

College Student Loan Debt: 2021

by Andrew Gillen, PhD

DEBT



September 2021



Texas Public Policy
Foundation

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Andrew Gillen, PhD

This annual report uses new data released by the U.S. Department of Education's College Scorecard to examine typical college student loan debt. This report can help students and parents make more informed college enrollment decisions. It can also help policymakers determine which areas of higher education may have a problem of excessive student loan debt.

U.S. Department of Education's College Scorecard Data

Before presenting the results of our analysis, a few technical notes:

- This report focuses on median student loan debt among college graduates who borrowed.
- The College Scorecard data report median student loan debt by program, which is a college/major/level of degree combination. For example, the bachelor's degree major (the level) in accounting (the major) at the University of Texas – Austin (the college) would be one program.
 - There are roughly 244,000 programs in the U.S. But around 50,000 of these are programs at branch campuses whose data are pooled with the parent campus, and another 50,000 have no graduates.
 - Programs with few graduates or few graduates with student loan debt data have their data suppressed to protect student privacy.
 - There are roughly 51,000 programs with student loan debt data, and these programs account for 73% of all graduates. We focus on the 47,000 of these programs that grant degrees.
- College Scorecard has median student loan debt data for three overlapping cohorts defined by their graduation year.
 - 2014-15 and 2015-16
 - 2015-16 and 2016-17
 - 2016-17 and 2017-18
- Debt is the cumulative amount borrowed by graduates who borrowed through the Stafford or Graduate PLUS loan programs. Parent PLUS and Perkins loans are not included. Debt does not include any accrued interest ([U.S. Department of Education, 2021, pp. 4-5](#)).
- Data are organized by degrees awarded, not by unique students. This means that some students who double majored are counted twice in the data.
- Values are not adjusted for inflation since debt is denominated in nominal dollars.

Key Points

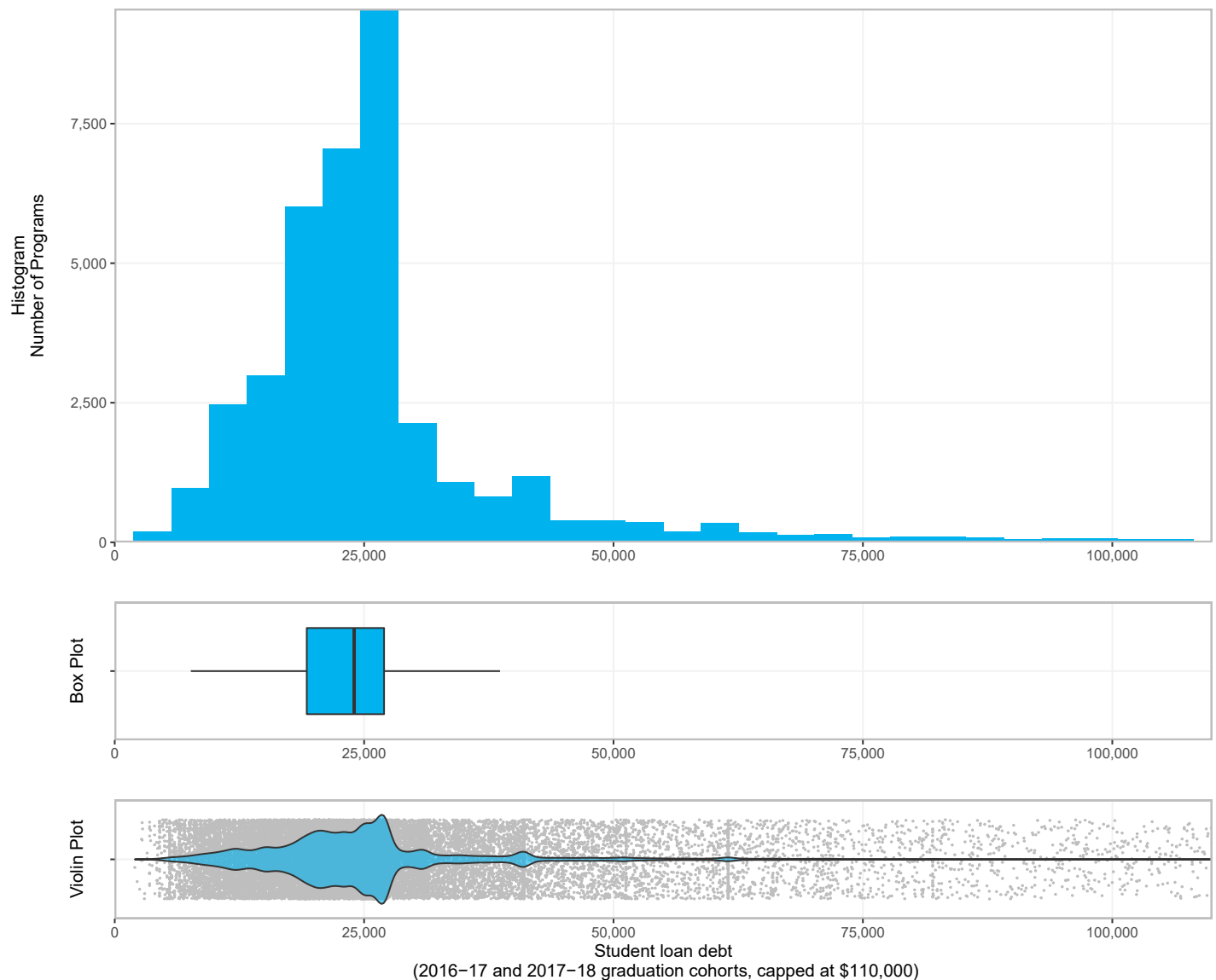
- New data from the U.S. Department of Education reveal the typical student loan debt of recent college graduates.
- Median student loan debt varies by credential: associate degree (\$14,000), bachelor's degree (\$23,000), master's degree (\$40,000), professional degree (\$142,000), and doctoral degree (\$73,000).
- We report median student loan debt by academic field (4-digit CIP code) and credential.
- We document which of the largest academic fields and degrees had the biggest growth or decline in student loan debt.
- Graduates from for-profit colleges generally have the highest student loan debt, followed by graduates from private nonprofits, and then graduates from public colleges.

College Graduate Student Loan Debt

Figure 1 shows the distribution of median college graduate student loan debt for students who borrowed and graduated in 2016-17 and 2017-18. The top portion is a histogram, which shows the number of programs in each bin. The next portion shows the same distribution as a box plot. In a box plot, the shaded box shows the middle 50% of observations, with the thick line near the middle representing the median value. The whiskers show the range of values relatively close to the median. The bottom portion shows the same distribution as a violin plot. In a violin plot, each program is a small grey dot, and the blue shape represents the relative frequency of values. A significant tapering off is visible at a value of \$31,000, which is the maximum amount that a dependent undergraduate can borrow.

Figure 1

College Graduate Student Loan Debt



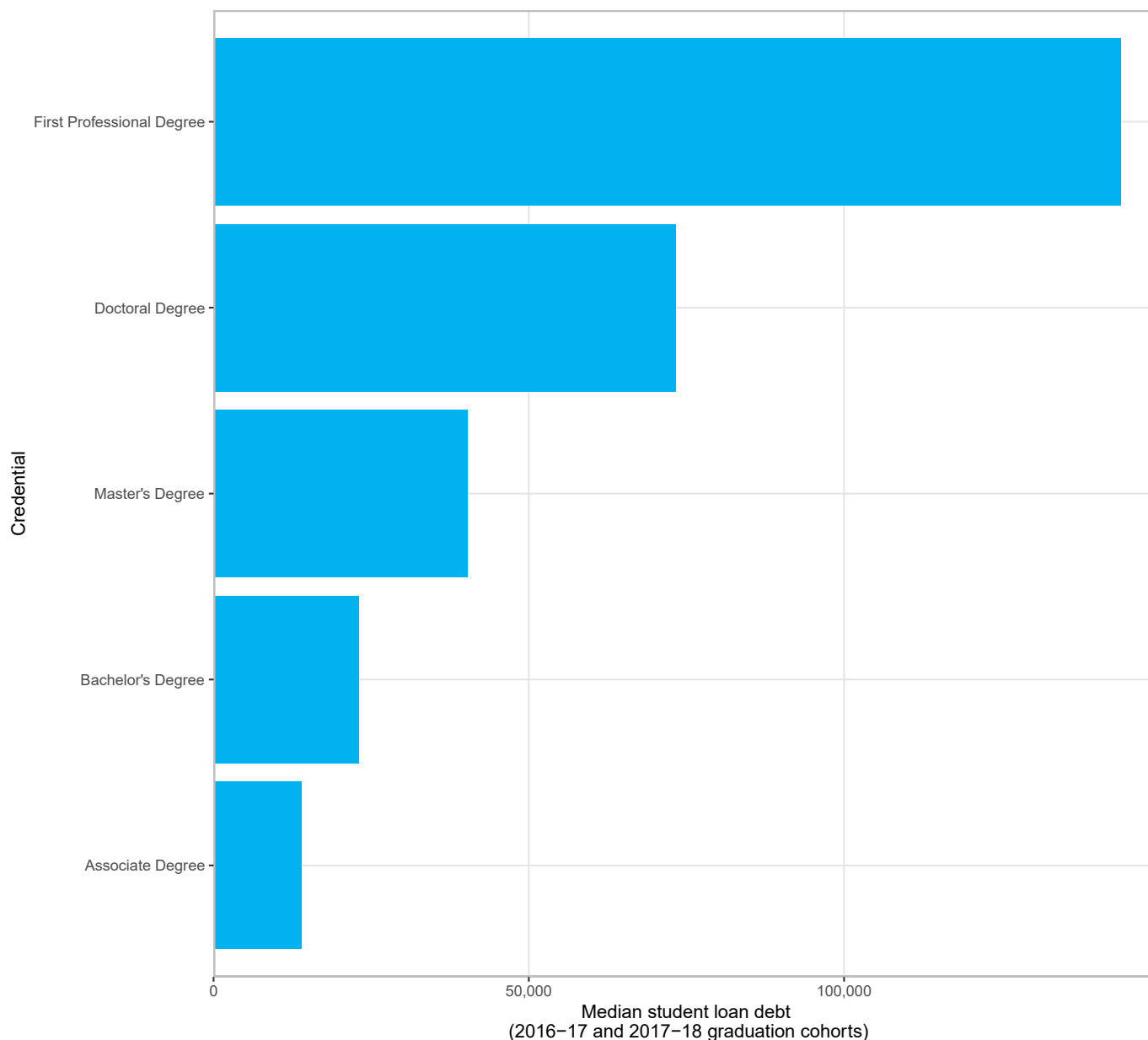
Note. Data from U.S. Department of Education and author's calculations; outliers have been suppressed in the box plot..

College Graduate Student Loan Debt by Credential

Figure 2 shows the median student loan debt by credential for borrowers from the 2016-17 and 2017-18 graduating cohorts. Associate degree graduates borrowed the least at \$14,000. Bachelor's degree graduates borrowed \$23,000. Graduate students borrowed more, with master's degree graduates borrowing \$40,000, professional degree recipients borrowing \$144,000, and doctoral degree graduates borrowing \$73,000.

Figure 2

Median Student Loan Debt by Credential

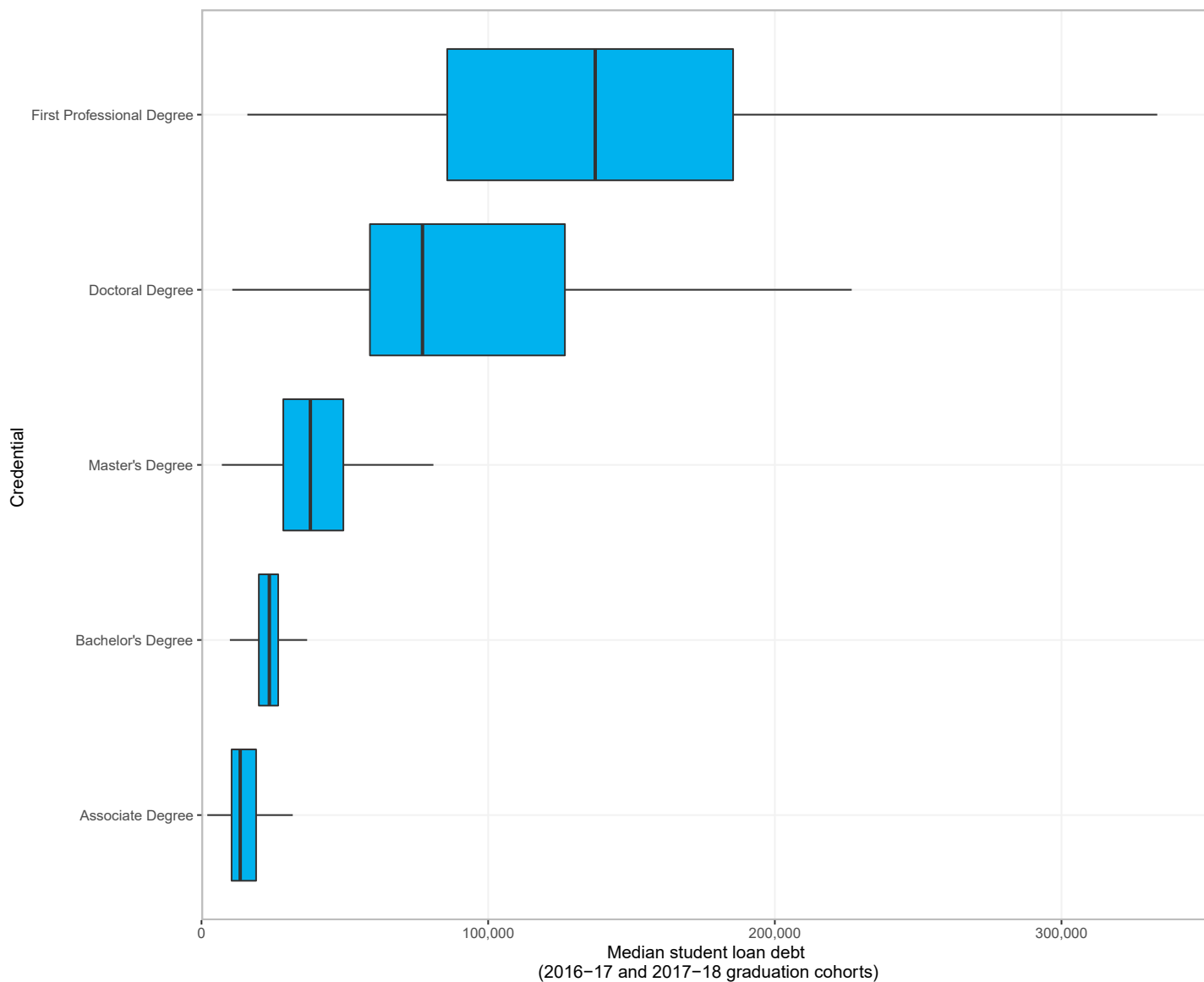


Note. Data from U.S. Department of Education and author's calculations.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of the student loan debt among programs. The high borrowing among some doctoral and professional programs obscures the lower borrowing among lower degree levels, so **Figure 3** reports the distribution for only associate and bachelor's degrees programs.

