



MUS Distance Education Report

May 2026



MUS Distance Education Report

Overview



Online Education is Growing in Montana →

Online Courses, SCH Generation,
Enrollment and Online Learner Metrics

Out-of-State Online Learners →

Out-of State Online Enrollment Trends

Online Learning Serves a Wide Range of Learners →

Selected Student Demographics by
Modality

MUS System Distance Education Program Overview →

2 Year Campus, 4 Year Campus Program
Portfolio and Distance Program Examples

Updates on OCHE Investments →

Canvas Learning Management System,
Parchment Digital Badges, and the MUS
Course Exchange

Future Distance Education Advisory Committee Work →

Course Quality and Data Integrity

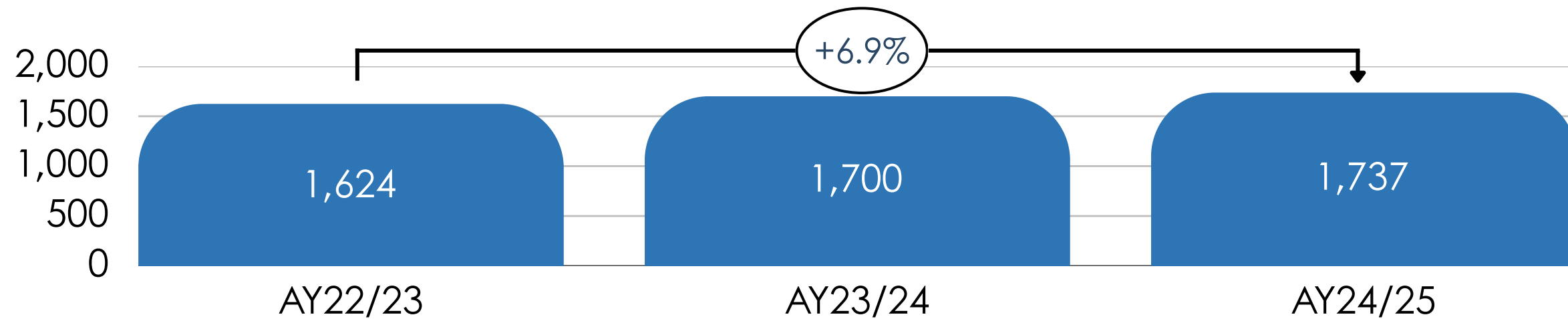


Online Education is Growing in Montana



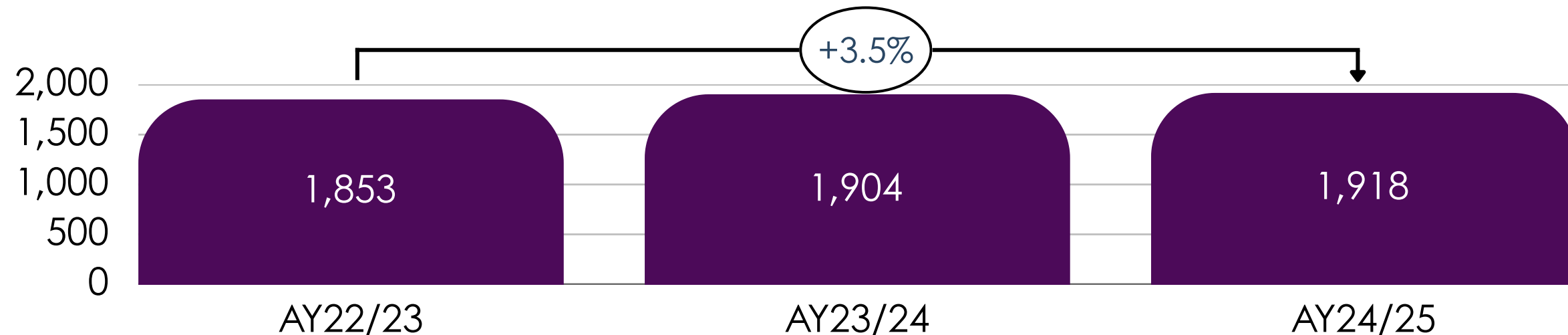
Fully Online (Asynchronous) Course Data — All MUS Institutions

Unique Online Course Offerings



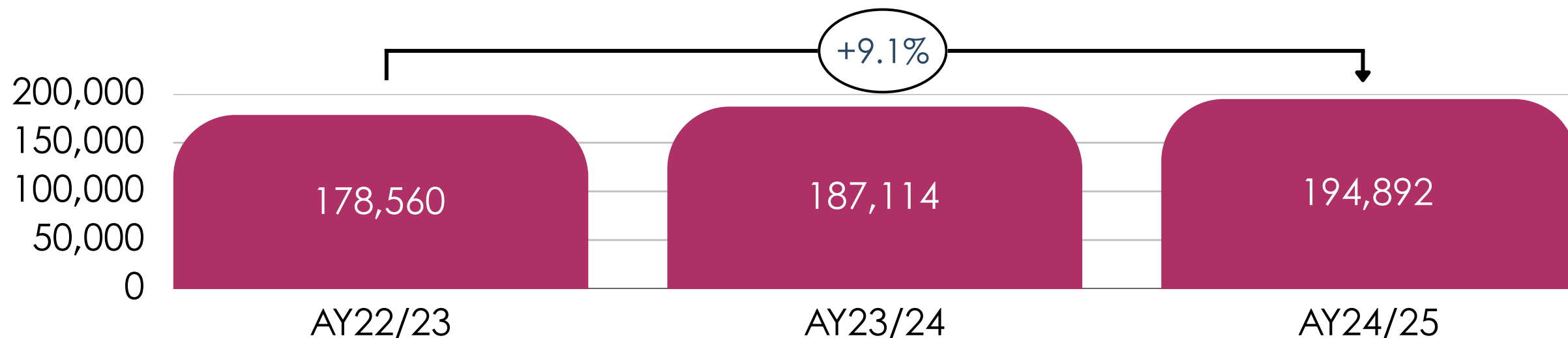
Comparison:
- 0.39% decrease
(All Courses)

