

Research Question

Do federal funding awards for projects focused on preservation and access to cultural heritage materials favor certain types of academic institutions?

Problem Statement

In a 2018 address, then president of the Society of American Archivists (SAA) Tanya Zanish-Belcher described the lack of resources often felt most keenly in smaller institutions, whereas larger institutions are better poised to contribute to the profession because of the availability of funding. Among other areas ripe for critical analysis, Zanish-Belcher suggested that smaller institutions need better support from external sources, including grants.¹ Contributing to the lack of resources experienced by small institutions, federal agencies, such as the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), primarily fund colleges and universities defined by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions in Higher Education (CIIHE) as Doctoral Universities. Between 2010 and 2019, the NEH Division of Preservation and Access awarded 1,871 grants totaling \$182,611,304.71 to libraries, museums, historical societies, and other organizations to advance the federal agency's goal of "preserving cultural heritage materials and making them available to scholars, teachers, and the general public."² Of the 1,871 projects funded by the Division of Preservation and Access, 36.3% were awarded to institutions of higher education, accounting for \$72,147,925.66 in total grant funds awarded outright, matching, and supplemental by the division. In the 2010s, academic institutions with the highest levels of research activity as defined by the CIIHE received greater levels of federal support through grants funded by the Division of Preservation and Access.

Methods

Researchers examined an openly accessible dataset from the NEH and CIIHE to explore funding bias and its impact on academic institutions' ability to leverage public funds to provide access to cultural heritage resources.^{3 4} By coding funding data from the NEH Division of Preservation and Access to colleges and universities with their respective CIIHE characteristics, they tested the hypothesis that academic institutions with the highest research activity as defined by the CIIHE receive the most federal support through NEH Division of Preservation and Access grants. Researchers limited analysis to the projects funded by the Division of Preservation and Access because of the division's broad focus on preservation of and access to cultural heritage materials. Other divisions, such as the Digital Humanities and Federal/State Partnerships, more narrowly focus their funding, perhaps justifiably preferring some types of organizations over others. Further, grants awarded by the Division of Preservation and Access made up 24.9% of the 7,503 total grants awarded and 15.2% of the \$1,438,049,152.75 in awards funded outright, matching, and supplemental by the NEH in the 2010s, providing a significant sample of funding data to analyze.

Findings and Further Research

To conclude, examination of funding awarded by the Division of Preservation and Access to academic institutions clearly indicates a preference for Doctoral Universities as defined by the CIIHE. It is unclear what percentage of institutions at each level of classification apply for NEH funding from the Division of Preservation and Access. On May 10, 2021, researchers submitted a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to access data about unfunded proposals awarded by the Division of Preservation and Access to investigate whether the breakdown of unfunded proposals by CIIHE Basic Classification matched the breakdown of funded proposals. The NEH denied the request "in accordance with FOIA Exemptions 4 and 6, NEH does not release the details of unfunded grant applications. 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(4), (b)(6)."⁵ It is also unclear what qualities Doctoral Universities possess that make them more likely to apply for and receive funding or if the NEH's requirements deter proposals from a wider variety of academic institutions. Further, it is unknown how many institutions in each classification own cultural heritage materials appropriate for grant programs offered by the Division of Preservation and Access.

To continue this line of inquiry, the researchers hope to consider the funding trends of other divisions of the NEH and data from other federal agencies, including the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC). They may also cross-reference data collected by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) and National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Academic Library Survey to further identify common traits of libraries associated with academic institutions that receive federal funding for cultural heritage curation and access efforts.

