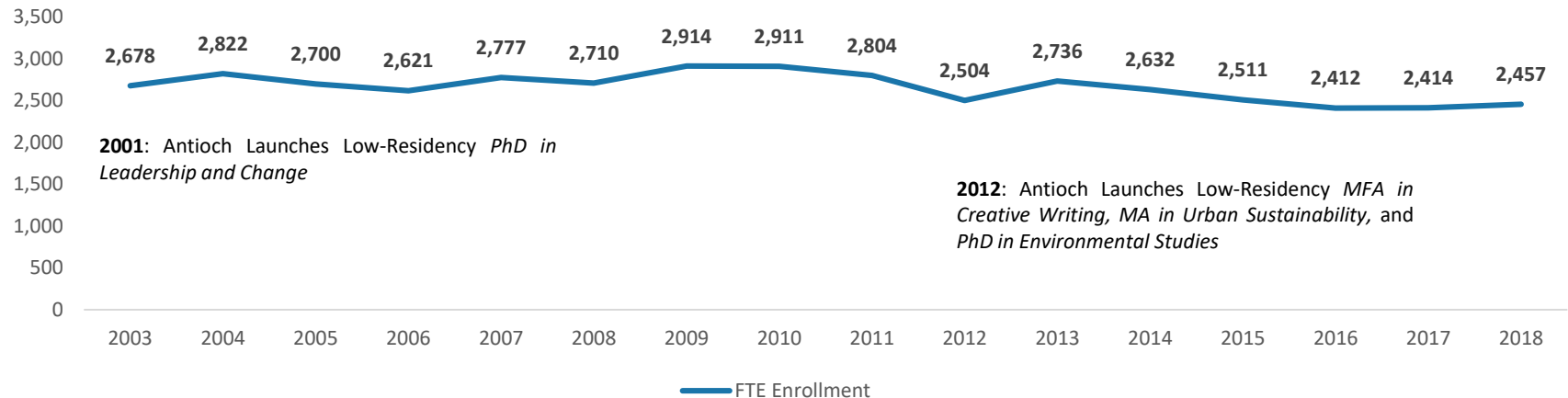
Antioch is currently [pursuing](#) a \$5 million fundraising campaign, which among other things will “support the scaling up of existing programs across the University system [and] launch new degree programs in the low-residency and hybrid model.”

The fund has supported the expansion of several existing programs into low-residency models, namely the certificate in *Dance Movement Therapy* and the master’s in *Marriage and Family Therapy*. A certificate in *Geographical Information Systems* (GIS) is likely to follow.



### Enrollment Trends

Antioch has seen mixed enrollment trends, with enrollment stabilizing as it ramped-up low-residency and online programs after 2011-12.



### Low-Residency Programs

Certificates	Master's Programs	Doctoral Programs
Certificate in Dance/Movement Therapy (New England)	MA in Clinical Mental Health Counseling (New England/Online)	EdD in Educational and Professional Practice (AU Online)
Certificate in Digital Media Specialist/Library Media Specialist Certification (New England)	MA in Marriage and Family Therapy (New England)	PhD in Environmental Studies (New England)
Certificate in Nature-Based Early Childhood Education (New England)	MA in Urban Sustainability (Los Angeles)	PhD in Leadership and Change (Graduate School of Leadership & Change)
Certificate in Somatic Psychotherapy (Santa Barbara)	MEd for Experienced Educators (9 tracks, New England)	PhD in Marriage and Family Therapy (New England)
Endorsement in K-12 Library Media (Seattle)	MFA in Creative Writing (Los Angeles)	--
Post-Master's Certificate in Marriage and Family Therapy (New England)	MFA in Writing & Contemporary Media (Santa Barbara)	--
Post-Master's Principal Certificate in Educational Leadership & Administration (New England)	MS in Resource Management and Administration, International Sustainable Development and Climate Change (New England)	--
Post-MFA Certificate in the Teaching of Creative Writing (Los Angeles)	Dual MA in Urban Sustainability and MFA in Creative Writing (Los Angeles)	--