Online Course Sections



Comparison:
+ 0.55% increase
(All Courses)

SCH Generation from Online Courses



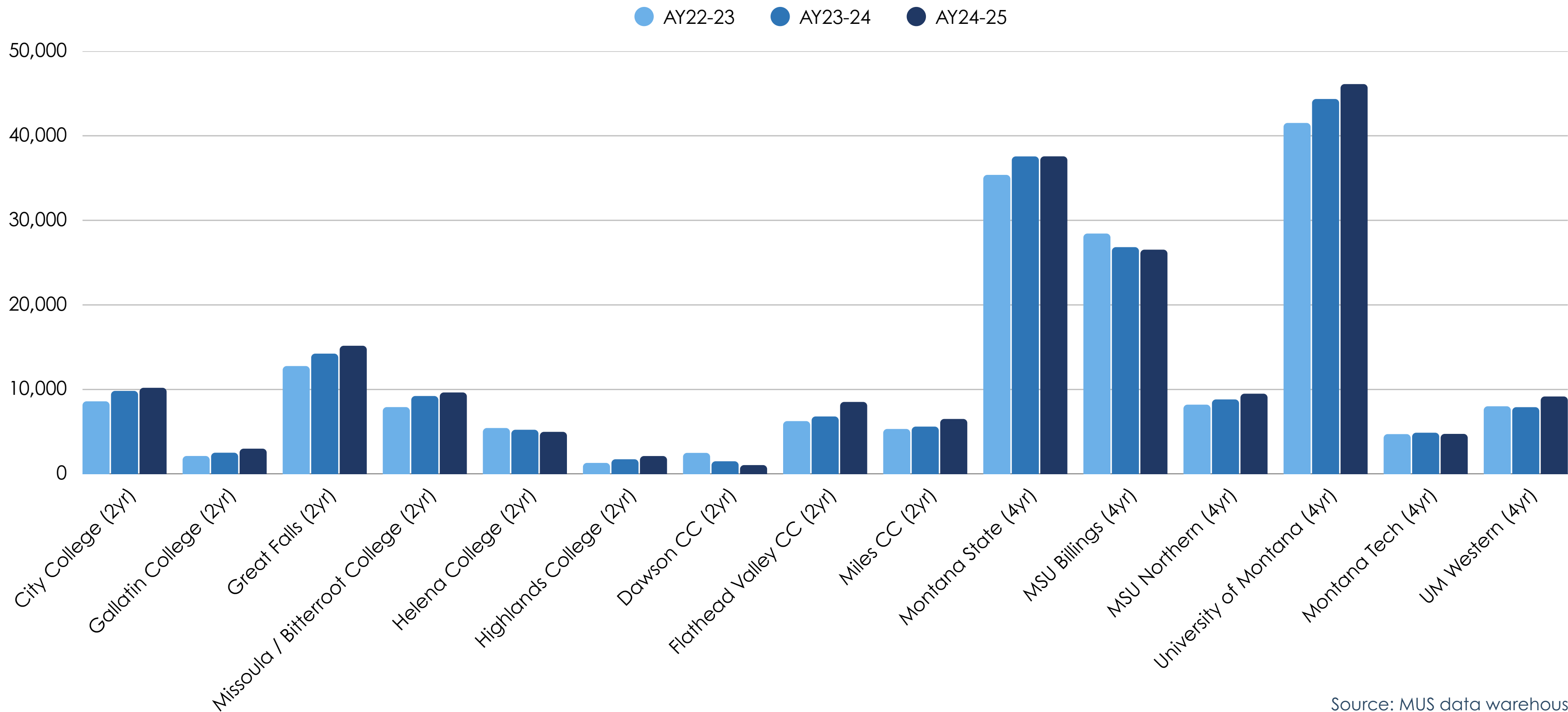
Comparison:
+ 4.5% increase
(All Courses SCH)