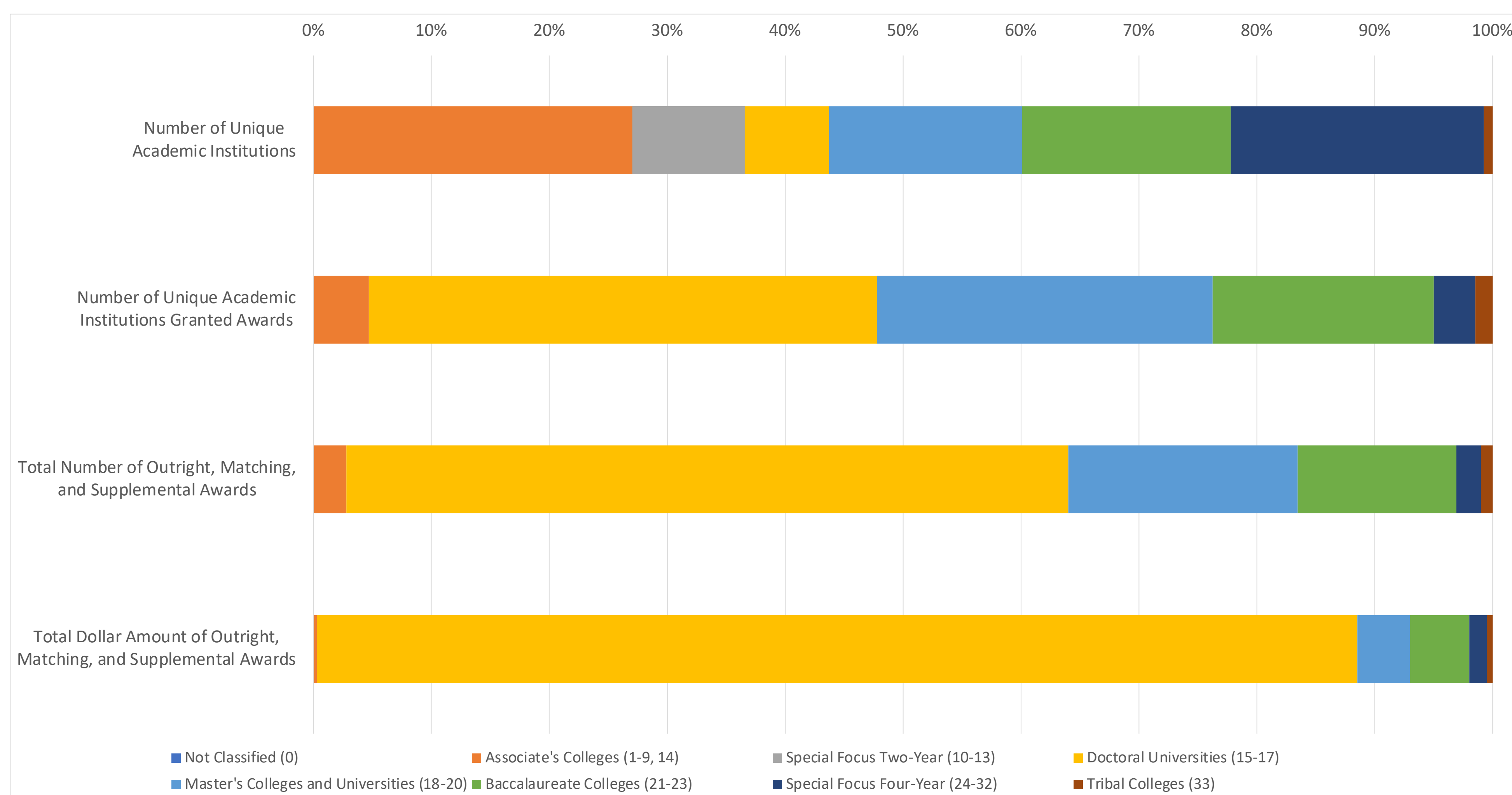
Table 1: Comparison of Average Preservation and Access Outright, Matching, and Supplemental Awards to Academic Institutions by CIIHE 2015 Basic Classification

CIIHE 2015 Basic Classification	Average Amount Awarded
Not Classified (0)	\$0.00
Associate's Colleges (1-9, 14)	\$10,106.58
Special Focus Two-Year (10-13)	\$0.00
Doctoral Universities (15-17)	\$145,712.24
Master's Colleges and Universities (18-20)	\$23,100.09
Baccalaureate Colleges (21-23)	\$37,767.08
Special Focus Four-Year (24-32)	\$71,438.74
Tribal Colleges (33)	\$51,630.07