Figure 3

Distribution of Median Student Loan Debt by Credential

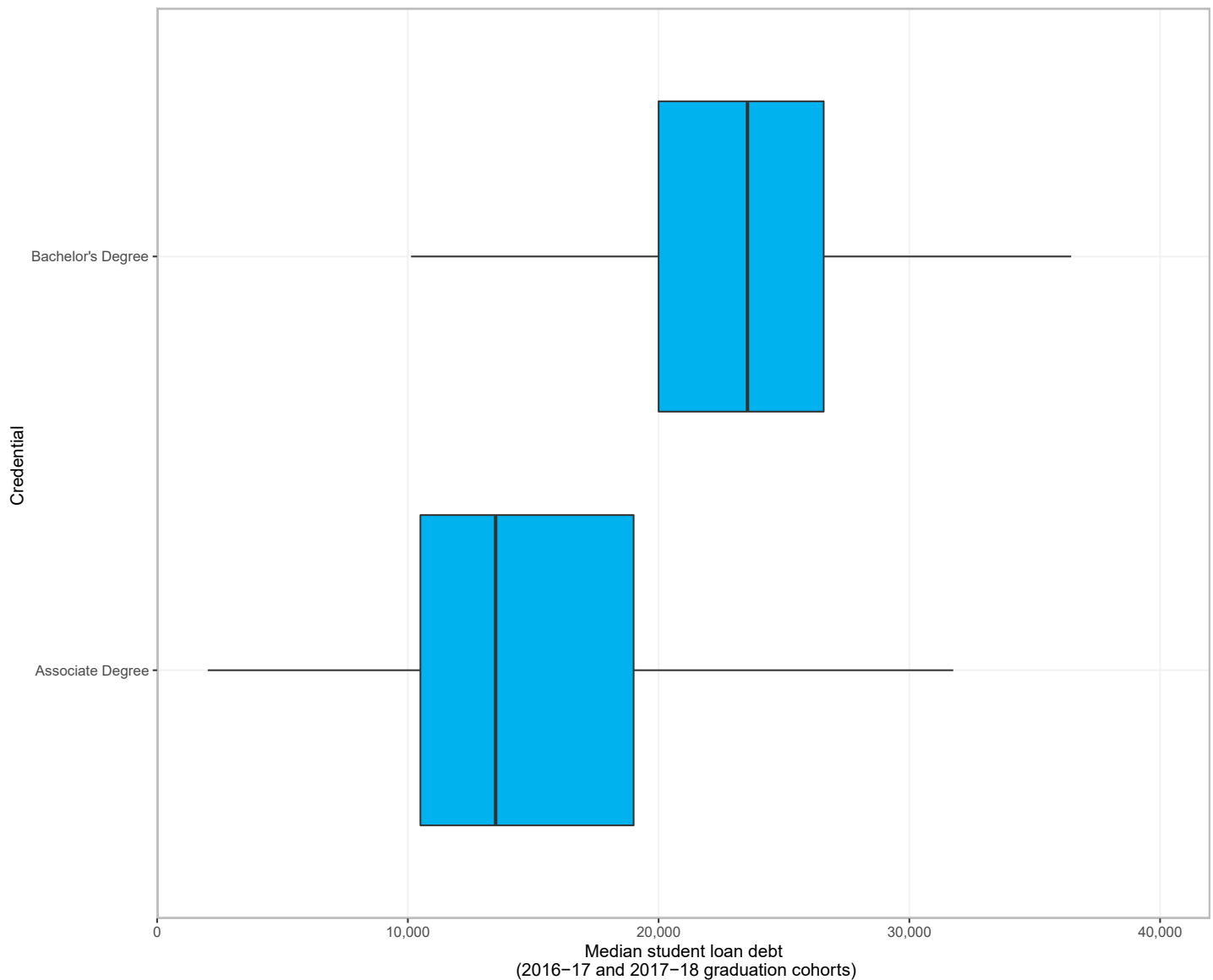


Note. Data from U.S. Department of Education and author's calculations; outliers have been suppressed.

High debt levels for graduate degrees somewhat obscures the debt for undergraduate degrees, so **Figure 4** shows the results for associate and bachelor's degrees only.

Figure 4

Distribution of Median Student Loan Debt by Credential: Associate and Bachelor's Degrees



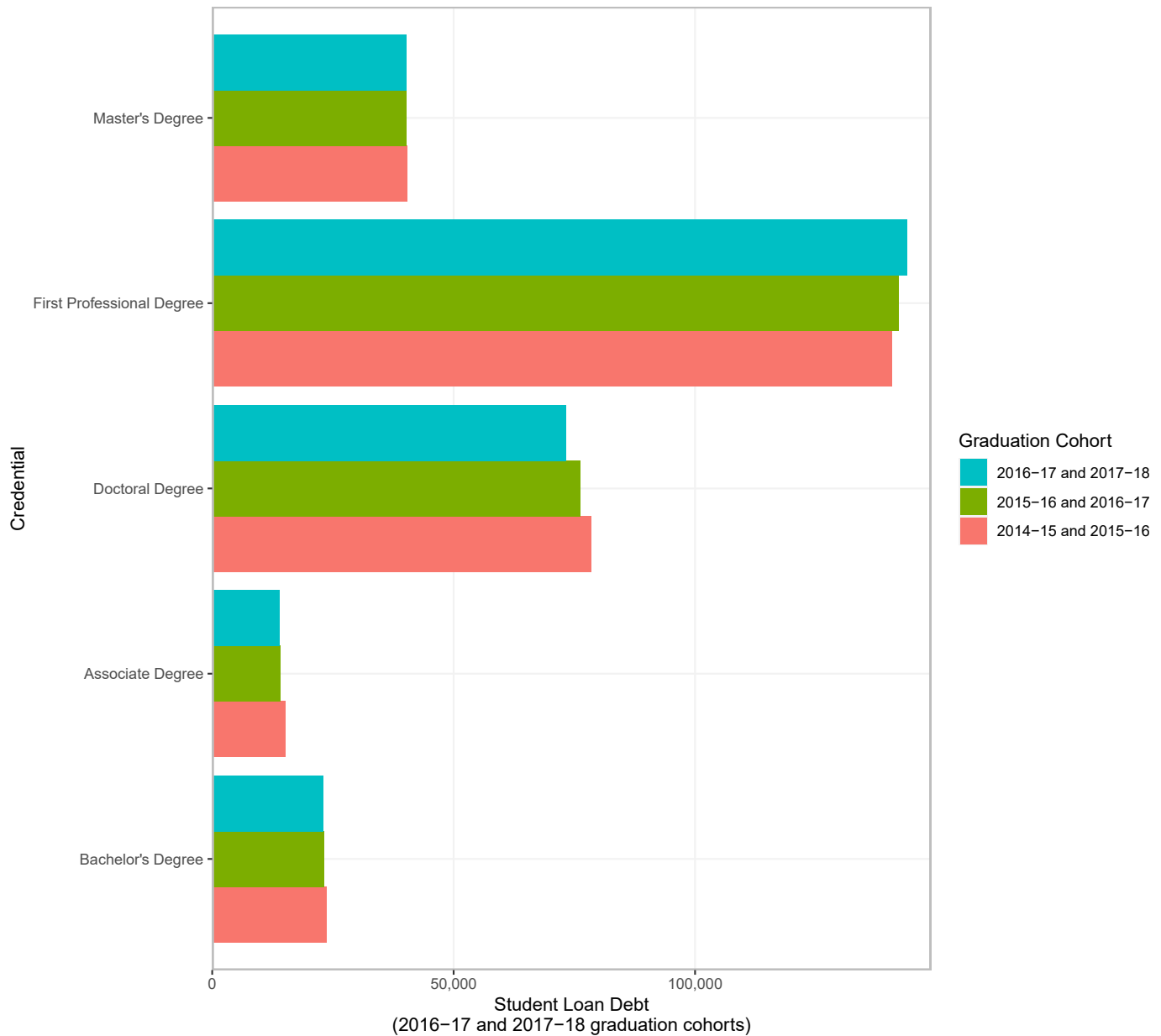
Note. Data from U.S. Department of Education and author's calculations; outliers have been suppressed.

Trends in Student Loan Debt

Figure 5 reports the median student loan debt among borrowers by graduating cohort. Compared to the debt of the 2014-15 and 2015-16 cohort, debt levels for the 2016-17 and 2017-18 cohorts fell slightly among associate, bachelor's, and master's degrees recipients. Debt fell by over \$5,000 for doctoral degree recipients and increased by over \$3,000 for professional degree recipients.

Figure 5

Median Student Loan Debt by Degree and Cohort



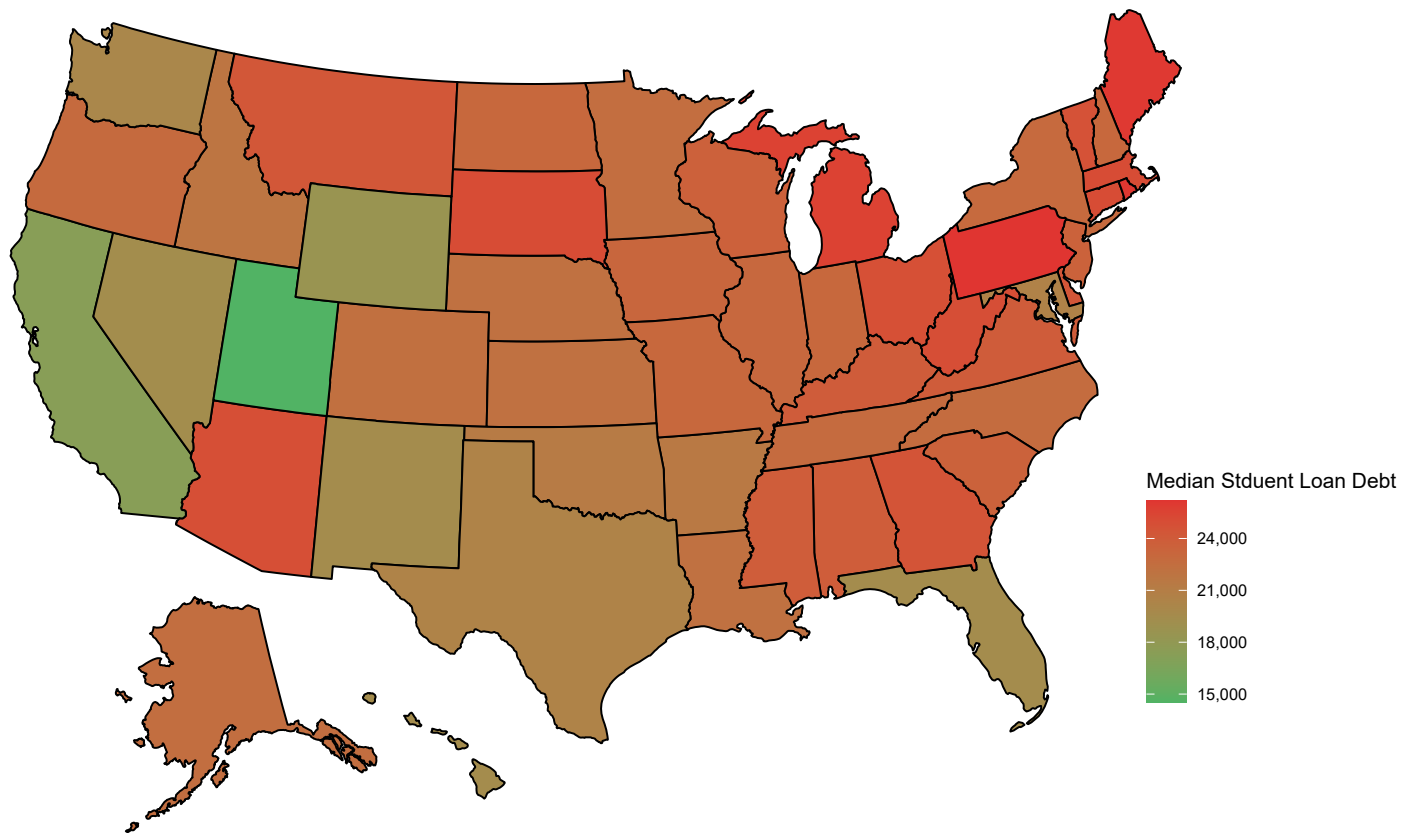
Note. Data from U.S. Department of Education and author's calculations.