Online Education is Growing in Montana



Total SCH Generation from Online Asynchronous Courses by Specific Campus



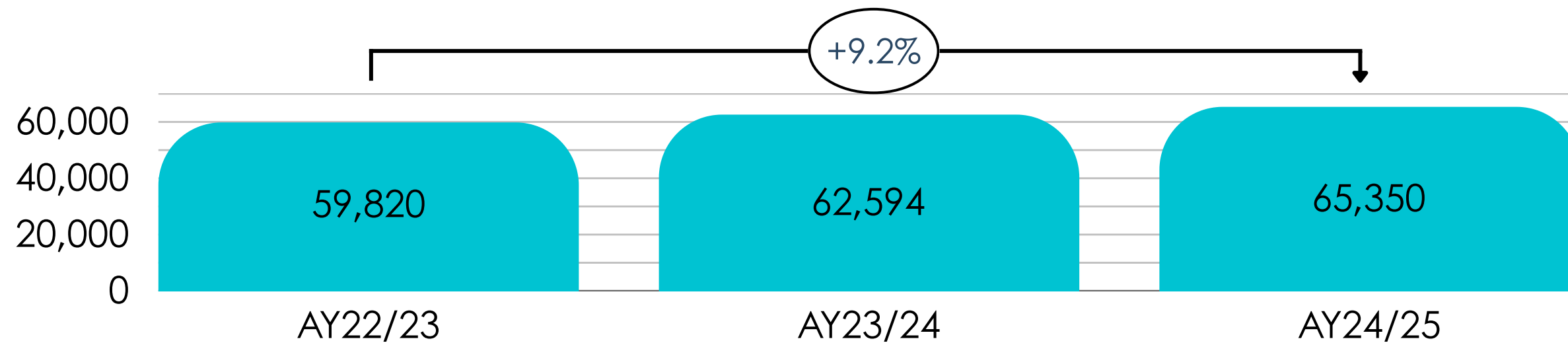


Online Education is Growing in Montana



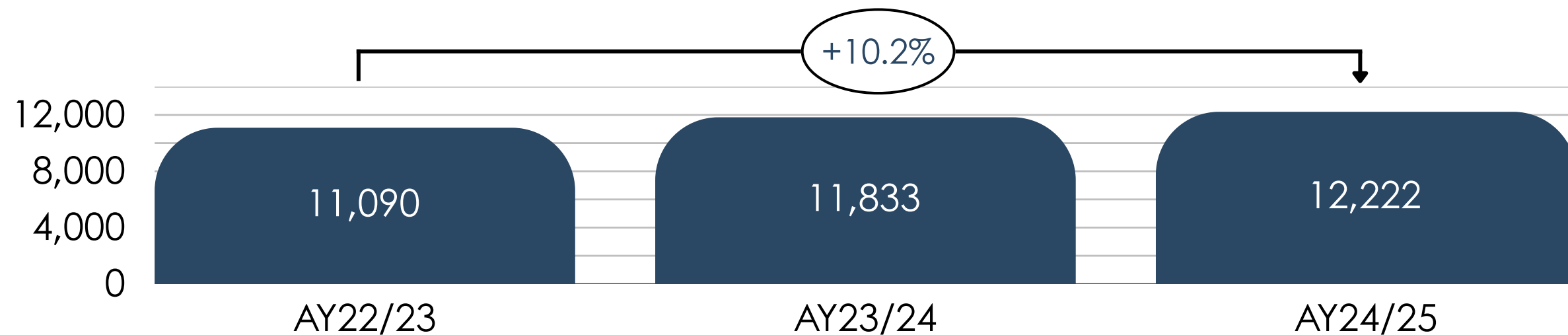
Total Enrollment and Unique Learners from Online Asynchronous Courses — All MUS Institutions

Total Enrollment in Online Courses



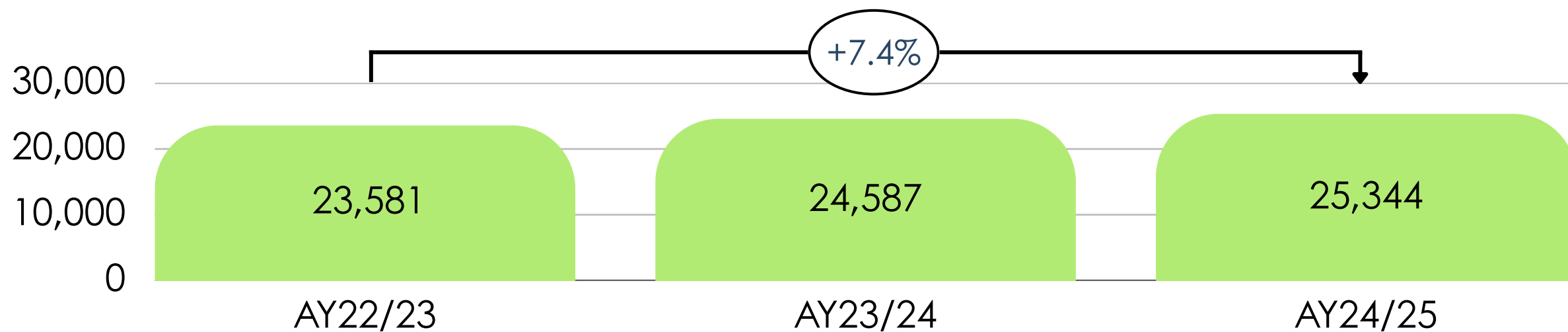
Comparison:
+ 4.5% increase
(All Enrollments)

Unique Learners Enrolled Exclusively in Online Courses



Comparison:
+ 3.1% increase
(F2F Learners)

Unique Learners Served Taking Online Courses



Comparison:
+ 5.4% increase
(All Learners)