# Profile: Chatham University

## Benchmarking of Residency-Based Higher Education Models

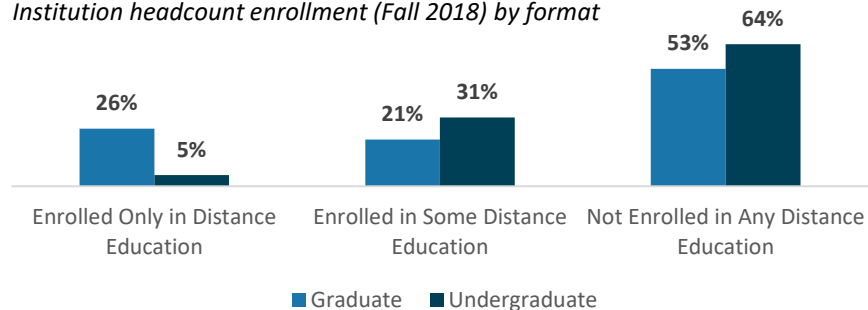
### Overview

Chatham has successfully piloted a suite of new low-residency programs, most exclusively in an online format.

Rather than transitioning to a dual-residency model at a particular time, Chatham has instead developed its mixed model gradually over the last decade. Starting from a handful of nursing programs, it has built up a portfolio of 14 online programs, mostly at the graduate level. This has coincided with large increase in FTE enrolment (13.4 percent from 2011 to 2018).

### Enrollment Breakdown

Institution headcount enrollment (Fall 2018) by format




### Strategic Plan

Chatham plans to expand its online and low-residency portfolio.

The university's [Strategic Plan](#) states that "some of Chatham's most successful and diverse degree programs – e.g., Doctor of Nursing Practice, the Doctor of Occupational Therapy, and the limited residency Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing – combine carefully structured online learning with a short, intensive time at Chatham. [Chatham] will expand these offerings to enable more working adults to further their education."



### Fast Facts

Undergraduate		Graduate
41	Number of On-Campus Programs	34
3	Number of Online/Low-Residency Programs	9
1	Number of Programs Available Low-Residency and On-Campus	1
	1,254 Total Enrollment	1,082

### Online and Low-Residency Programs

#### Undergraduate

- BA in Business Administration
- BA in Psychology (degree completion)
- BS in Nursing (RN-to-BSN)

#### Graduate

- Certificates of Completion in Healthcare Informatics & Analytics
- Certificate of Completion in Travel Writing
- Professional Writing Certificates
- 
- Master of Professional Writing
- MS in Healthcare Informatics
- MS in Interior Architecture
- MS in Nursing
- 
- Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP, BSN-DNP)
- Doctor of Occupational Therapy, Post-Professional



Source: [Chatham University](#)

# Profile: Drexel University (College of Arts & Sciences)

## Benchmarking of Residency-Based Higher Education Models

### Overview

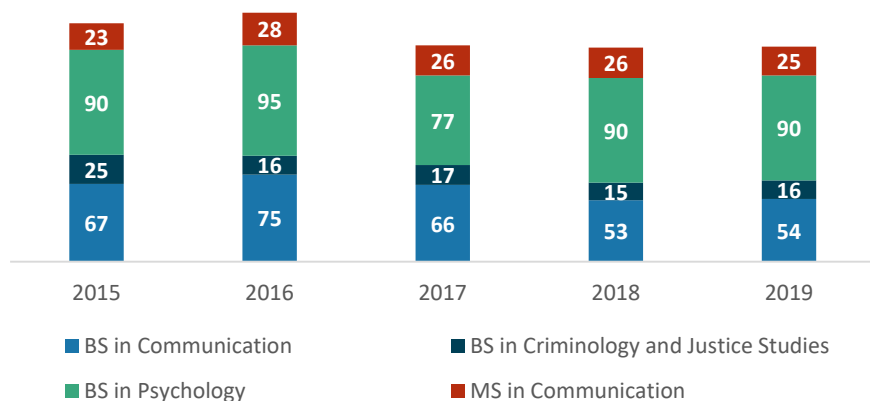
Drexel's distance-delivered programs have had more stable enrollment than its traditional offerings, but student demand has nonetheless declined.