Student Loan Debt by State

Figure 6 shows a map of student loan debt of bachelor's degree recipients by state.

Figure 6

Median Student Loan Debt by State: Bachelor's Degree



Note. Data from U.S. Department of Education and author's calculations.

Student Loan Debt by Academic Field and Credential

Table 1 reports student loan debt by academic field and credential.

Table 1

Median Student Loan Debt by Academic Field and Credential

Academic Field (CIP Code)	Associate Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	1st Professional Degree	Doctoral Degree
Accounting and Computer Science (3016)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Accounting and Related Services (5203)	\$18,928	\$23,000	\$28,341	NA	NA
Advanced/Graduate Dentistry and Oral Sciences (5105)	NA	NA	\$138,857	NA	NA
Aerospace, Aeronautical and Astronautical Engineering (1402)	NA	\$23,875	\$43,250	NA	NA
African Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics (1602)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Agricultural and Domestic Animal Services (105)	\$12,000	\$23,855	NA	NA	NA
Agricultural and Food Products Processing (104)	NA	\$21,500	NA	NA	NA
Agricultural Business and Management (101)	\$12,000	\$17,274	\$25,500	NA	NA
Agricultural Engineering (1403)	NA	\$22,521	NA	NA	NA
Agricultural Mechanization (102)	\$12,340	\$21,314	NA	NA	NA

Academic Field (CIP Code)	Associate Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	1st Professional Degree	Doctoral Degree
Agricultural Production Operations (103)	\$11,961	\$20,819	NA	NA	NA
Agricultural Public Services (108)	NA	\$18,545	\$26,637	NA	NA
Agriculture, Agriculture Operations, and Related Sciences, Other (199)	NA	\$20,641	\$27,554	NA	NA
Agriculture, General (100)	\$9,765	\$20,500	\$21,360	NA	NA
Agriculture/Veterinary Preparatory Programs (113)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Air Force ROTC, Air Science and Operations (2801)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Air Transportation (4901)	\$17,665	\$23,527	\$36,217	NA	NA
Allied Health and Medical Assisting Services (5108)	\$18,879	\$21,902	\$130,030	NA	NA
Allied Health Diagnostic, Intervention, and Treatment Professions (5109)	\$17,345	\$24,500	\$108,562	NA	\$41,000
Alternative and Complementary Medical Support Services (5134)	NA	NA	\$57,135	NA	NA
Alternative and Complementary Medicine and Medical Systems (5133)	\$35,750	\$37,957	\$112,743	\$230,103	\$154,484
American Indian/Native American Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics (1610)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
American Sign Language (1616)	NA	\$21,262	\$33,304	NA	NA
Animal Sciences (109)	\$12,000	\$20,499	NA	NA	NA
Anthropology (4502)	NA	\$21,271	\$35,935	NA	\$21,219
Apparel and Textiles (1909)	\$13,979	\$23,030	\$61,361	NA	NA
Applied Horticulture and Horticultural Business Services (106)	\$14,383	\$20,702	NA	NA	NA
Applied Mathematics (2703)	NA	\$19,426	\$57,748	NA	NA
Archeology (4503)	NA	\$20,723	NA	NA	NA
Architectural Engineering Technologies/Technicians (1501)	\$13,720	\$22,723	NA	NA	NA
Architectural Engineering (1404)	NA	\$27,102	\$16,279	NA	NA
Architectural History and Criticism (408)	NA	\$21,500	NA	NA	NA
Architectural Sciences and Technology (409)	\$12,918	\$26,704	\$66,685	NA	NA
Architecture and Related Services, Other (499)	NA	\$25,500	NA	NA	NA
Architecture (402)	NA	\$26,086	\$41,000	NA	NA
Area Studies (501)	NA	\$19,368	\$61,262	NA	NA
Army ROTC, Military Science and Operations (2803)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Arts, Entertainment, and Media Management (5010)	\$20,151	\$25,000	\$40,326	NA	NA
Astronomy and Astrophysics (4002)	NA	\$18,723	NA	NA	NA
Atmospheric Sciences and Meteorology (4004)	NA	\$25,621	NA	NA	NA
Audiovisual Communications Technologies/Technicians (1002)	\$16,146	\$27,687	\$50,400	NA	NA
Basic Skills and Developmental/Remedial Education (3201)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Behavioral Sciences (3017)	\$21,550	\$39,890	\$59,127	NA	NA
Bible/Biblical Studies (3902)	\$24,844	\$23,819	\$23,000	NA	NA
Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education (1302)	NA	NA	\$22,036	NA	NA
Biochemical Engineering (1443)	NA	\$24,709	NA	NA	NA
Biochemistry, Biophysics and Molecular Biology (2602)	NA	\$20,018	\$42,771	NA	NA
Bioethics/Medical Ethics (5132)	NA	\$17,502	\$59,554	NA	NA
Biological and Biomedical Sciences, Other (2699)	\$9,750	\$23,906	\$51,203	NA	NA
Biological and Physical Sciences (3001)	\$8,548	\$25,717	\$50,550	NA	NA

Academic Field (CIP Code)	Associate Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	1st Professional Degree	Doctoral Degree
Biological/Biosystems Engineering (1445)	NA	\$22,120	NA	NA	NA
Biology Technician/Biotechnology Laboratory Technician (4101)	\$7,200	\$27,000	NA	NA	NA
Biology, General (2601)	\$9,599	\$22,891	\$35,199	NA	\$49,838
Biomathematics, Bioinformatics, and Computational Biology (2611)	NA	\$16,716	\$62,595	NA	NA
Biomedical/Medical Engineering (1405)	NA	\$23,138	\$33,025	NA	NA
Biopsychology (3010)	NA	\$24,117	NA	NA	NA
Biotechnology (2612)	\$9,437	\$22,402	\$40,336	NA	NA
Boilermaking/Boilermaker (4808)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Botany/Plant Biology (2603)	NA	\$21,198	NA	NA	NA
Building/Construction Finishing, Management, and Inspection (4604)	\$20,088	\$23,948	NA	NA	NA
Business Administration, Management and Operations (5202)	\$17,569	\$23,250	\$40,855	NA	\$77,239
Business Operations Support and Assistant Services (5204)	\$17,021	\$16,200	NA	NA	NA
Business, Management, Marketing, and Related Support Services, Other (5299)	\$19,194	\$21,416	\$43,786	NA	NA
Business/Commerce, General (5201)	\$19,061	\$23,106	\$41,000	NA	\$136,333
Business/Corporate Communications (5205)	NA	\$22,819	\$41,000	NA	NA
Business/Managerial Economics (5206)	NA	\$20,119	\$36,123	NA	NA
Carpenters (4602)	\$13,338	NA	NA	NA	NA
Cell/Cellular Biology and Anatomical Sciences (2604)	\$15,563	\$20,146	\$43,356	NA	NA
Celtic Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics (1613)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Ceramic Sciences and Engineering (1406)	NA	\$27,034	NA	NA	NA
Chemical Engineering (1407)	NA	\$23,106	\$34,000	NA	NA
Chemistry (4005)	NA	\$23,096	\$31,446	NA	NA
Chiropractic (5101)	NA	NA	NA	\$179,038	NA
Citizenship Activities (3301)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
City/Urban, Community and Regional Planning (403)	NA	\$19,925	\$41,000	NA	NA
Civil Engineering Technologies/Technicians (1502)	\$15,250	\$27,000	NA	NA	NA
Civil Engineering (1408)	NA	\$24,035	\$27,931	NA	NA
Classical and Ancient Studies (3022)	NA	\$26,443	NA	NA	NA
Classics and Classical Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics (1612)	NA	\$22,244	NA	NA	NA
Clinical Psychology (4202)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Clinical, Counseling and Applied Psychology (4228)	\$13,418	\$25,000	\$51,489	\$69,288	\$114,372
Clinical/Medical Laboratory Science/Research and Allied Professions (5110)	\$15,754	\$23,718	\$67,451	NA	NA
Cognitive Psychology and Psycholinguistics (4203)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Cognitive Science (3025)	NA	\$17,052	\$31,498	NA	NA
Communication and Media Studies (901)	\$10,929	\$22,500	\$38,882	NA	\$101,392
Communication Disorders Sciences and Services (5102)	NA	\$20,890	\$41,040	\$109,554	\$121,621
Communication, Journalism, and Related Programs, Other (999)	\$15,753	\$24,233	\$58,586	NA	NA
Communications Technologies/Technicians and Support Services, Other (1099)	NA	\$22,812	NA	NA	NA
Communications Technology/Technician (1001)	\$13,425	\$20,067	NA	NA	NA
Community Organization and Advocacy (4402)	\$12,407	\$25,199	\$41,679	NA	NA

Academic Field (CIP Code)	Associate Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	1st Professional Degree	Doctoral Degree
Community Psychology (4204)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Computational Science (3030)	NA	\$23,000	\$30,750	NA	NA
Computer & Information Sciences & Support Services, Other (1199)	\$12,766	\$27,716	\$30,750	NA	NA
Computer & Information Sciences, General (1101)	\$19,032	\$22,941	\$40,533	NA	\$101,573
Computer Engineering Technologies/Technicians (1512)	\$15,600	\$25,000	NA	NA	NA
Computer Engineering (1409)	\$21,337	\$22,835	\$38,967	NA	NA
Computer Programming (1102)	\$15,375	\$28,103	NA	NA	NA
Computer Science (1107)	\$15,337	\$21,000	\$37,477	NA	\$77,269
Computer Software and Media Applications (1108)	\$18,930	\$28,998	\$41,000	NA	NA
Computer Systems Analysis (1105)	\$24,000	\$42,196	\$35,524	NA	NA
Computer Systems Networking and Telecommunications (1109)	\$19,054	\$32,706	\$39,844	NA	NA
Computer/Information Technology Administration and Management (1110)	\$18,580	\$27,000	\$41,000	NA	\$125,328
Construction Engineering Technologies (1510)	\$17,220	\$22,931	NA	NA	NA
Construction Engineering (1433)	NA	\$25,888	NA	NA	NA
Construction Management (5220)	\$18,021	\$23,250	\$33,539	NA	NA
Construction Trades, General (4600)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Construction Trades, Other (4699)	\$14,037	NA	NA	NA	NA
Cosmetology and Related Personal Grooming Services (1204)	\$12,330	NA	NA	NA	NA
Crafts/Craft Design, Folk Art and Artisanry (5002)	NA	\$27,000	\$67,507	NA	NA
Creative Writing (2305)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Criminal Justice and Corrections (4301)	\$15,216	\$23,632	\$39,882	NA	NA
Criminology (4504)	\$19,409	\$21,500	\$34,008	NA	NA
Culinary Arts and Related Services (1205)	\$18,171	\$37,178	\$36,500	NA	NA
Cultural Studies/Critical Theory and Analysis (3026)	NA	\$18,500	\$42,189	NA	NA
Curriculum and Instruction (1303)	NA	\$44,126	\$23,902	NA	\$64,035
Dance (5003)	NA	\$27,000	\$86,508	NA	NA
Data Entry/Microcomputer Applications (1106)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Data Processing (1103)	\$19,133	\$26,389	NA	NA	NA
Demography and Population Studies (4505)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Dental Residency Programs (6001)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Dental Support Services and Allied Professions (5106)	\$17,008	\$21,500	NA	NA	NA
Dentistry (5104)	NA	NA	NA	\$243,433	NA
Design and Applied Arts (5004)	\$14,013	\$27,000	\$70,525	NA	NA
Developmental and Child Psychology (4207)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Dietetics and Clinical Nutrition Services (5131)	\$9,500	\$24,459	\$45,148	NA	NA
Dispute Resolution (3028)	NA	NA	\$76,000	NA	\$135,844
Drafting/Design Engineering Technologies/Technicians (1513)	\$15,023	\$26,665	\$102,500	NA	NA
Drama/Theatre Arts and Stagecraft (5005)	\$12,000	\$25,000	\$78,334	NA	NA
East Asian Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics (1603)	NA	\$20,297	NA	NA	NA
Ecology, Evolution, Systematics, and Population Biology (2613)	\$28,750	\$21,510	\$64,737	NA	\$38,978