Out-of-State Online Learners

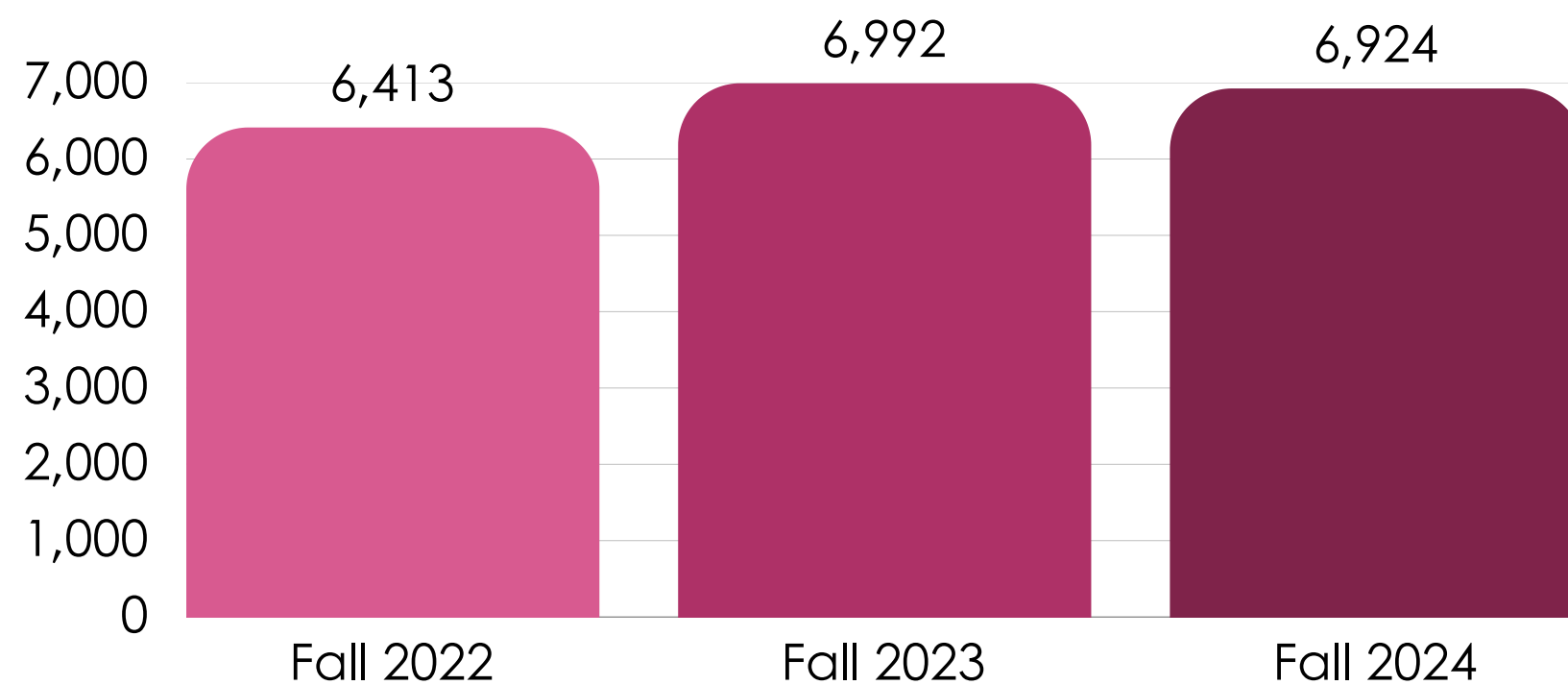


6,924

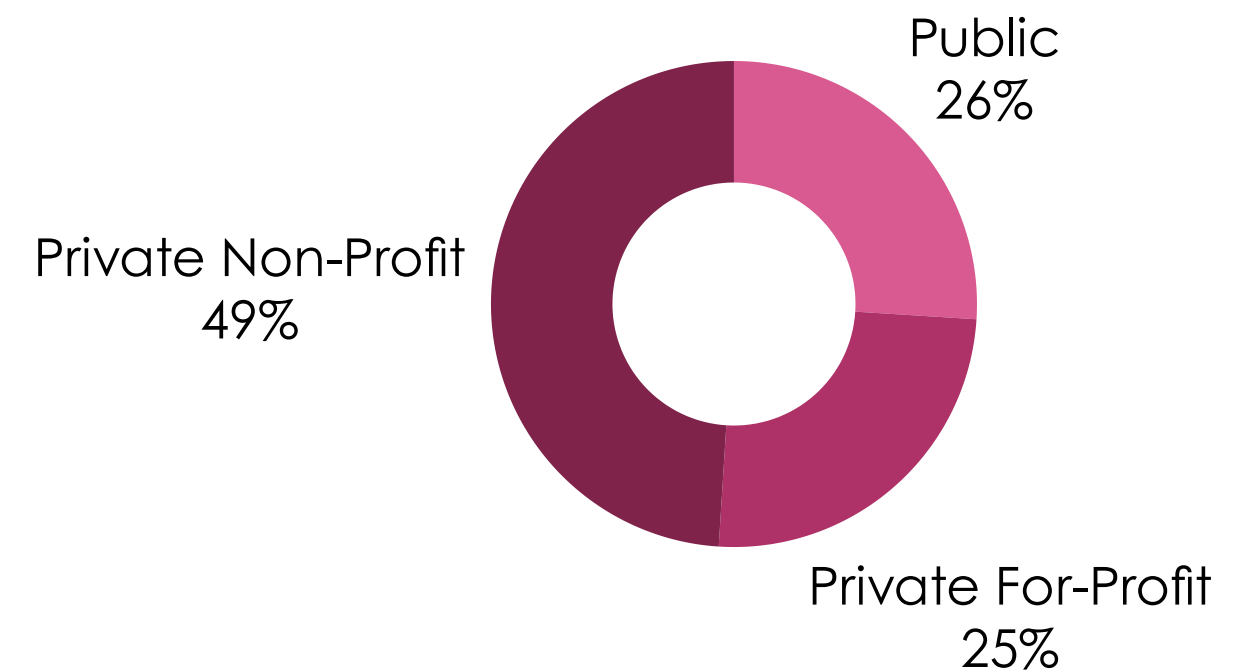
Montanans enrolled exclusively online at out-of-state institutions (Fall 2024)