Drexel [launched](#) its first web-enabled course in 1996, and soon thereafter launched its first fully-online program (an *MS in Library Science*). The university "continues to view technology-enhanced learning as essential to its [future](#)," and to that end transitioned its for-profit subsidiary (Drexel eLearning Inc.) into the non-profit Drexel University Online.

Over the past five years, bachelor's conferrals from the College of Arts and Sciences fell by an average -4.6 percent per year, while conferrals from master's programs fell by -4.5 percent per year. By contrast, programs with distance-delivered options declined less rapidly over these years (by an average of -2.5 percent). In addition, the College [launched](#) a low-residency *MFA in Creative Writing* in Fall 2019 with an [inaugural class](#) of 19.


### Program Conferrals

Recent degree conferrals by program



Source: [Drexel University](#)

### Fast Facts

Undergraduate		Graduate
18	Number of On-Campus Programs	21
3	Number of Online/Low-Residency Programs	2
3	Number of Programs Available Low-Residency and On-Campus	1
	2,198 Total Enrollment	354

### Online and Low-Residency Programs



#### Undergraduate

- BS in Communication
- BS in Criminology & Justice Studies
- BS in Psychology

#### Graduate

- MS in Communication
- MFA in Creative Writing (Low-Residency)

Source: [Drexel University](#)

# Profile: Naropa University

## Benchmarking of Residency-Based Higher Education Models

### Overview

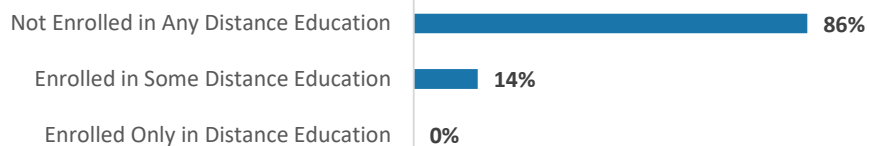
Naropa's low-residency programs have generally underperformed its traditional offerings in recent years.

For the last decade, Naropa University has offered low-residency master's programs in *Ecopsychology* and *Creative Writing*, graduating an average of 24 and 10 students respectively each year from 2011 through 2018. The institution has both low-residency and traditional options for its M.Div. program, and in 2016 [announced](#) a hybrid-delivered *Mindfulness-Based Transpersonal Counseling* program as part of its *MA in Clinical Mental Health Counseling*. The institution [added](#) a master's concentration in *Yoga Studies* to begin this year.

From 2014 to 2018, conferrals from these master's programs with low-residency options fell at a rate of -2.2 percent per year, while conferrals from all of Naropa's programs fell by -1.7 percent annually.