Academic Field (CIP Code)	Associate Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	1st Professional Degree	Doctoral Degree
Economics (4506)	NA	\$19,849	\$41,551	NA	NA
Education, General (1301)	\$10,806	\$27,000	\$28,351	NA	\$78,283
Education, Other (1399)	\$24,832	\$23,061	\$28,747	NA	\$72,125
Educational Administration and Supervision (1304)	NA	\$24,100	\$26,667	\$30,750	\$61,500
Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research (1306)	NA	\$22,750	\$30,214	NA	\$60,342
Educational/Instructional Media Design (1305)	NA	\$31,250	\$25,770	NA	\$107,541
Electrical and Power Transmission Installers (4603)	\$12,000	NA	NA	NA	NA
Electrical Engineering Technologies/Technicians (1503)	\$14,418	\$26,245	NA	NA	NA
Electrical, Electronics and Communications Engineering (1410)	\$20,000	\$23,630	\$21,287	NA	NA
Electrical/Electronics Maintenance and Repair Technology (4701)	\$15,657	NA	NA	NA	NA
Electromechanical Engineering (1441)	NA	\$31,000	NA	NA	NA
Electromechanical Instrumentation and Maintenance Technologies/Technicians (1504)	\$13,494	\$38,439	NA	NA	NA
Energy and Biologically Based Therapies (5137)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Energy Systems Technologies/Technicians (1517)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Engineering-Related Fields (1515)	NA	\$24,701	\$29,720	NA	NA
Engineering-Related Technologies (1511)	\$16,909	\$27,000	NA	NA	NA
Engineering Chemistry (1444)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Engineering Mechanics (1411)	NA	\$26,320	NA	NA	NA
Engineering Physics (1412)	NA	\$24,747	NA	NA	NA
Engineering Science (1413)	\$10,500	\$26,753	\$20,500	NA	NA
Engineering Technologies/Technicians, Other (1599)	\$14,407	\$24,341	\$27,052	NA	NA
Engineering Technology, General (1500)	\$12,408	\$23,205	\$24,000	NA	NA
Engineering, General (1401)	\$10,944	\$24,999	\$30,663	NA	NA
Engineering, Other (1499)	NA	\$25,637	\$82,829	NA	NA
English Language and Literature, General (2301)	NA	\$21,500	\$40,603	NA	\$62,757
English Language and Literature/Letters, Other (2399)	NA	\$25,943	\$38,209	NA	NA
English Literature (British and Commonwealth) (2308)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Entrepreneurial and Small Business Operations (5207)	\$15,434	\$24,215	\$43,944	NA	NA
Environmental Control Technologies/Technicians (1505)	\$21,943	\$26,512	NA	NA	NA
Environmental Design (404)	NA	\$20,784	\$43,292	NA	NA
Environmental/Environmental Health Engineering (1414)	NA	\$25,500	\$32,862	NA	NA
Ethnic, Cultural Minority, Gender, and Group Studies (502)	NA	\$19,348	\$23,050	NA	\$71,585
Family & Consumer Economics & Related Studies (1904)	NA	\$22,171	\$32,064	NA	NA
Family & Consumer Sciences/Human Sciences Business Services (1902)	NA	\$24,276	NA	NA	NA
Family & Consumer Sciences/Human Sciences, General (1901)	NA	\$24,420	\$30,360	NA	NA
Family & Consumer Sciences/Human Sciences, Other (1999)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Film/Video and Photographic Arts (5006)	\$19,702	\$25,000	\$81,700	NA	NA
Finance and Financial Management Services (5208)	\$13,125	\$22,365	\$41,000	NA	NA
Fine and Studio Arts (5007)	\$11,396	\$25,000	\$70,907	NA	NA
Fire Protection (4302)	\$9,647	\$20,747	\$43,690	NA	NA

Academic Field (CIP Code)	Associate Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	1st Professional Degree	Doctoral Degree
Fishing and Fisheries Sciences and Management (303)	NA	\$22,266	NA	NA	NA
Food Science and Technology (110)	NA	\$22,459	\$25,432	NA	NA
Foods, Nutrition, and Related Services (1905)	NA	\$23,821	\$36,655	NA	NA
Foreign Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics, Other (1699)	NA	\$25,415	NA	NA	NA
Forest Engineering (1434)	NA	\$25,834	NA	NA	NA
Forestry (305)	\$12,000	\$22,254	NA	NA	NA
Funeral Service and Mortuary Science (1203)	\$13,921	\$17,898	NA	NA	NA
General Sales, Merchandising and Related Marketing Operations (5218)	\$18,243	\$20,792	\$62,649	NA	NA
Genetics (2608)	NA	\$24,065	NA	NA	NA
Geography and Cartography (4507)	NA	\$21,432	\$24,969	NA	NA
Geological and Earth Sciences/Geosciences (4006)	NA	\$22,729	\$27,583	NA	NA
Geological/Geophysical Engineering (1439)	NA	\$26,868	NA	NA	NA
Germanic Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics (1605)	NA	\$26,233	NA	NA	NA
Gerontology (3011)	NA	\$21,818	\$53,063	NA	NA
Graphic Communications (1003)	\$12,000	\$26,995	\$80,336	NA	NA
Ground Transportation (4902)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Health-Related Knowledge and Skills (3401)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Health Aides/Attendants/Orderlies (5126)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Health and Medical Administrative Services (5107)	\$17,879	\$29,756	\$41,000	NA	\$91,159
Health and Physical Education/Fitness (3105)	\$15,567	\$23,250	\$30,217	NA	\$51,816
Health Professions and Related Clinical Sciences, Other (5199)	\$14,994	\$25,000	\$34,742	NA	NA
Health Services/Allied Health/Health Sciences, General (5100)	\$11,187	\$22,714	\$46,003	NA	\$67,061
Health/Medical Preparatory Programs (5111)	\$10,130	\$24,995	\$59,454	NA	NA
Heating, Air Conditioning, Ventilation and Refrigeration Maintenance Technology/Technician (HAC, HACR, HVAC, HVACR) (4702)	\$13,562	NA	NA	NA	NA
Heavy/Industrial Equipment Maintenance Technologies (4703)	\$12,000	\$26,000	NA	NA	NA
High School/Secondary Certificate Programs (5302)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
High School/Secondary Diploma Programs (5301)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Historic Preservation and Conservation (3012)	NA	\$18,988	\$43,184	NA	NA
History (5401)	NA	\$22,215	\$39,753	NA	NA
Holocaust and Related Studies (3021)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Homeland Security, Law Enforcement, Firefighting and Related Protective Services, Other (4399)	\$15,929	\$26,043	\$30,673	NA	NA
Homeland Security (4303)	\$19,978	\$23,143	\$35,426	NA	NA
Hospitality Administration/Management (5209)	\$14,637	\$21,500	\$34,676	NA	NA
Housing and Human Environments (1906)	NA	\$22,917	NA	NA	NA
Human Biology (3027)	NA	\$17,834	NA	NA	NA
Human Computer Interaction (3031)	\$22,750	\$31,706	\$45,602	NA	NA
Human Development, Family Studies, and Related Services (1907)	\$16,445	\$23,250	\$44,450	NA	NA
Human Resources Management and Services (5210)	\$20,744	\$25,000	\$41,000	NA	\$98,848
Human Services, General (4400)	\$18,810	\$26,986	\$41,000	NA	NA
Industrial Engineering (1435)	NA	\$22,250	\$22,416	NA	NA

Academic Field (CIP Code)	Associate Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	1st Professional Degree	Doctoral Degree
Industrial Production Technologies/Technicians (1506)	\$11,564	\$24,024	NA	NA	NA
Information Science/Studies (1104)	\$12,382	\$24,500	\$41,000	NA	\$118,106
Insurance (5217)	NA	\$23,047	\$41,000	NA	NA
Intelligence, Command Control and Information Operations (2902)	NA	\$24,366	\$33,941	NA	NA
Intercultural/Multicultural and Diversity Studies (3023)	NA	\$21,987	NA	NA	NA
Interior Architecture (405)	NA	\$24,272	\$20,500	NA	NA
Internal Medicine Residency/Fellowship Programs (6108)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
International Agriculture (107)	NA	\$17,880	\$15,317	NA	NA
International and Comparative Education (1307)	NA	\$10,000	\$50,161	NA	NA
International Business (5211)	NA	\$23,689	\$61,553	NA	NA
International Relations and National Security Studies (4509)	NA	\$20,920	\$62,974	NA	NA
International/Global Studies (3020)	NA	\$18,982	\$33,632	NA	NA
Interpersonal and Social Skills (3501)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Iranian/Persian Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics (1608)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Journalism (904)	NA	\$23,132	\$49,311	NA	NA
Landscape Architecture (406)	NA	\$25,477	\$53,892	NA	NA
Law (2201)	NA	NA	NA	\$120,034	NA
Leatherworking and Upholstery (4803)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Legal Professions and Studies, Other (2299)	\$30,500	\$27,000	\$44,387	\$61,500	NA
Legal Research and Advanced Professional Studies (2202)	NA	\$19,661	\$53,736	NA	NA
Legal Support Services (2203)	\$19,980	\$25,180	\$41,000	NA	NA
Leisure and Recreational Activities (3601)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Liberal Arts and Sciences, General Studies and Humanities (2401)	\$10,000	\$22,752	\$41,323	NA	\$199,115
Library and Archives Assisting (2503)	\$12,049	NA	NA	NA	NA
Library Science and Administration (2501)	NA	\$25,892	\$34,903	NA	NA
Library Science, Other (2599)	NA	NA	\$40,032	NA	NA
Linguistic, Comparative, and Related Language Studies and Services (1601)	NA	\$20,000	\$47,813	NA	NA
Literature (2314)	NA	\$23,883	\$52,181	NA	NA
Management Information Systems and Services (5212)	\$21,288	\$23,386	\$38,356	NA	\$62,284
Management Sciences and Quantitative Methods (5213)	\$16,929	\$22,662	\$37,078	NA	NA
Manufacturing Engineering (1436)	NA	\$25,274	NA	NA	NA
Marine Sciences (3032)	NA	\$22,414	NA	NA	NA
Marine Transportation (4903)	NA	\$25,524	NA	NA	NA
Maritime Studies (3029)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Marketing (5214)	\$17,499	\$22,713	\$35,762	NA	NA
Mason/Masonry (4601)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Materials Engineering (1418)	NA	\$24,343	NA	NA	NA
Materials Sciences (4010)	NA	\$24,955	NA	NA	NA
Mathematics and Computer Science (3008)	NA	\$20,536	NA	NA	NA
Mathematics and Statistics, Other (2799)	NA	\$23,130	NA	NA	NA

Academic Field (CIP Code)	Associate Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	1st Professional Degree	Doctoral Degree
Mathematics (2701)	NA	\$21,500	NA	NA	NA
Mechanic and Repair Technologies/Technicians, Other (4799)	\$11,039	NA	NA	NA	NA
Mechanical Engineering Related Technologies/Technicians (1508)	\$12,732	\$24,962	NA	NA	NA
Mechanical Engineering (1419)	NA	\$23,000	\$23,202	NA	NA
Mechanics and Repairers, General (4700)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Mechatronics, Robotics, and Automation Engineering (1442)	\$6,500	\$26,566	NA	NA	NA
Medical Clinical Sciences/Graduate Medical Studies (5114)	NA	NA	\$69,305	NA	NA
Medical Illustration and Informatics (5127)	NA	\$27,000	\$36,714	NA	NA
Medical Residency Programs (6002)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Medicine (5112)	NA	NA	NA	\$179,553	NA
Medieval and Renaissance Studies (3013)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Mental and Social Health Services and Allied Professions (5115)	\$17,643	\$25,000	\$53,582	NA	NA
Metallurgical Engineering (1420)	NA	\$20,841	NA	NA	NA
Microbiological Sciences and Immunology (2605)	NA	\$21,474	\$34,303	NA	NA
Middle/Near Eastern and Semitic Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics (1611)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Military Applied Sciences (2903)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Military Science and Operational Studies (2805)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Military Systems and Maintenance Technology (2904)	NA	\$27,000	NA	NA	NA
Military Technologies and Applied Sciences, Other (2999)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Mining and Mineral Engineering (1421)	NA	\$27,092	NA	NA	NA
Mining and Petroleum Technologies/Technicians (1509)	\$16,700	\$24,500	NA	NA	NA
Missions/Missionary Studies and Missiology (3903)	NA	\$22,891	\$34,850	NA	NA
Modern Greek Language and Literature (1606)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Molecular Medicine (2614)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Movement and Mind-Body Therapies and Education (5136)	NA	\$20,500	\$106,441	NA	NA
Multi-/Interdisciplinary Studies, General (3000)	\$10,300	\$23,933	\$40,252	NA	NA
Multi-/Interdisciplinary Studies, Other (3099)	\$11,576	\$21,962	\$34,770	NA	\$146,015
Museology/Museum Studies (3014)	NA	NA	\$46,215	NA	NA
Music (5009)	\$21,353	\$25,206	\$40,848	NA	\$50,552
Nanotechnology (1516)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Natural Resources and Conservation, Other (399)	NA	\$27,000	NA	NA	NA
Natural Resources Conservation and Research (301)	\$10,946	\$21,457	\$41,000	NA	NA
Natural Resources Management and Policy (302)	\$11,000	\$23,416	\$40,573	NA	NA
Natural Sciences (3018)	\$9,467	\$27,000	NA	NA	NA
Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering (1422)	NA	\$27,000	NA	NA	NA
Neurobiology and Neurosciences (2615)	NA	\$22,204	NA	NA	NA
Neuroscience (3024)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Non-Professional General Legal Studies (Undergraduate) (2200)	\$32,390	\$24,473	\$52,259	NA	NA
Noncommercial Vehicle Operation (3602)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Nuclear and Industrial Radiologic Technologies/Technicians (4102)	\$8,000	NA	NA	NA	NA