↑ 7.97% since Fall 2022

Growth in out-of-state online learners



Types of out-of-state institutions Montanans are attending



Top five institutions Montanans are attending

1. Western Governors University
2. Southern New Hampshire University
3. Grand Canyon University
4. University of Phoenix
5. Penn Foster University



Online Learning Serves a Wide Range of Learners



Selected Demographics by Modality — All MUS Institutions (AY 24-25)

Student Type	Face-to-Face	Some Online	Online
% of total resident students	51%	29.4%	19.7%
% of total non-resident	55%	21.9%	23.1%
Graduate students	33.8%	20.5%	45.7%
Undergraduate students	55.5%	29.3%	15.3%
Non-traditional Students	35.3%	25.2%	39.5%
Part time students	46.8%	14.8%	38.4%
Native American Students	44.3%	34.1%	21.7%
Veteran Students	48.4%	37.9%	13.7%
Working students	48.9%	36%	15.2%
Average Credit Load	11.033	12.532	5.572

Online learners are more likely to be non-traditional students, work while attending, pursue graduate programs, and attend part time.



MUS System Distance Education Program Overview

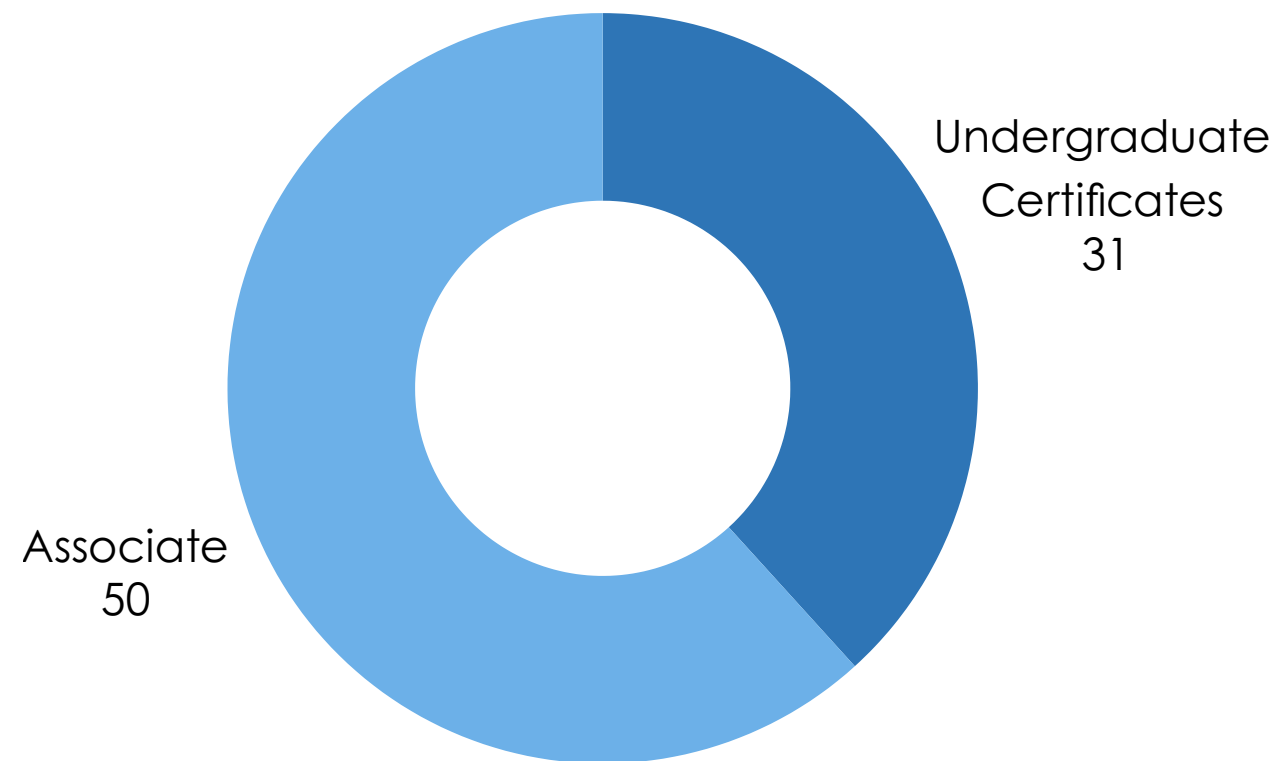


Various Delivery Methods to Meet the Unique Needs and Life Circumstances of our Learners

254
total programs
(systemwide)

