



2016-2017 APSA DEPARTMENTAL SURVEY: DEGREES AWARDED REPORT

April 3, 2018

Executive Summary

The 2016-2017 APSA Departmental Survey asked chairs of departments offering degrees in courses in Political Science and Government to report the number of degrees they awarded in political science, government, international relations, or another related field in the 2016-2017 academic year.

The average number of degrees awarded in 2016-2017 varied by the highest degree offered by the department, as well as by the type of institution in which the department is located. Private institutions conferred a slightly higher average number of master's and doctoral degrees than their public counterparts. Significantly higher average numbers of bachelor's degrees were awarded by public institutions than by private ones – however, this is likely a reflection of 80.5% percent of these responding private institutions being made up of BA-granting departments, which awarded fewer degrees on average. The average number of bachelor's degrees awarded by PhD-granting departments was higher than MA-granting departments, which in turn was higher than the average number conferred by BA-granting departments. In contrast, the average number of master's degrees awarded was slightly greater at MA-granting than at PhD-granting departments.

This year's report also highlights changes in the number of degrees awarded by responding departments between 2014-2015 and 2016-2017. There has been a slight decline in the average number of degrees conferred by responding departments, which is broadly in accordance with the trends seen in the National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES)* degrees data. There was decline in the average number of bachelor's degrees awarded, with responding public and BA-granting departments seeing the greatest decline. PhD-granting departments were the exception to this trend, as they saw a slight increase in average bachelor's degrees awarded. There was also a slight decline in the overall average number of master's degrees awarded, with public and PhD-granting departments experiencing the highest average decline. Similarly, there was a slight drop in the overall average number of doctoral degrees conferred. Differences between institution types were very small, with public institutions seeing slightly greater decline than their private counterparts.

To review other reports on the APSA Departmental Survey, as well as to read reports from previous years and on other surveys, please visit the [American Political Science Association website](#).

We encourage you to read the report carefully, and we welcome your questions, thoughts, and ideas. Please contact us with any specific questions about these findings. We aim to fold in broader questions that members bring to our attention in subsequent reports and data collection efforts. Please contact us at surveys@apsanet.org.

Rory Jackson
Betsy Super, PhD

Washington, DC
April 3, 2018

*For more information on NCES degrees data and wider trends in degrees conferred in political science and the social sciences, see the APSA [Trends in Degrees Awarded in the Social Sciences: 1949-2016](#) report.

About the Data

The 2016-2017 APSA Departmental Survey was administered to 1,233 departments at 4-year colleges and universities offering degrees in courses in Political Science and Government in the United States. The survey was administered online from May 30th to November 9th, 2017. 367 departments responded to the survey for an overall response rate of 29.8%. Departments of social science had a response rate of 12.1% (n =24); BA departments combining political science with at least one other field had a response rate of 24.0% (n = 64); BA departments of political science or government had a response rate of 34.5% (n = 167); MA-granting departments had a response rate of 27.5% (n = 41); and PhD-granting departments had a response rate of 53.8% (n = 71).

Key Findings: 2016-2017

- **Bachelor's Degrees (Table 1):**

- Responding departments reported a mean of 58 and median of 27 bachelor's degrees awarded in 2016-2017. There was considerable variation between departments, with 479 the maximum number of degrees awarded by a single department.
- Public departments tended to confer a greater number of bachelor's degrees, with a mean of 88 at public departments versus 33 at private ones. Public institutions awarded greater average numbers of bachelor's degrees across department types. However, this is likely a reflection of 80.5% percent of these responding private institutions being made up of BA-granting departments, which awarded fewer degrees on average.
- The average number of bachelor's degrees awarded by PhD-granting departments was higher than MA-granting departments, which in turn was higher than the average number conferred by BA-granting departments. Indeed, PhD-granting departments awarded a mean of 161 bachelor's degrees, as compared to just 13 at BA-granting Combined & Social Science departments and 34 at BA-granting Political Science departments.

- **Master's Degrees (Table 2):**

- The mean number of master's degrees awarded by responding departments was 11, and the median was 8. The highest number conferred by a single department was 87.
- Private departments (mean and median of 12) conferred a slightly higher average number of master's degrees than public ones (mean of 11 and median of 7). This slightly higher private average carried across department types.
- MA-granting departments (mean of 12 and median of 10) on average granted a slightly higher number of master's degrees than PhD-granting ones (mean of 10 and median of 6).

- **Doctoral Degrees (Table 3):**

- Responding departments reported a mean of 7 and median of 5 doctoral degrees conferred in 2016-2017. There was variation between departments, with 25 the maximum number of doctoral degrees awarded by a single department.
- Private departments (mean and median of 8) awarded a slightly higher average number of doctoral degrees than their public counterparts (mean of 6 and median of 5).