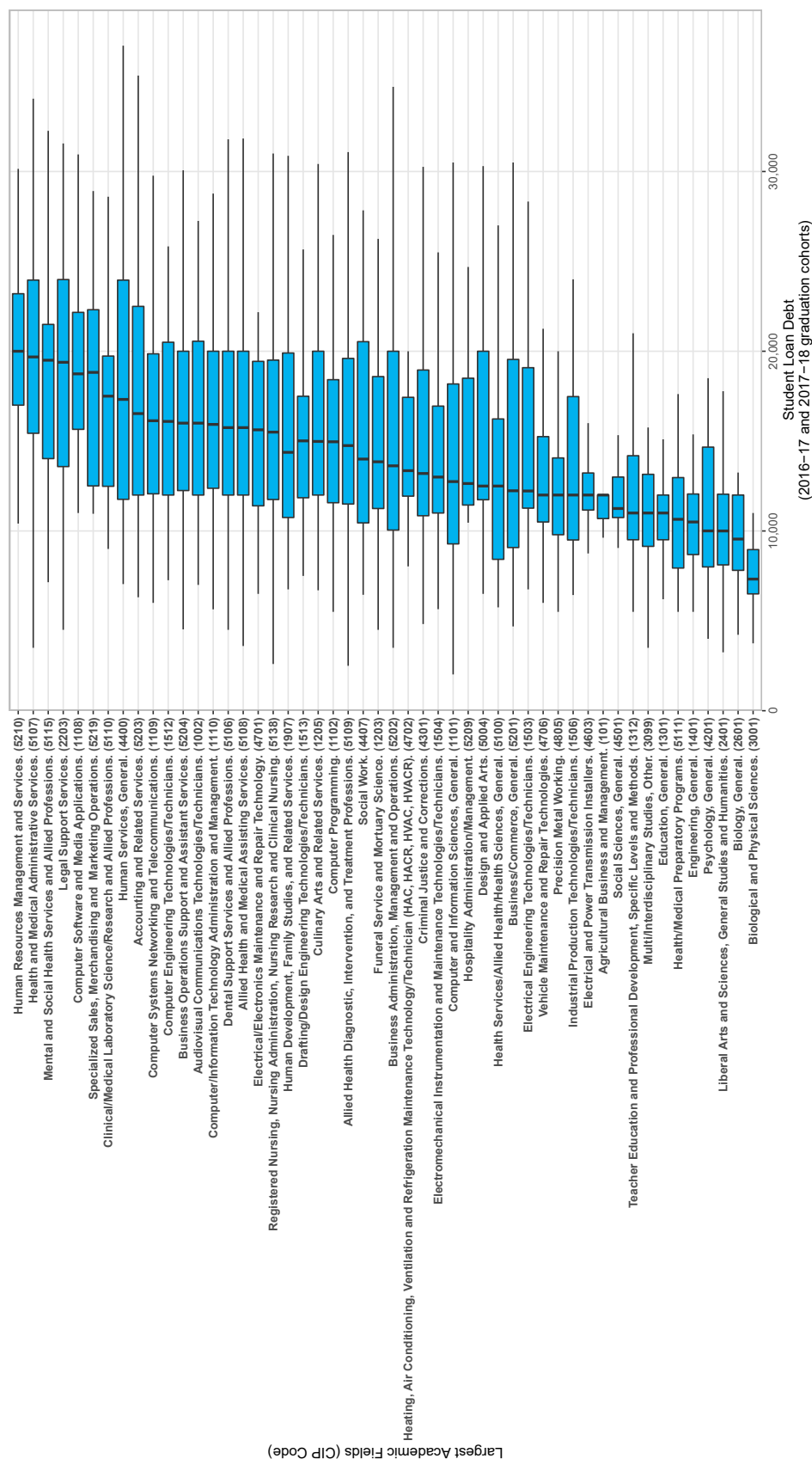
Academic Field (CIP Code)	Associate Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	1st Professional Degree	Doctoral Degree
Nuclear Engineering Technologies/Technicians (1514)	\$15,530	NA	NA	NA	NA
Nuclear Engineering (1423)	NA	\$22,126	NA	NA	NA
Nursing (5116)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Nutrition Sciences (3019)	NA	\$21,829	\$61,500	NA	NA
Ocean Engineering (1424)	NA	\$25,826	NA	NA	NA
Operations Research (1437)	NA	\$15,971	NA	NA	NA
Ophthalmic and Optometric Support Services and Allied Professions (5118)	\$13,588	NA	NA	NA	NA
Optometry (5117)	NA	NA	NA	\$178,870	NA
Orthopedic Surgery Residency/Fellowship Programs (6115)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Osteopathic Medicine/Osteopathy (5119)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Outdoor Education (3106)	NA	\$25,500	NA	NA	NA
Paper Science and Engineering (1440)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Parks, Recreation and Leisure Facilities Management (3103)	\$15,929	\$23,500	\$31,452	NA	NA
Parks, Recreation and Leisure Studies (3101)	NA	\$20,856	\$28,623	NA	NA
Parks, Recreation, Leisure, and Fitness Studies, Other (3199)	NA	\$20,804	NA	NA	NA
Pastoral Counseling and Specialized Ministries (3907)	\$19,128	\$25,249	\$55,495	NA	\$49,845
Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution (3005)	NA	\$16,905	\$48,760	NA	NA
Personal and Culinary Services, Other (1299)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Personal Awareness and Self-Improvement (3701)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Petroleum Engineering (1425)	NA	\$25,946	\$25,140	NA	NA
Pharmacology and Toxicology (2610)	NA	\$17,191	\$38,070	NA	NA
Pharmacy, Pharmaceutical Sciences, and Administration (5120)	NA	\$22,930	\$29,433	\$136,167	\$271,378
Philosophy and Religious Studies, General (3800)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Philosophy and Religious Studies, Other (3899)	NA	\$19,038	\$41,000	NA	NA
Philosophy (3801)	NA	\$20,447	\$56,582	NA	NA
Physical Science Technologies/Technicians (4103)	\$12,681	NA	NA	NA	NA
Physical Sciences, Other (4099)	NA	\$21,744	\$30,852	NA	NA
Physical Sciences (4001)	\$10,422	\$27,365	NA	NA	NA
Physics (4008)	NA	\$21,816	NA	NA	NA
Physiology, Pathology and Related Sciences (2609)	NA	\$23,146	\$68,585	NA	NA
Plant Sciences (111)	\$13,000	\$19,482	\$19,770	NA	NA
Plumbing and Related Water Supply Services (4605)	\$12,000	NA	NA	NA	NA
Podiatric Medicine/Podiatry (5121)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Political Science and Government (4510)	\$10,284	\$21,500	\$41,000	NA	NA
Polymer/Plastics Engineering (1432)	NA	\$25,874	NA	NA	NA
Practical Nursing, Vocational Nursing and Nursing Assistants (5139)	\$16,817	\$31,255	NA	NA	NA
Precision Metal Working (4805)	\$12,000	NA	NA	NA	NA
Precision Production Trades, General (4800)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Precision Production, Other (4899)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Precision Systems Maintenance and Repair Technologies (4704)	\$16,226	NA	NA	NA	NA
Psychiatry Residency/Fellowship Programs (6124)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Academic Field (CIP Code)	Associate Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	1st Professional Degree	Doctoral Degree
Psychology, General (4201)	\$14,060	\$22,750	\$41,000	NA	\$73,830
Psychology, Other (4299)	\$13,000	\$22,707	\$39,352	NA	\$185,680
Public Administration and Social Service Professions, Other (4499)	\$8,900	\$28,219	\$37,177	NA	NA
Public Administration (4404)	NA	\$20,901	\$40,621	NA	\$137,560
Public Health (5122)	\$26,464	\$22,678	\$46,658	\$66,000	\$79,842
Public Policy Analysis (4405)	NA	\$19,310	\$41,806	NA	NA
Public Relations, Advertising, and Applied Communication (909)	\$11,540	\$23,250	\$41,640	NA	NA
Publishing (910)	NA	NA	\$42,151	NA	NA
Quality Control and Safety Technologies/Technicians (1507)	\$14,200	\$24,360	\$29,352	NA	NA
Radio, Television, and Digital Communication (907)	\$12,172	\$23,250	\$49,889	NA	NA
Radiology Residency/Fellowship Programs (6126)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Real Estate Development (410)	NA	\$14,000	\$91,182	NA	NA
Real Estate (5215)	\$22,938	\$21,449	\$41,083	NA	NA
Registered Nursing, Nursing Administration, Nursing Research and Clinical Nursing (5138)	\$16,559	\$21,679	\$45,006	\$76,126	\$68,120
Rehabilitation and Therapeutic Professions (5123)	\$19,030	\$26,000	\$53,274	\$108,268	\$76,717
Religion/Religious Studies (3802)	\$29,500	\$31,915	\$42,275	NA	\$97,215
Religious Education (3904)	NA	\$31,582	\$38,513	NA	NA
Religious/Sacred Music (3905)	NA	\$26,889	\$40,998	NA	NA
Research and Experimental Psychology (4227)	NA	\$18,549	\$50,370	NA	NA
Rhetoric and Composition/Writing Studies (2313)	\$19,734	\$23,217	\$41,000	NA	NA
Romance Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics (1609)	\$8,159	\$21,247	\$19,481	NA	NA
Rural Sociology (4514)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Science Technologies/Technicians, General (4100)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Science Technologies/Technicians, Other (4199)	\$8,909	\$21,555	NA	NA	NA
Science, Technology and Society (3015)	NA	\$21,210	\$20,500	NA	NA
Security Policy and Strategy (2806)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Security Science and Technology (4304)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Slavic, Baltic and Albanian Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics (1604)	NA	\$25,233	NA	NA	NA
Social and Philosophical Foundations of Education (1309)	NA	NA	\$31,697	NA	\$118,529
Social Psychology (4216)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Social Sciences, General (4501)	\$10,906	\$21,989	\$60,070	NA	NA
Social Sciences, Other (4599)	\$7,465	\$21,397	\$43,167	NA	NA
Social Work (4407)	\$13,130	\$24,356	\$41,000	NA	\$86,195
Sociology and Anthropology (4513)	NA	\$23,610	NA	NA	NA
Sociology (4511)	\$8,944	\$21,500	\$36,185	NA	NA
Soil Sciences (112)	NA	\$22,547	NA	NA	NA
Somatic Bodywork and Related Therapeutic Services (5135)	\$24,662	\$17,832	NA	NA	NA
South Asian Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics (1607)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Southeast Asian and Australasian/Pacific Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics (1614)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Special Education and Teaching (1310)	\$11,015	\$25,254	\$29,844	NA	NA

Academic Field (CIP Code)	Associate Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	1st Professional Degree	Doctoral Degree
Specialized Sales, Merchandising and Marketing Operations (5219)	\$11,844	\$25,471	\$61,144	NA	NA
Statistics (2705)	NA	\$17,558	\$51,360	NA	NA
Student Counseling and Personnel Services (1311)	NA	NA	\$41,000	NA	\$69,047
Surveying Engineering (1438)	NA	\$24,905	NA	NA	NA
Sustainability Studies (3033)	NA	\$18,540	\$42,377	NA	NA
Systems Engineering (1427)	NA	\$18,713	\$35,770	NA	NA
Systems Science and Theory (3006)	NA	\$25,999	\$33,243	NA	NA
Taxation (5216)	NA	NA	\$30,500	NA	NA
Teacher Education and Professional Development, Specific Levels and Methods (1312)	\$12,931	\$23,999	\$30,553	NA	\$105,921
Teacher Education and Professional Development, Specific Subject Areas (1313)	\$9,051	\$24,250	\$23,972	NA	\$96,364
Teaching Assistants/Aides (1315)	\$20,162	NA	NA	NA	NA
Teaching English or French as a Second or Foreign Language (1314)	NA	\$25,205	\$22,804	NA	NA
Telecommunications Management (5221)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Textile Sciences and Engineering (1428)	NA	\$23,250	\$20,500	NA	NA
Theological and Ministerial Studies (3906)	\$17,500	\$25,000	\$41,000	\$29,352	\$82,362
Theology and Religious Vocations, Other (3999)	\$19,210	\$44,045	\$34,118	NA	\$65,007
Transportation and Materials Moving, Other (4999)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Turkic, Uralic-Altaic, Caucasian, and Central Asian Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics (1615)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Urban Studies/Affairs (4512)	NA	\$20,460	\$35,057	NA	NA
Vehicle Maintenance and Repair Technologies (4706)	\$14,943	\$24,809	NA	NA	NA
Veterinary Biomedical and Clinical Sciences (181)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Veterinary Biomedical and Clinical Sciences (5125)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Veterinary Medicine (180)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Veterinary Medicine (5124)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Veterinary Residency Programs (6003)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Veterinary/Animal Health Technologies/Technicians (183)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Visual and Performing Arts, General (5001)	\$11,373	\$24,589	\$61,188	NA	NA
Visual and Performing Arts, Other (5099)	NA	\$21,259	\$85,830	NA	NA
Wildlife and Wildlands Science and Management (306)	\$11,654	\$21,788	NA	NA	NA
Woodworking (4807)	NA	\$27,000	NA	NA	NA
Work and Family Studies (1900)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Work and Family Studies (1910)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Zoology/Animal Biology (2607)	NA	\$23,250	\$26,934	NA	NA