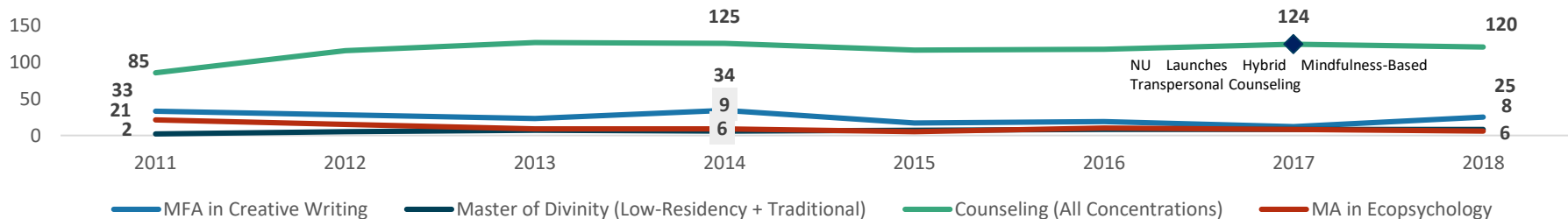
### Enrollment Breakdown

Institution headcount enrollment (Fall 2018) by format

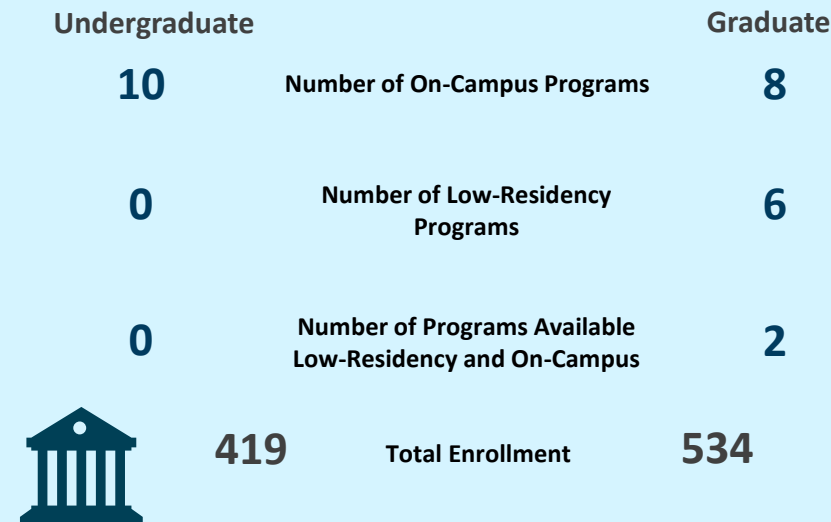


### Program Conferrals

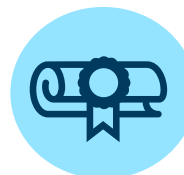
Recent degree conferrals by program



### Fast Facts



### Low-Residency Programs



- MA in Ecopsychology
- MFA in Creative Writing
- MA in Mindfulness-Based Transpersonal Counseling Hybrid
- Master of Divinity
- MA in Religious Studies: Yoga Studies
- MA in Buddhist Studies

# Profile: Prescott College

## Benchmarking of Residency-Based Higher Education Models

### Overview

Prescott College is the only peer to have almost complete overlap between its traditional and low-residency offerings.


Nearly all of Prescott's undergraduate programs are offered in both low-residency and on-campus formats, while most of its graduate and certificate programs are offered exclusively online (no program is offered exclusively on-campus).

Some of Prescott's programs include modest residency requirements, but nearly all offer optional orientations or in-person residency events called colloquia.

Prescott's enrollment remains largely flat.

From Fall 2014 to Fall 2018, FTE enrollment at Prescott has remained relatively stable at 631 (from 636) – though it fell from an average of 866.2 in the previous five-year period. Given that Prescott's low-residency strategy dates before this period, this suggests that even a pure dual-residency format is not sufficient to guarantee an enrollment rise.

### Fast Facts

Undergraduate		Graduate
10	Number of On-Campus Programs	2
11	Number of Low-Residency Programs	14
10	Number of Programs Available Low-Residency and On-Campus	2
	456 Total Enrollment	371

### Online and Low-Residency Programs

Bachelor's		Master's		Certificate	
BA in Adventure Education	BA in Sustainable Community Development	MA in Adventure Education*	MFA in Social and Environmental Arts Practice*	Adventure-Based Psychotherapy*	Expressive Arts Therapy*
BA in Arts and Humanities	BA in Human Development & Psychology	MS in Counseling*	MS in Resilient and Sustainable Communities*	Early Childhood Education*	School Counselor*
BFA in Arts and Letters	BA in Interdisciplinary Studies	MA in Critical Psychology and Human Services*	MA in Social Justice and Community Organizing	Early Childhood Special Education*	Secondary Education*
BA in Cultural and Regional Studies	BA in Sustainability Management*	MBA in Sustainability Leadership*	MS in Sustainable Food Systems*	Ecotherapy*	Special Education*
BA in Environmental Studies	BS in Environmental Studies	MA in Education*	MEd in Education	Elementary Education*	--
BA in Education	--	MA in Education with Emphasis in Environmental Education*	MS in Environmental Studies*	Equine-Assisted Learning*	--
--	--	PhD in Sustainability Education*	Dual Degree: MBA/MS in Sustainable Food Systems*	Equine-Assisted Mental Health*	--

Source: [Prescott College](#)

\*Program is only offered online.



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