Reported Change: 2014-2015 to 2016-2017

By matching data from individual departments that completed the 2016-2017 APSA Departmental Survey *and* the 2014-2015 APSA Departmental Survey[†], we are able to analyze reported changes in the number of bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees awarded by these departments. Figures 1-3 highlight the slight decline in the average number of degrees conferred by these departments over this period.

- **Bachelor's Degrees (Figure 1):**

- 138 departments reported the total number of bachelor's degrees they conferred in 2014-2015 and 2016-2017. The mean change in bachelor's degrees awarded by these departments was -5, with the median -1. The highest increase experienced by any department was +249 and the greatest decrease was -276.
- On average, public departments (mean of -7 and median of -3) saw a slightly greater drop in the number of bachelor's degrees awarded than private ones (mean of -2 and median of -1).
- BA-granting departments, and particularly BA-granting Political Science departments, on average experienced greater decline than MA-granting departments. In contrast, PhD-granting departments actually saw an increase in the average number of bachelor's degrees granted between 2014-2015 and 2016-2017 (mean of +3 and median of +7).

- **Master's Degrees (Figure 2):**

- 46 departments reported the total number of master's degrees they conferred in 2014-2015 and 2016-2017. The mean change in master's degrees awarded was -6, with the median -3.
- As with bachelor's degrees, the decline in the overall average number of master's degrees awarded was more pronounced within public institutions (mean of -8 and median of -4) than private ones (mean of +1 and median of -1).
- PhD-granting departments (mean and median of -7) experienced a greater fall between 2014-2015 and 2016-2017 than did MA-granting departments (mean of -3 and median of -1).

- **Doctoral Degrees (Figure 3):**

- 37 departments reported the total number of doctoral degrees they conferred in 2014-2015 and 2016-2017. The mean change in doctoral degrees awarded was -1, with the median -2.
- There was almost no difference in the change over time across institution types, although public institutions saw a slightly higher drop in doctoral degrees awarded than their private counterparts (the means for both institution types were -1, with the public median -2 and private median 0).

[†] 2014-2015 was the most recent year prior to 2016-2017 that the APSA Departmental Survey asked departments to report the total number of bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees they conferred.

Table 1. Bachelor's Degrees Awarded by Department and Institution Type, 2016-2017

	All Departments			PhD-granting Departments			MA-granting Departments			BA-granting, Political Science Departments			BA-granting, Combined & Social Science Departments		
	Mean	Median	Max	Mean	Median	Max	Mean	Median	Max	Mean	Median	Max	Mean	Median	Max
	n = 164			n = 49			n = 35			n = 55			n = 25		
Public Departments	88	44	479	183	166	479	81	58	235	42	30	200	15	14	65
	n = 185			n = 18			n = 7			n = 109			n = 51		
Private Departments	33	17	265	99	100	265	44	20	90	31	22	168	12	10	62
	n = 349			n = 67			n = 42			n = 164			n = 76		
All Departments	58	27	479	161	144	479	74	55	235	34	24	200	13	10	65

Table 2. Master's Degrees Awarded by Department and Institution Type, 2016-2017

	All Departments			PhD-granting Departments			MA-granting Departments			BA-granting, Political Science Departments			BA-granting, Combined & Social Science Departments		
	Mean	Median	Max	Mean	Median	Max	Mean	Median	Max	Mean	Median	Max	Mean	Median	Max
	n = 75			n = 41			n = 34			n = 0			n = 0		
Public Departments	11	7	87	10	6	87	11	9	37	--	--	--	--	--	--
	n = 18			n = 12			n = 6			n = 0			n = 0		
Private Departments	12	12	33	12	12	33	13	11	22	--	--	--	--	--	--
	n = 93			n = 53			n = 40			n = 0			n = 0		
All Departments	11	8	87	10	6	87	12	10	37	--	--	--	--	--	--