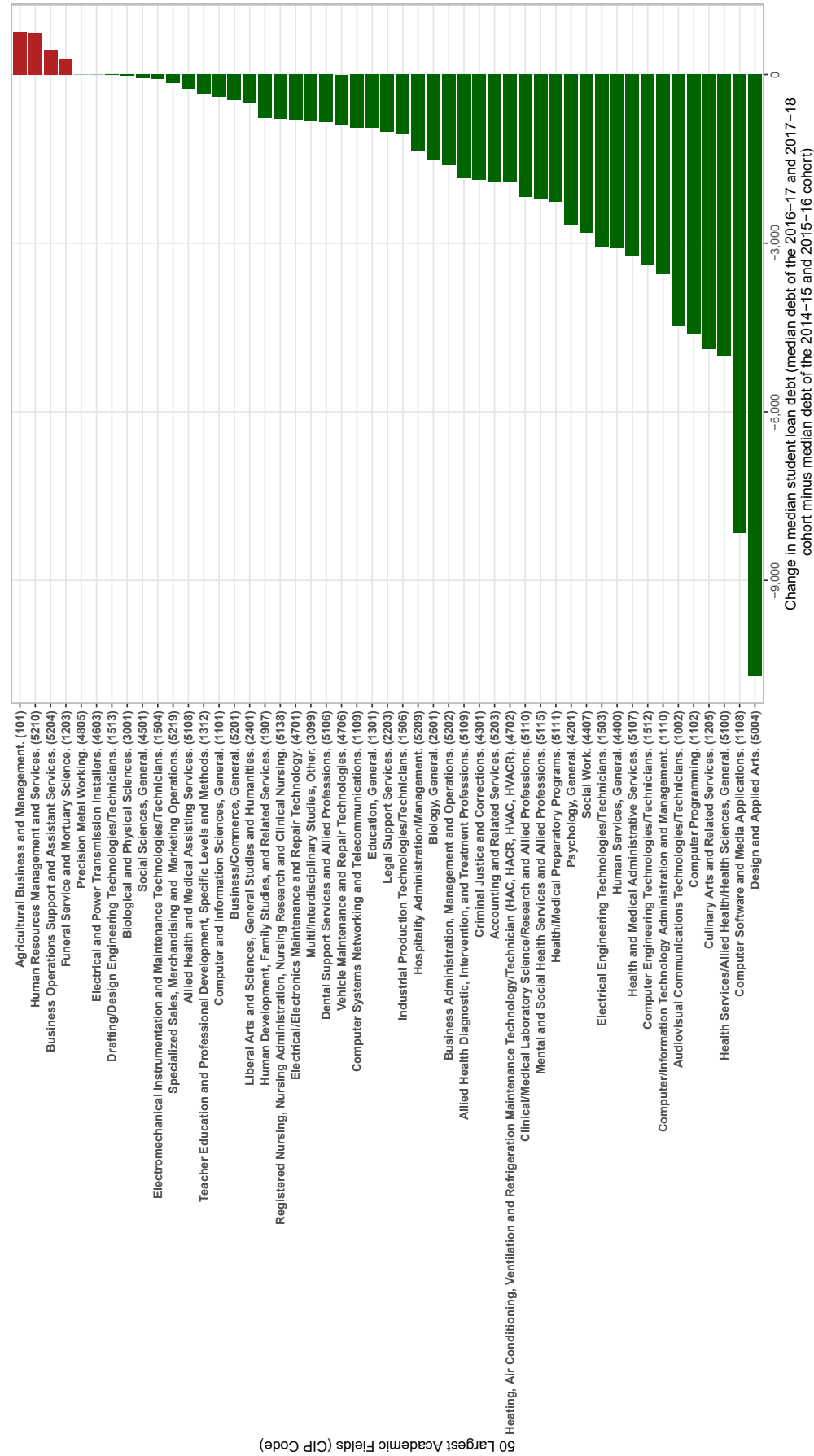
Figures 7 through 15 display the distribution of median student loan debt by academic field as well as the change in student loan debt among graduating cohorts of students.

Figure 7
Distribution of Median Student Loan Debt by Academic Field: Associate Degree



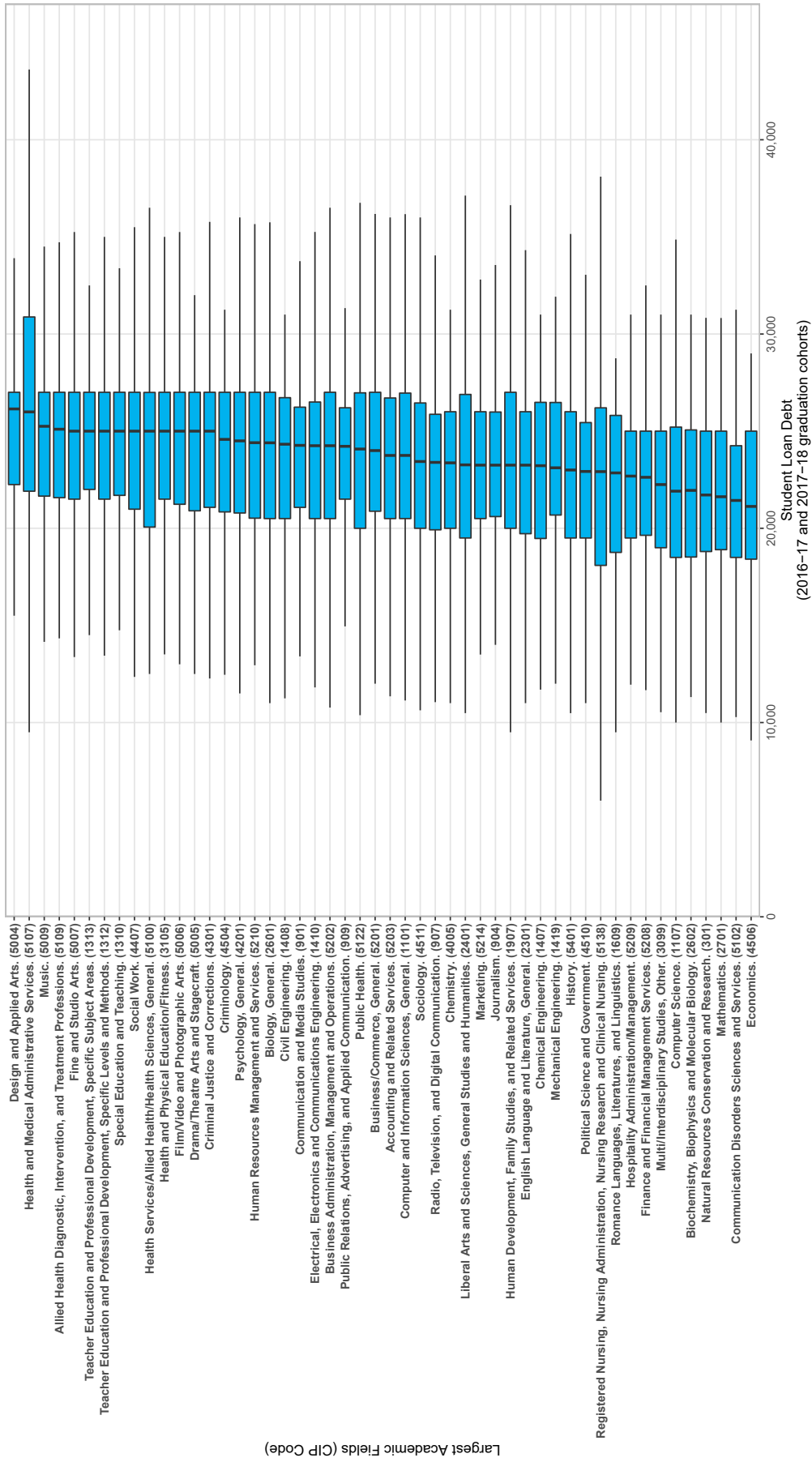
Note: Data from U.S. Department of Education and author's calculations; outliers have been suppressed.

Figure 8
Change in Median Student Loan Debt by Academic Field: Associate Degree



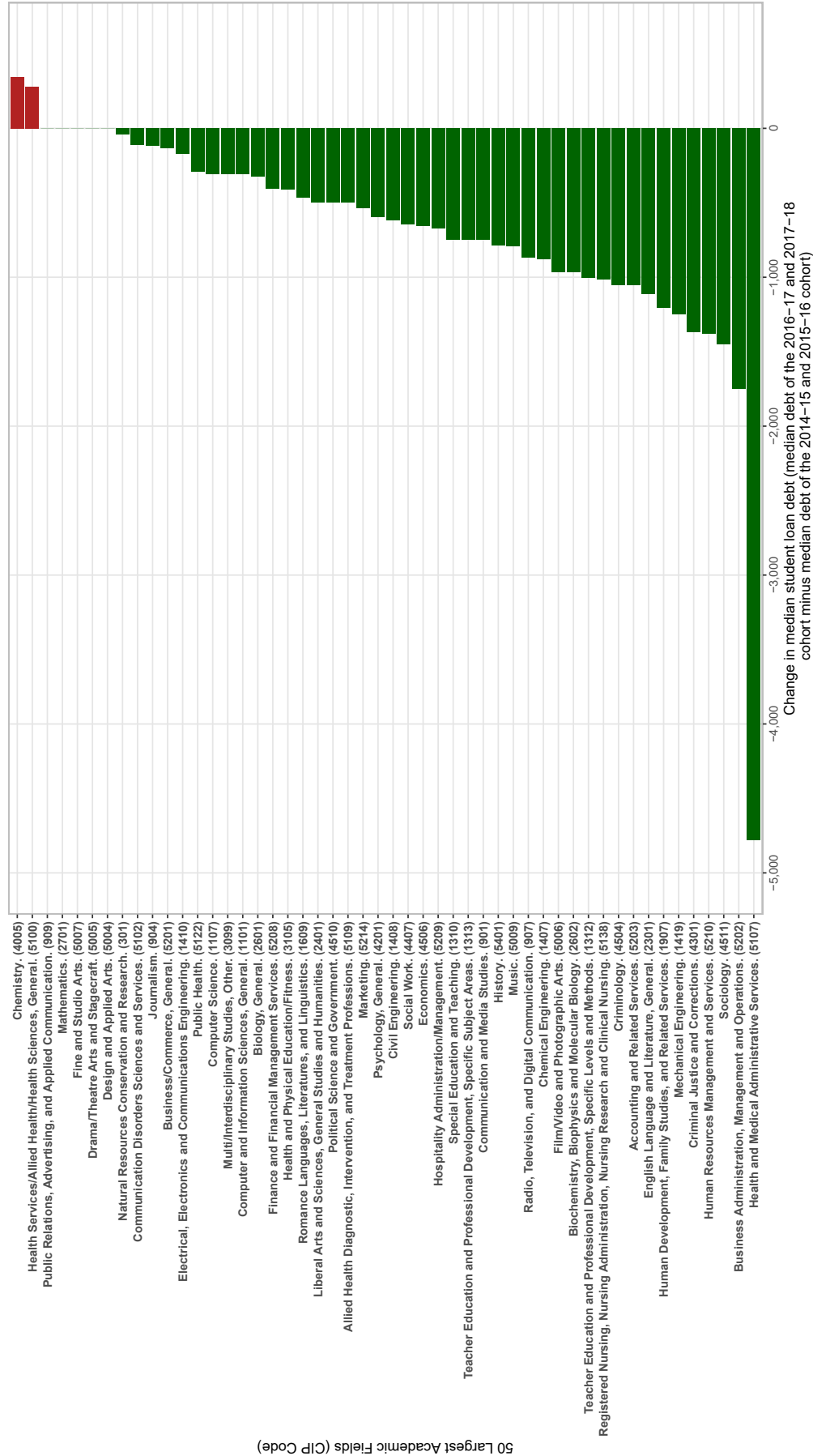
Note. Data from U.S. Department of Education and author's calculations.

Figure 9
Distribution of Median Student Loan Debt by Academic Field: Bachelor's Degree



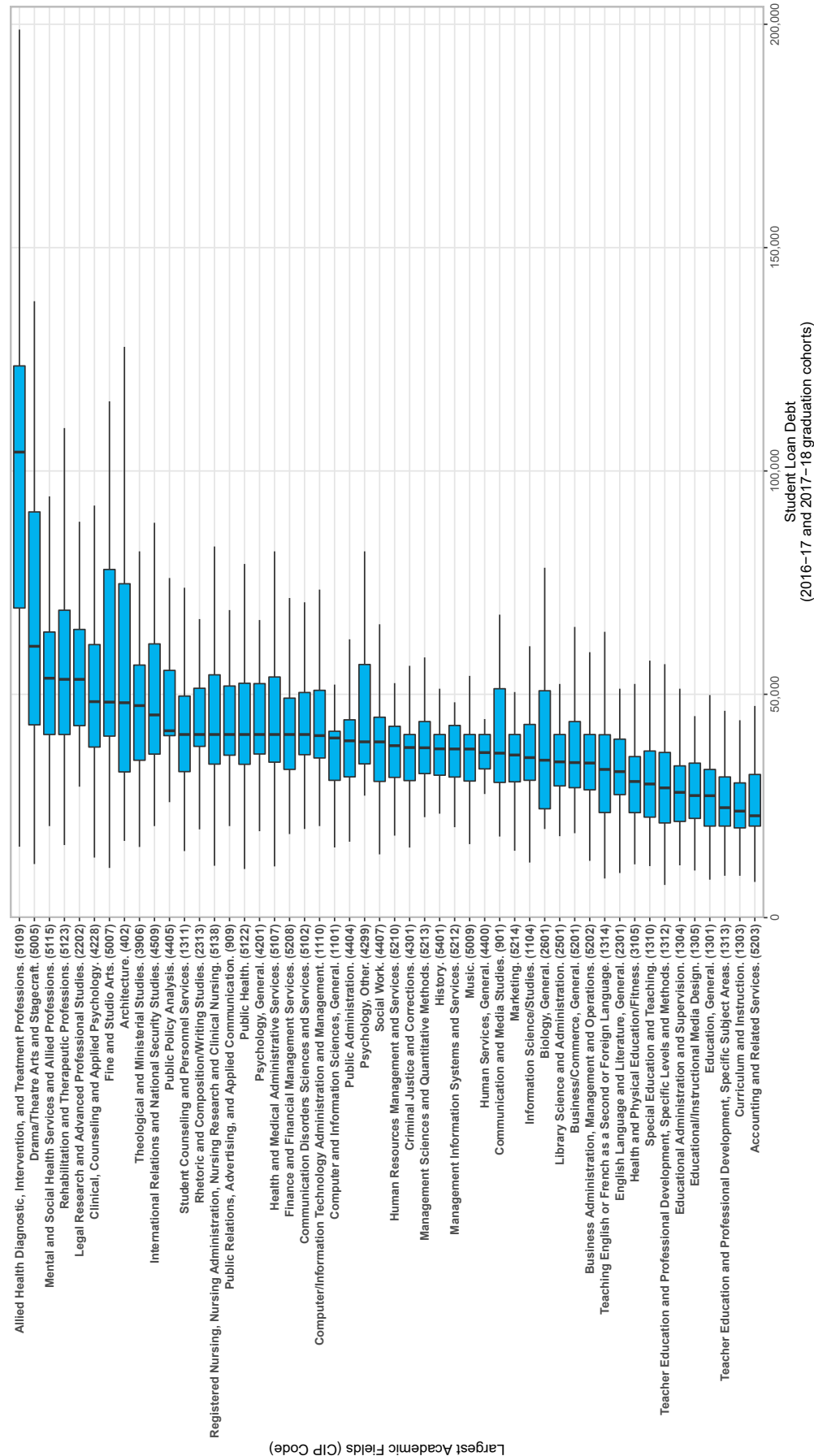
Note. Data from U.S. Department of Education and author's calculations; outliers have been suppressed.