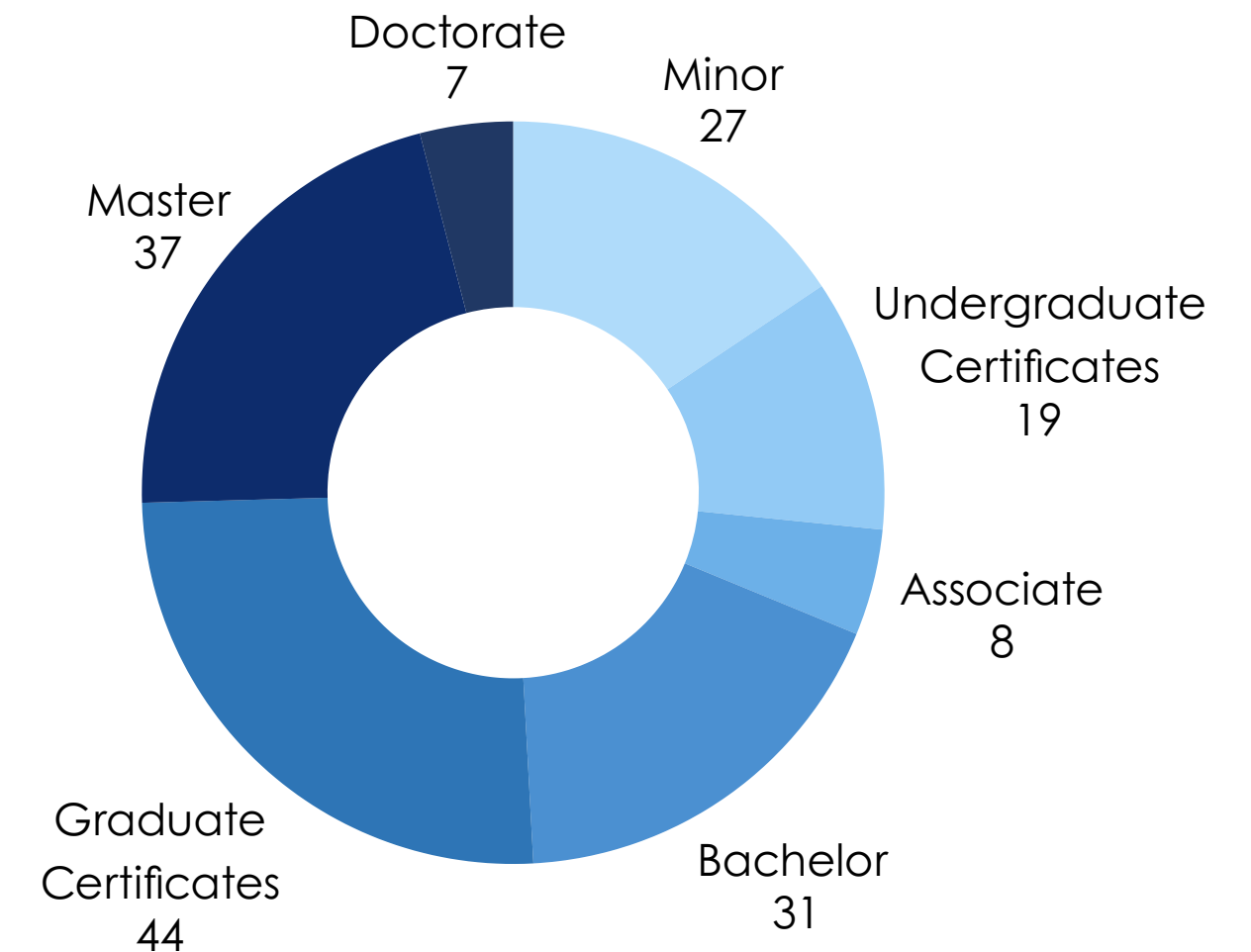
2 Year Campus Distance Education Portfolio

81 programs



4 Year Campus Distance Education Portfolio

173 programs



Online Asynchronous Learning only accounts for a portion of our distance education program portfolio which also includes **Remote** and **Online with Limited On-Site Programs**



Distance Education Program Examples

Various Delivery Methods to Meet the Unique Needs and Life Circumstances of our Learners



Fully Online Programs

Asynchronous coursework delivered via the LMS providing learners with maximum flexibility

Example: Miles City Community College
Associate of Arts- General Studies

Online with Limited Onsite Programs

Couples asynchronous coursework with in-person experiential learning such as clinical placements or internships

Example: Montana State University
Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction

Remote Programs

Synchronous coursework delivered via video conferencing which may include some online offerings

Example: University of Montana
Bachelor of Social Work



Updates on OCHE Investments



MUS Transition to Canvas Learning Management System (LMS)

January 2024

Implementation of Canvas LMS Begins

Fall 2024

First Round of Implementation (4 Institutions)

Fall 2025

All Institutions Using Canvas LMS

Looking Ahead

- Trust Relationships
- Digital Badge Integration



Canvas
By Instructure



Updates on OCHE Investments



Parchment Digital Badge Pilot

4,566

Number of badges issued to date

(Pilot began January 2025)



Institutions utilizing digital badges

- University of Montana
- UM Western
- Montana State
- MSU Billings
- Flathead Valley CC



What are they used for?

Digital badges are virtual learning records that verify a learner's successful completion of an academic or occupational achievement. Digital badges provide a granular snapshot of the knowledge, skills and abilities learners have acquired. They are useful in articulating relevant workforce skills and competencies to current and prospective employers.