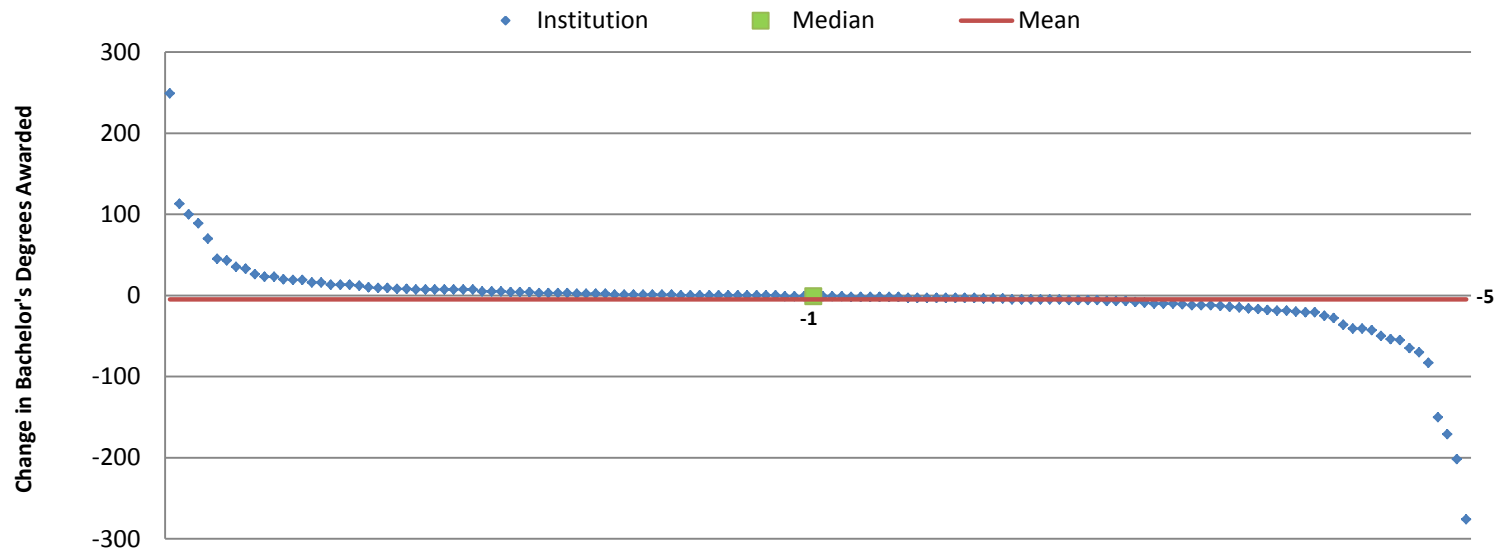
Note: n refers to the number of responding departments for each department and institution type.

Table 3. Doctoral Degrees Awarded by Department and Institution Type, 2016-2017

	All Departments			PhD-granting Departments			MA-granting Departments			BA-granting, Political Science Departments			BA-granting, Combined & Social Science Departments		
	Mean	Median	Max	Mean	Median	Max	Mean	Median	Max	Mean	Median	Max	Mean	Median	Max
	n = 50			n = 50			n = 0			n = 0			n = 0		
Public Departments	6	5	25	6	5	25	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	n = 20			n = 20			n = 0			n = 0			n = 0		
Private Departments	8	8	15	8	8	15	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	n = 70			n = 70			n = 0			n = 0			n = 0		
All Departments	7	5	25	7	5	25	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

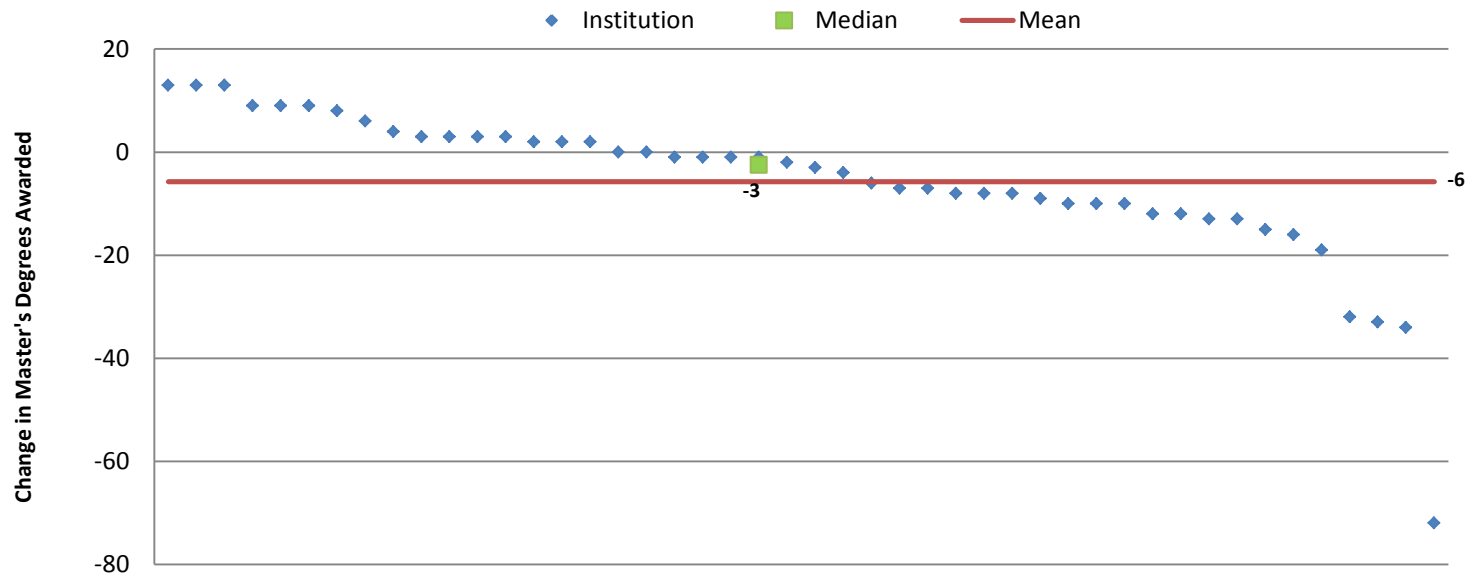
Note: n refers to the number of responding departments for each department and institution type.