Figure 10
Change in Median Student Loan Debt by Academic Field: Bachelor's Degree



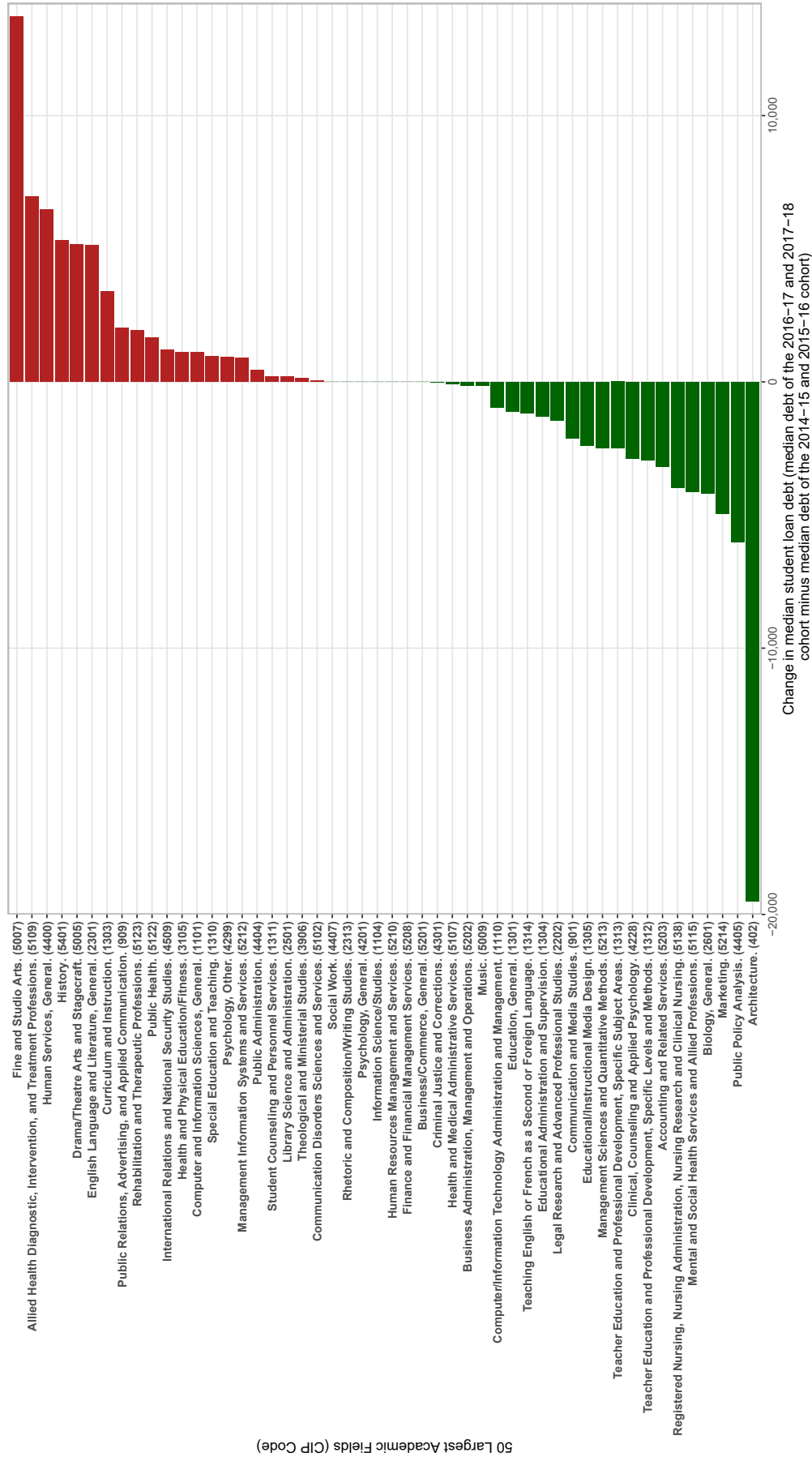
Note: Data from U.S. Department of Education and author's calculations.

Figure 11
Distribution of Median Student Loan Debt by Academic Field: Master's Degree



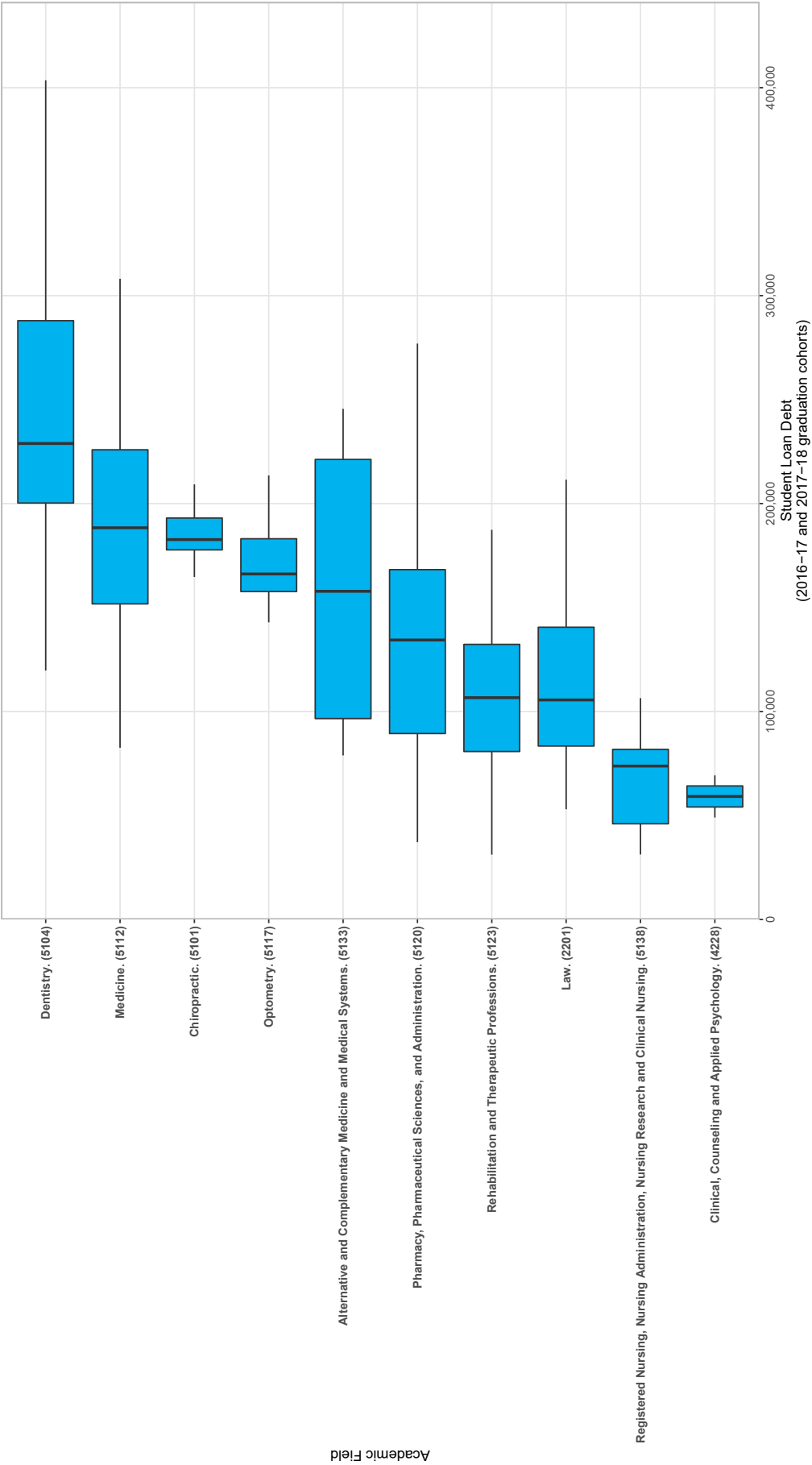
Note: Data from U.S. Department of Education and author's calculations; outliers have been suppressed.

Figure 12
Change in Median Student Loan Debt by Academic Field: Master's Degree



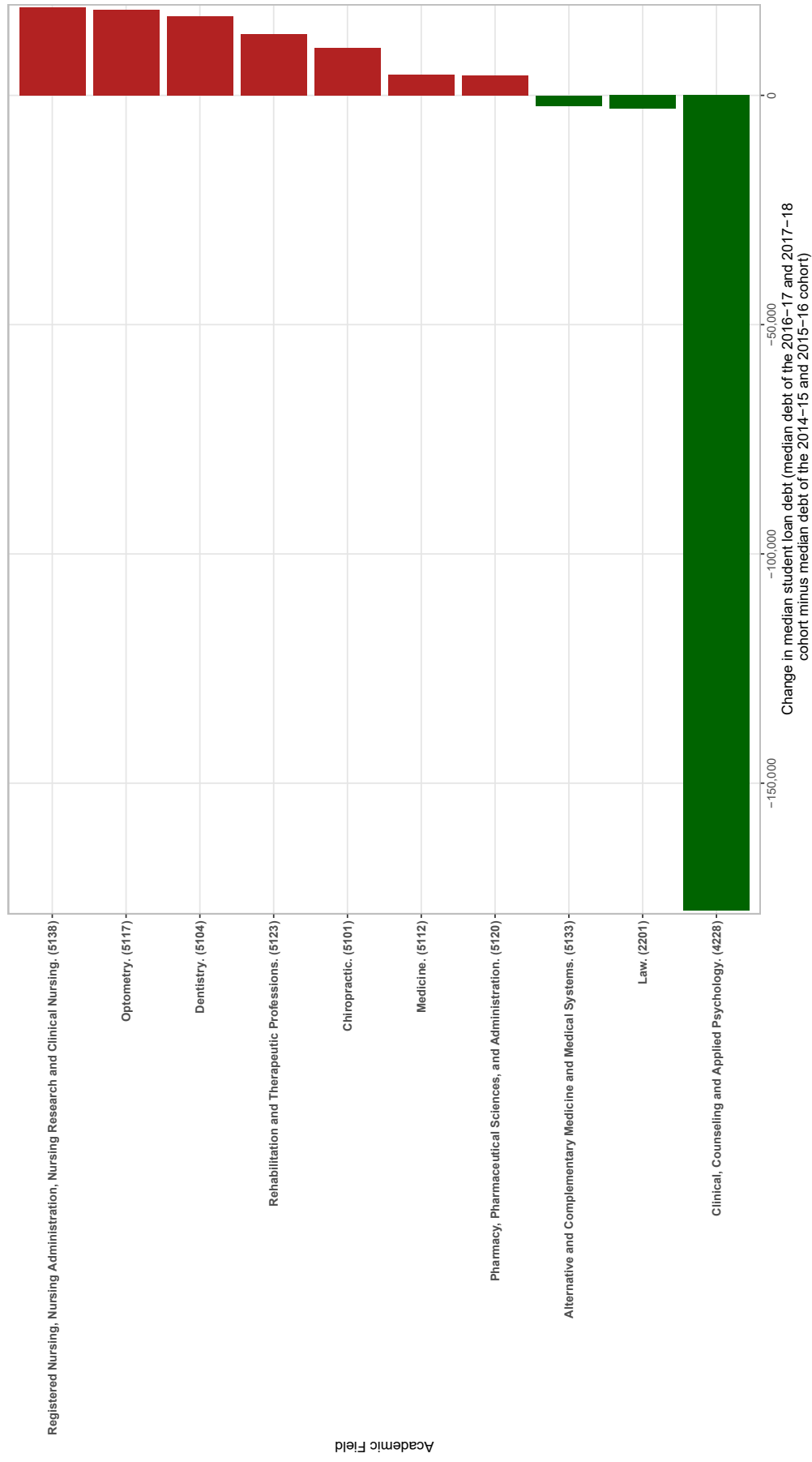
Note: Data from U.S. Department of Education and author's calculations.

