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Higher education and Minnesota demographics

Michael Hemesath

College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University, mhemesath@csbsju.edu

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Demographics

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Higher Education and Minnesota Demographics



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One of the things we spend a significant time thinking about at Saint John's and Saint Ben's is our demographic future. The next 18 entering classes for higher education have already been born. As Jon McGee, Vice President of Planning and Public Affairs, often reminds us, "They are not making any more 18 year-olds." So our attention is focused on where those future 18 year-olds live, what their educational needs and desires might be, and what our competitors might be doing to win their affection.

Our demographic destiny was on my mind as I listened to an interesting MPR story on Minnesota population growth. The [story reported](#) that the state's total population had grown by over 185,000 in the last five years. What was particularly interesting were the sources of that growth:

Minnesota is actually losing population to other states. About 4,200 more people moved out of the Twin Cities than moved in. Immigration from abroad more than made up for that, though. Fifty-eight thousand people born in other countries moved in over the half-decade span. But even new immigrants account for just a fraction of the region's growth. Two-thirds of it is from native Minnesotans. "Really it's births that are driving the largest share of growth," said Susan Brower, Minnesota state demographer.

There are several interesting takeaways from this story:

1. Though Minnesota's growth has been slower than United States' growth over the past five years – 3.50% versus 3.70% – [Minnesota is growing faster](#) than other Midwestern states including Wisconsin, Iowa, Michigan, Illinois and Ohio.
2. Future college students in Minnesota are likely to be more [demographically diverse](#) as foreign born parents are much more likely to be people of color and native born populations of color are growing faster than the white population. We are, of course, already seeing this demographic change in our current student population, but this trend will grow.
3. The share of native born Minnesota children going to college will be higher than similar populations in other states because their parents are well-educated. As Carleton economist Nathan Grawe has found in his research, parental education attainment is a very good predictor for college attendance by children. Over 30% of Minnesota's population

has a bachelor's degree, putting MN in the **top 10 nationwide**. College educated parents having babies is good news for colleges, especially colleges with a high percentage of legacy students, like CSB and SJU where over 30% of our students are in that category.

So while we often focus on the relatively slow population growth in the upper Midwest as a reason for enrollment concern in the years ahead, this story and the data behind it brought a ray of sunshine as we go into the heart of the enrollment season.

Though Minnesota is not growing like Texas or California (where we will continue to look for future Johnnies and Bennies), we are better off than most of our Midwestern peers, both in terms of actual population and the make-up of that population.

But we still need our alumni and friends to send great students our way!!

Michael Hemesath | March 29th, 2016 | Categories: [Higher Education](#) | [0 Comments](#)

About the Author: **Michael Hemesath**



Michael Hemesath is the 13th president of Saint John's University. A 1981 SJU graduate, Hemesath is the first layperson appointed to a full presidential term at SJU. You can find him on Twitter [at] [PrezHemesath](#).