Updates on OCHE Investments



MUS Course Exchange

Overview

The MUS Course Exchange is an innovative tool that allows students currently enrolled at MUS institutions to seamlessly enroll in online courses offered by other eligible Montana colleges. Currently, 100-200 level courses that do not require pre-requisites are primarily offered on the exchange.



Benefits to Students

- Expedites degree completion
- Provides a greater cross section of available online courses
- Provides a streamlined admission experience and single billing process



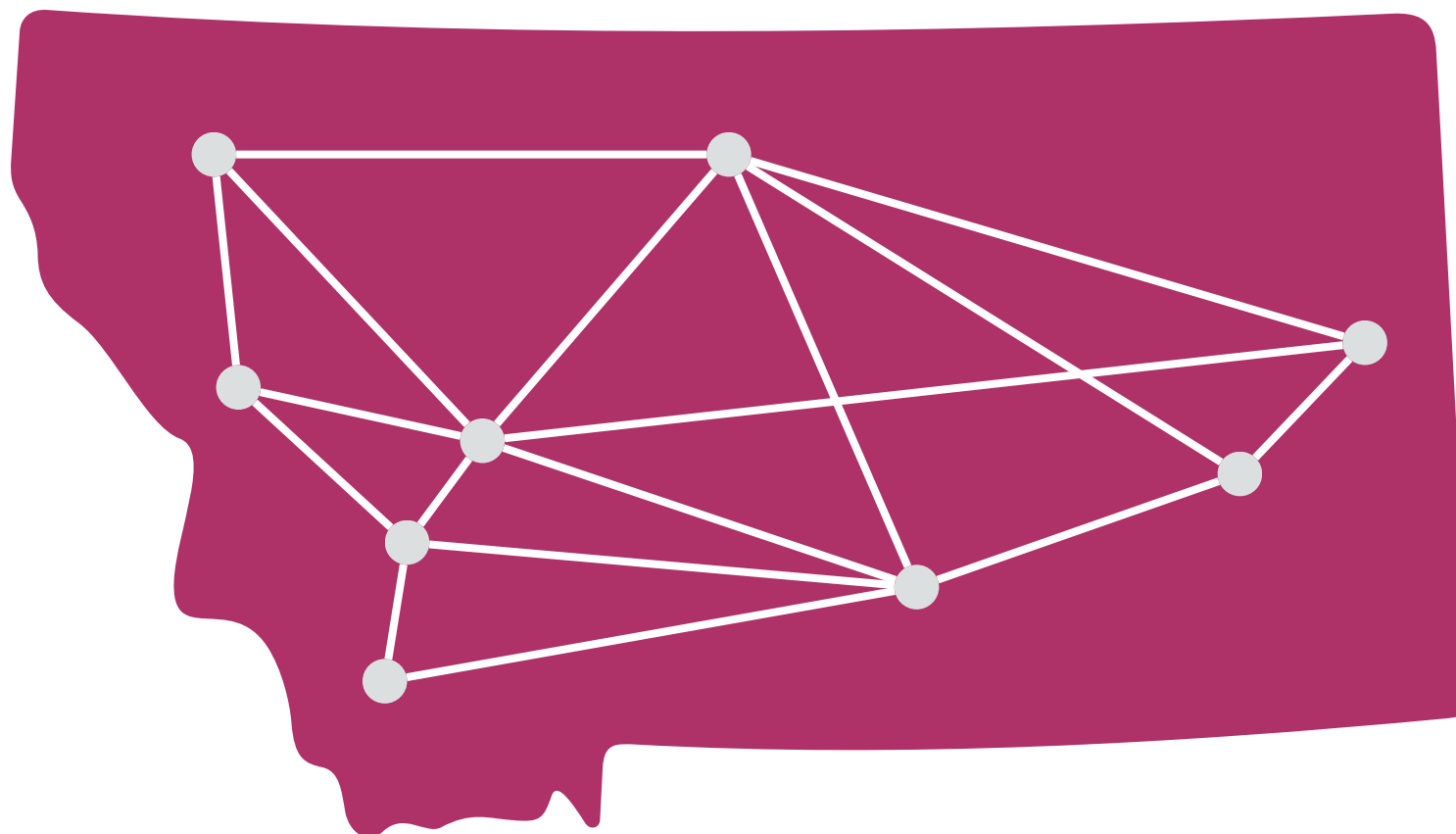
Benefits to Campuses

- Leverages the MUS system's wide reach to support students
- Maximizes enrollment by filling under-enrolled courses
- Helps colleges with fewer options by partnering them campuses with more capacity



Provides New Opportunities

- Potential to offer upper division and graduate level coursework
- Potential for MUS Institutions to explore shared programming and degree models