Figure 13
Distribution of Median Student Loan Debt by Academic Field: Professional Degree



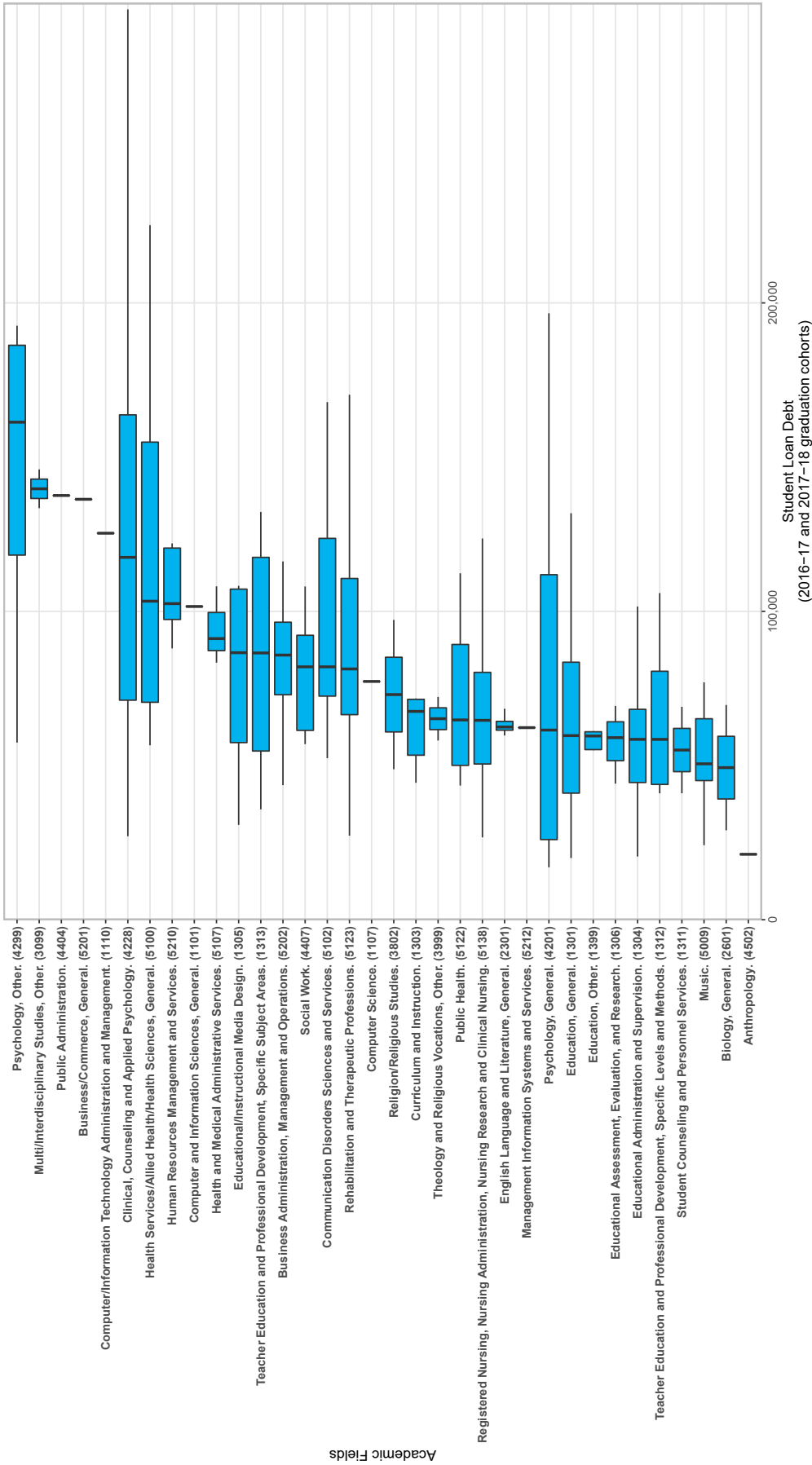
Note: Data from U.S. Department of Education and author's calculations; outliers have been suppressed.

Figure 14
Change in Median Student Loan Debt by Academic Field: Professional Degree



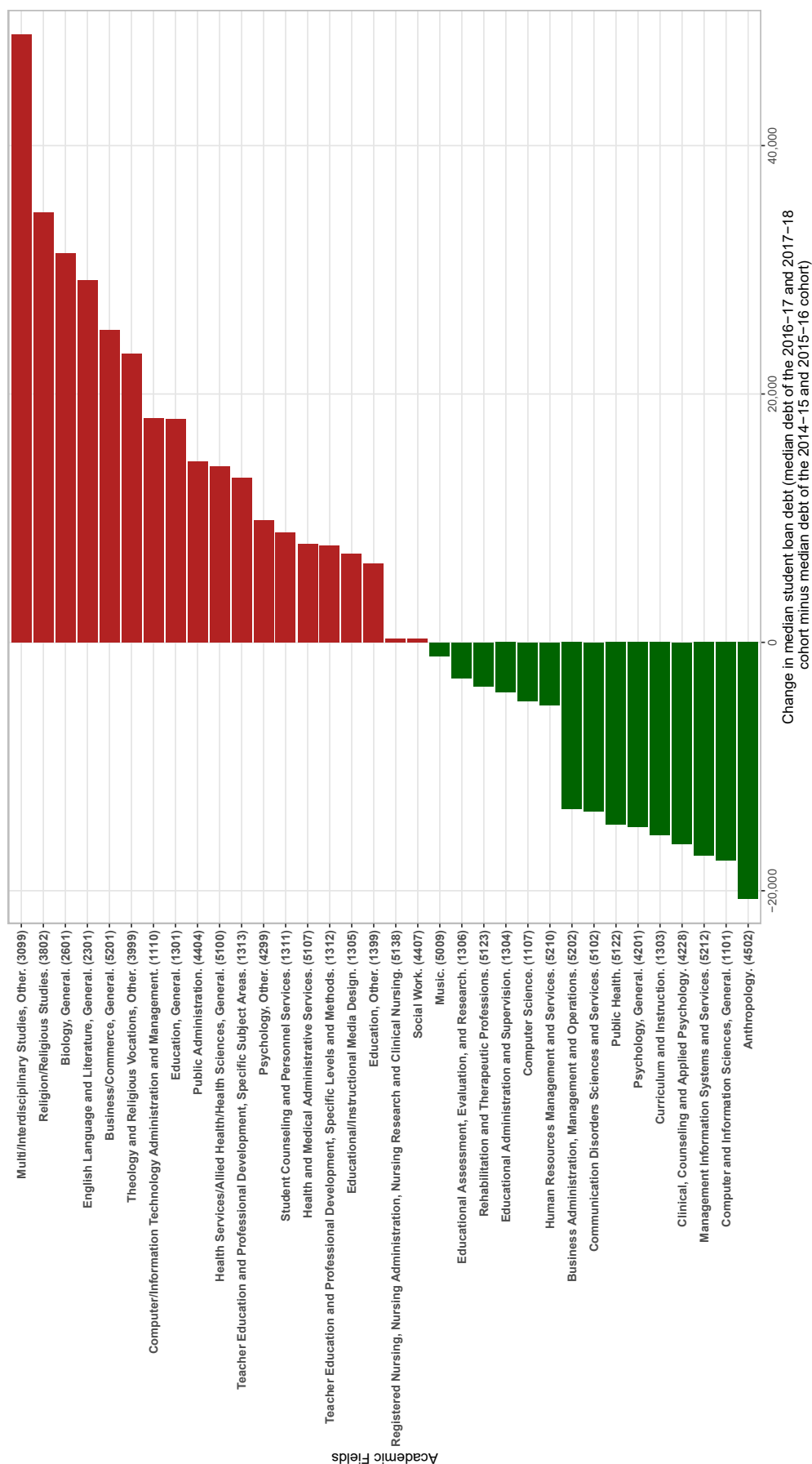
Note: Data from U.S. Department of Education and author's calculations.

Figure 15
Distribution of Median Student Loan Debt by Academic Field: Doctoral Degree



Note. Data from U.S. Department of Education and author's calculations; outliers have been suppressed.

Figure 16
Change in Median Student Loan Debt by Academic Field: Doctoral Degree



Note. Data from U.S. Department of Education and author's calculations.

Student Loan Debt by Control

Table 2 reports median student loan debt by credential and control (public, private nonprofit, or for-profit). Graduates from for-profit universities have the highest debt at the undergraduate level. Graduate debt levels are more mixed, with private nonprofit universities having higher debt at the master's and doctoral levels, and for-profits having higher debt at the professional degree level. Public universities have the lowest debt for all credentials.

Table 2

Median Student Loan Debt by Control and Credential

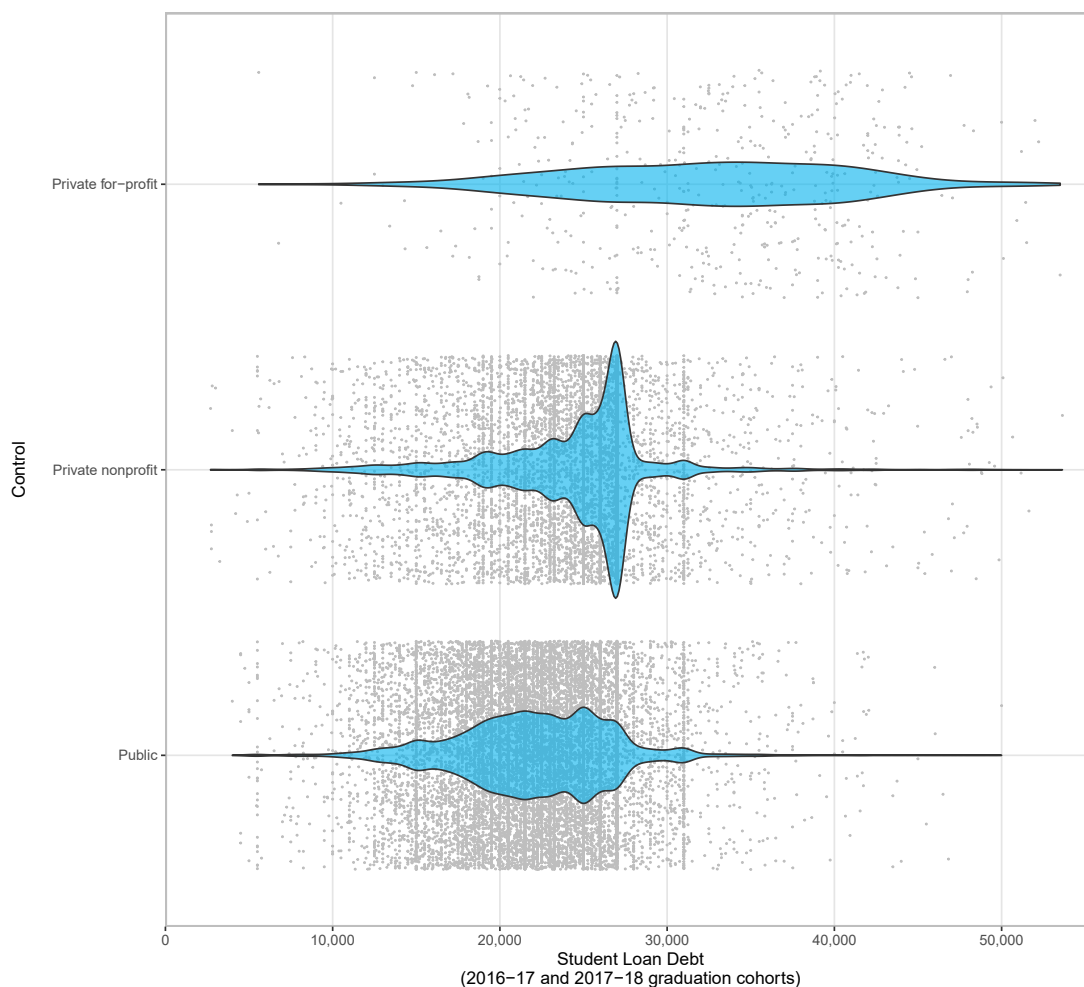
Control	Associate Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	1st Professional Degree	Doctoral Degree
Private for-profit	\$21,086	\$35,142	\$39,609	\$191,262	\$78,187
Private nonprofit	\$18,500	\$25,000	\$42,574	\$150,997	\$88,117
Public	\$11,500	\$21,500	\$35,750	\$138,884	\$62,202

Note. Data from U.S. Department of Education and author's calculations.

Figure 17 shows the distribution of median debt for bachelor's degree graduates by control.

Figure 17

Distribution of Median Student Loan Debt by Control: Bachelor's Degree



Note. Data from U.S. Department of Education and author's calculations.

Where to Find More Information

This report is just one part of a much broader project. You can find more of our research at <https://www.texaspolicy.com/initiatives/next-generation-texas>. ★

References

U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). *College Scorecard* [Data set]. <https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/data/>

U.S. Department of Education. (2021). *Technical documentation: College Scorecard data by field of study*. <https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/assets/FieldOfStudyDataDocumentation.pdf>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Andrew Gillen, PhD, is a senior policy analyst at the Texas Public Policy Foundation and an adjunct professor of economics at Johns Hopkins University. Dr. Gillen's recent work has focused on how to reform federal financial aid, how state disinvestment is a myth, and how post-college earnings and debt should be used to inform student choice and government accountability.

Prior to joining the Foundation, Dr. Gillen spent over a decade at nonprofit and philanthropic organizations researching and trying to improve higher education. He was a program officer for the Charles Koch Foundation and served in research roles for American Institutes for Research, Education Sector; the American Council of Trustees and Alumni; and the Center for College Affordability and Productivity. He was also on the U.S. Department of Education's Advisory Committee

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Andrew has a PhD in economics from Florida State University and a BBA (business) degree from Ohio University.

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