Figure 1. Reported Change in Number of Bachelor's Degrees Awarded, 2014-2015 to 2016-2017



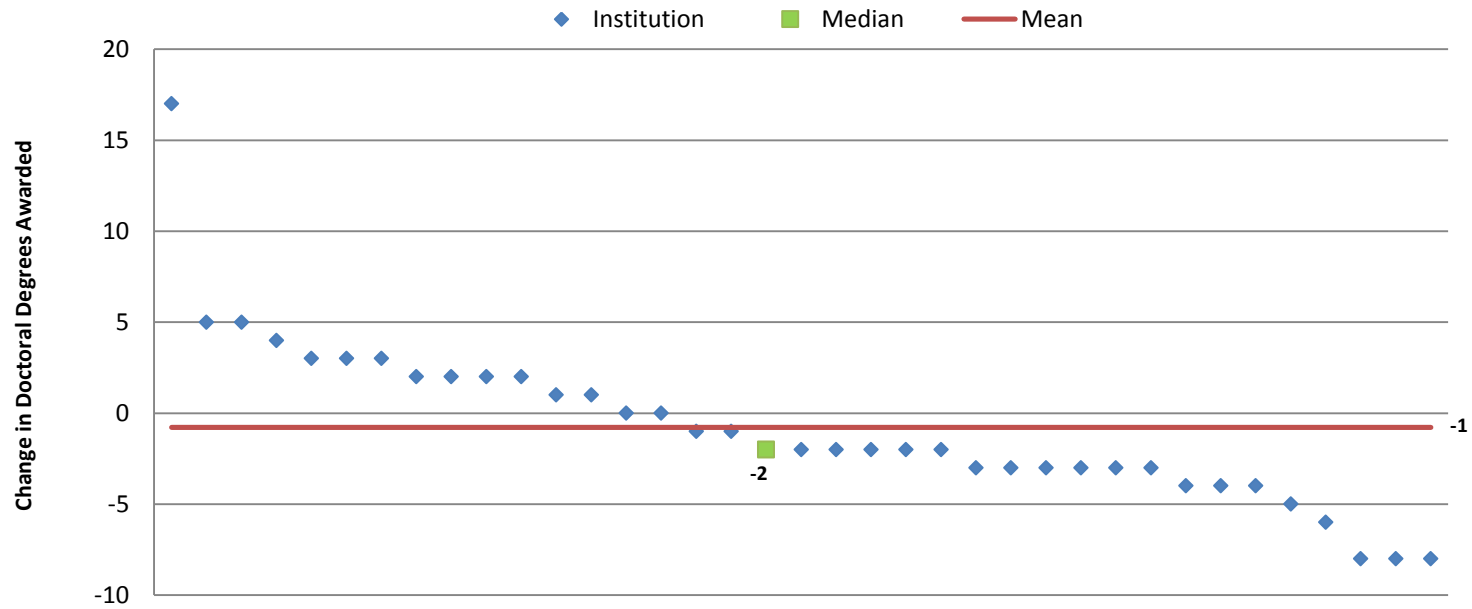
	Number of Departments	Mean	Median
Public Departments	68	-7	-3
Private Departments	70	-2	-1
PhD-granting Departments	35	+3	+7
MA-granting Departments	22	-4	-3
BA-granting, Political Science Departments	61	-9	-2
BA-granting, Combined & Social Science Departments	20	-6	-2
All Departments	138	-5	-1

Figure 2. Reported Change in Number of Master's Degrees Awarded, 2014-2015 to 2016-2017



	Number of Departments	Mean	Median
Public Departments	34	-8	-4
Private Departments	12	+1	-1
PhD-granting Departments	27	-7	-7
MA-granting Departments	19	-3	-1
All Departments	46	-6	-3

Figure 3. Reported Change in Number of Doctoral Degrees Awarded, 2014-2015 to 2016-2017



	Number of Departments	Mean	Median
Public Departments	26	-1	-2
Private Departments	11	-1	0
PhD-granting Departments	37	-1	-2
All Departments	37	-1	-2