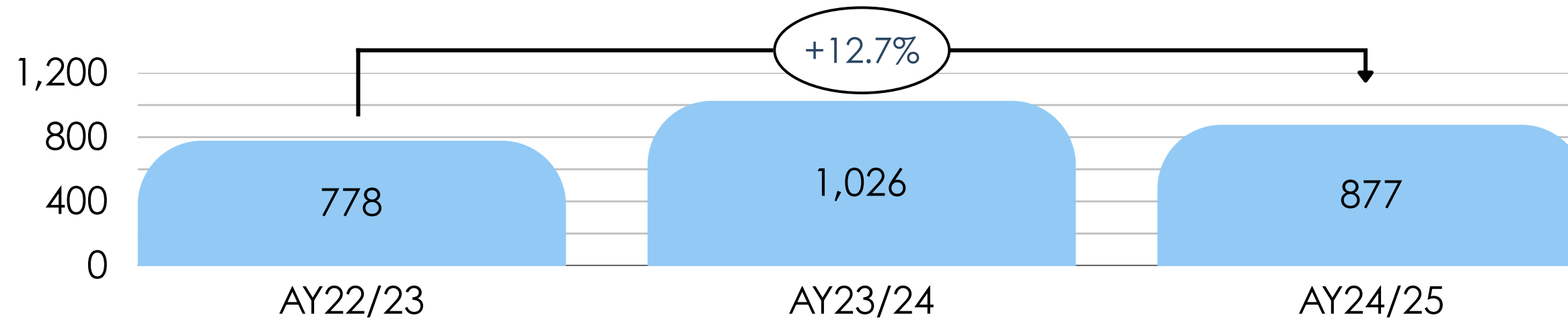


Updates on OCHE Investments

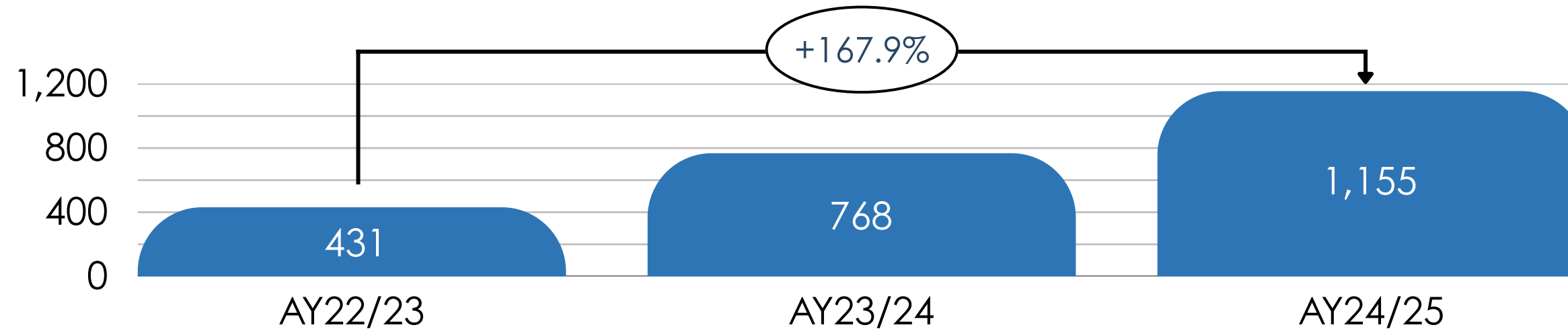


MUS Course Exchange Data Metrics

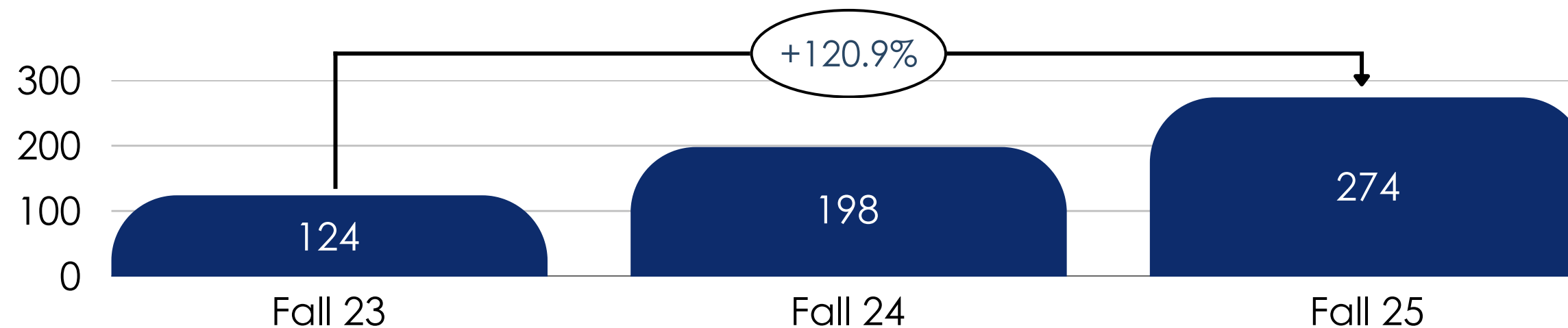
Course Sections Offered



Course Enrollments



Unique Learners Served



Spring 26 represented the largest number of enrollments to date:

635
Course Enrollments

85% increase from Spring 24

Future Distance Education Advisory Committee Work



Course Quality

Ensure that we provide clear guidance on best practices and regulatory compliance

- “MUS Principles of Quality for E-Learning Courses” (Last revised 9/2021)
- Regulatory Alignment: How has the policy landscape shifted?
- Higher Learning Commission, C-RAC Guideline Alignment: Have guidelines changed?
- Best practice alignment: Compare current guidelines with nationally recognized rubrics such as Quality Matters
- Other: Third party publishing, online course size and AI guidance



Data Integrity

Ensure that we have high-quality data regarding distance education within the MUS.

- Ensure institutions implement [BOR 303.7.2](#)
- Ensure accurate recordkeeping between OCHE and MUS institutions regarding curriculum proposals and program inventory
- Research national data benchmarks for distance education program and courses
- Establish KPIs for distance education program and course data
- Establish systems for data tracking