Utah Women in Higher Education, 2000-2017

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Background

• Utah’s population is becoming more diverse

• Utah adults are making progress toward the ”66% in 2020” goal

• Utah businesses report a shortage of educated workers

• Utah fares poorly in many national rankings of women’s educational attainment and economic equality
1. What is the higher education context for men and women in Utah?
2. How does women’s educational attainment in Utah compare to women’s educational attainment in the US?
3. What is the extent of women’s educational attainment in Utah?
4. What factors are associated with persistence for men and women?
5. How have these things changed over time?
Study Structure

- Population-level analysis using the American Community Survey (ACS), 2000-2016
- Institution-level analysis using the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 2000-2016
- Individual-level analysis using the Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) data, 2000-2017
Men’s graduate degree and women’s associate degree attainment are stable over time.

The gap between men’s and women’s bachelor’s degree attainment has recently been eliminated.

For women, being married and having children are associated with having lower levels of postsecondary education.

Utah Women’s associated degree attainment is the highest in the nation.

Utah Men’s graduate degree attainment is the highest in the nation.
Figure 6. Percent of Utah Adults 25+ Holding Only a Bachelor’s Degree

- **Female (vs male)**: More likely
- **Hispanic origin (vs no Hispanic origin)**: Less likely
- **Labor force participation**: More likely for men, less likely for women
- **Born out of Utah (vs born in Utah)**: More likely
- **In poverty (vs not in poverty)**: Less likely
- **Married (vs never married)**: More likely for men, less likely for women
- **Divorced, separated, or widowed (vs never married)**: Less likely, especially for women
- **Children under 5 in home (vs no children under 5 in home)**: More likely, especially for women
Despite this, when including graduate degrees Utah men have the highest educational levels compared to Utah women and US men and women, and Utah women have the lowest (Figure 3).

Table 3. Highest Level of Education for Utah and US Adults 25+ in 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Utah Men</th>
<th>Utah Women</th>
<th>US Men</th>
<th>US Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/A or None</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn’t finish high school</td>
<td>7.93</td>
<td>6.87</td>
<td>12.08</td>
<td>10.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school degree or GED</td>
<td>23.69</td>
<td>24.44</td>
<td>28.31</td>
<td>26.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1 year college</td>
<td>6.74</td>
<td>8.77</td>
<td>5.96</td>
<td>6.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 1 year college, no degree</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>18.86</td>
<td>14.52</td>
<td>14.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate degree</td>
<td>8.12</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>7.33</td>
<td>9.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>21.26</td>
<td>18.81</td>
<td>19.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>6.57</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>8.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional degree</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate degree</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. Percent of Adults 18+ Holding at Least a Bachelor’s Degree
IPEDS Findings (Institution Level)

- Utah women make up a larger percentage of enrolled students compared to Utah men in private nonprofit and for-profit institutions.
- Utah women complete a greater proportion of shorter degree/certificate programs compared to Utah men.
- Utah women represent a smaller proportion of fall enrollment compared to US women.
- Utah women have lower participation in STEM fields compared to Utah men and US women.
• Of Utah men and women initially intending to earn a bachelor’s degree, a greater proportion of Utah women earn an associate degree and a greater proportion of Utah men earn a bachelor’s degree.

• Utah men are more likely to pursue fields of study such as engineering and business, and Utah women are more likely to pursue education.

• Utah men and women experience different patterns of persistence and completion (though hypotheses for these differences should be informed by other data sources).
Concerns

- Although Utah women are doing well compared to Utah men in many areas, they fare poorly in comparisons to US women.

- Utah women pursue fields of study and certificate/degree lengths that are associated with poorer economic outcomes.

- Both Utah men and Utah women both experience obstacles in their pursuit of higher education.
Reconciling Findings

• Consider the level of data collection/analysis

• Recognize the context of postsecondary educational activities
• How can we enable men and women to exercise their postsecondary education preferences?

• How can we better prepare Utah women for their eventual labor force participation?

• How can we support Utah families as men and women pursue higher education and labor force activities?
Thank You

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Utah Women & Leadership Project
www.uvu.edu/uwlp

Utah Women & Education Initiative
www.utahwomenandeducation.org