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On campus, women outnumber men more than ever

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JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

Students filed across the College of Communication campus at Boston University last year.

By Matt Rocheleau

GLOBE STAFF MARCH 28, 2016

Many more women than men will be opening acceptance letters and e-mails this spring and enrolling

in college in the fall, in a trend that holds for both institutions in Massachusetts and nationwide.

Women accounted for 55 percent of undergraduates enrolled at four-year colleges in the United States as of fall 2014, according to the most recent data available from the federal education department.

It's not a new phenomenon. Women have outnumbered men on college campuses in the US by a widening margin since the late 1970s, and the gap will continue to grow in coming years, according to some projections.

But it hasn't always been this way.

In the late 1940s, men accounted for more than 70 percent of college students.



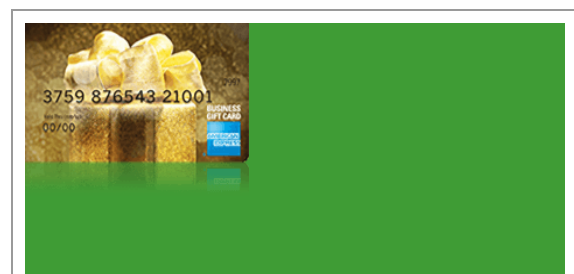
Chart: Enrollment of women vs. men at US colleges

Which US colleges have more enrolled women than men?

What caused the dramatic change?

Researchers have said a variety of factors, perhaps working together, have been responsible.

“Some have pointed to economic factors — as labor market barriers to women have been lowered, the benefits of a college education grew more for women than men,” the



Pew Research Center explains. “Others say the higher incidence of behavioral and school disciplinary problems among boys may be a factor.”

Women tend to earn higher grades and drop out less frequently than men. Also, men are more likely to enter the military or start working full-time right after high school, in lieu of college, studies have found.

Total fall enrollment in degree-granting colleges, 1947-2023

MALE FEMALE
Created with Highcharts

4.0.3194719481949195019511952195319541955195619571959196119631964196519661967196819691970197119721973
15M

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SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education
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At schools in Massachusetts, as well as the New England region as a whole, the female-male student ratio in the fall of 2014 mirrored the national breakdown: 55 percent to 45 percent.

But there are some outliers.

For example, at Boston University, which has the largest undergraduate student body among private schools statewide, 60 percent of undergraduates were women as of the fall of 2014. That means there were 3,691 more women than men, out of the total 18,017 students.

Meanwhile, at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, the state's largest public campus, and the largest overall for undergraduates, men slightly outnumbered women, 51 percent to 49 percent in 2014.

Women vs. men at the 20 biggest four-year colleges in Massachusetts

A look at the female-male ratio among undergraduate populations statewide as of fall 2014.

College	Men	Women	Total
University of Massachusetts-Amherst	51%	49%	22,252
Boston University	40%	60%	18,017
Northeastern University	49%	51%	13,510
University of Massachusetts-Lowell	62%	38%	12,983
University of Massachusetts-Boston	45%	55%	12,700
Harvard University	51%	49%	10,338
Boston College	46%	54%	9,856
Bridgewater State University	41%	59%	9,628
Salem State University	40%	60%	7,600
University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth	52%	48%	7,454
Westfield State University	47%	53%	5,590
Worcester State University	40%	60%	5,563
Suffolk University	45%	55%	5,390
Tufts University	49%	51%	5,177
Berklee College of Music	68%	32%	4,743
Framingham State University	37%	63%	4,609
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	54%	46%	4,512
Wentworth Institute of Technology	81%	19%	4,329
Bentley University	60%	40%	4,264
Worcester Polytechnic Institute	68%	32%	4,235

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education

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