Results

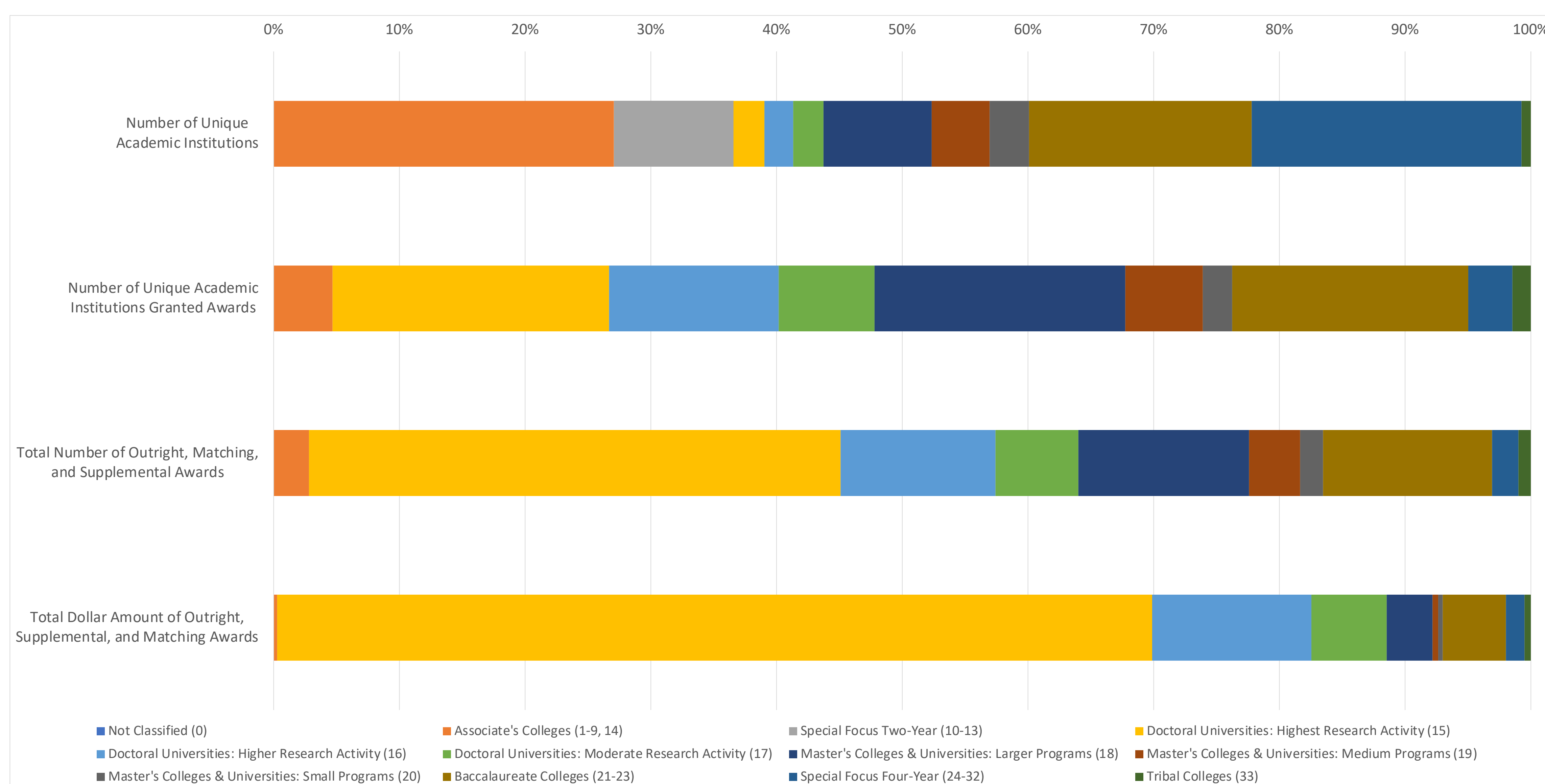
Despite comprising only 7.2% of the total number of institutions of higher education classified by the CIIHE, the NEH Division of Preservation and Access awarded Doctoral Universities 59.2% of the total number of awards granted between 2010 and 2019. More disproportionately, the Division awarded doctoral institutions 88.3% of the total dollars awarded outright to academic institutions in the 2010s through their various programs (Figure 1). On average, Doctoral Universities received more than twice the amount per Division of Preservation and Access grant as the next closest classification, Special Focus Four-Year institutions (Table 1). Additionally, Doctoral Universities are the only institution type that benefited from matching and supplemental awards, which dramatically affected the final dollar amounts awarded to institutions by CIIHE type (Figure 1). Of the 1,871 grants awarded by the Division of Preservation and Access to academic institutions, only 341 unique colleges and universities received funding, signifying that the Division has funded some institutions multiple times.

Figure 1: Comparison of the Number of Academic Institutions by the Number and Amount of Division of Preservation and Access Awards by CIIHE 2015 Basic Classification



A closer inspection of Doctoral Universities and Master's Colleges & Universities as defined by the CIIHE, which received 92.7% of awards funded outright, matching, and supplemental by the Division of Preservation and Access in the 2010s, shows a clear preference for funding Doctoral Universities with the highest research activity. The Division granted 75 unique Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity 42.3% of the total number of outright, matching, and supplemental awards in the 2010s, but those institutions garnered most of the monetary support, attracting 69.6% of the total dollars awarded outright, matching, and supplemental (Figure 2). In short, the Division of Preservation and Access funded 22.0% of the unique academic institutions awarded grants with 69.6% of the total monetary support they offered between 2010 and 2019.

Figure 2: Comparison of the Number of Academic Institutions by the Number and Amount of Division of Preservation and Access Awards by CIIHE 2015 Basic Classification



References

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4. Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. "Downloads." [carnegieclassifications.iu.edu](https://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/downloads.php). Accessed July 7, 2021. <https://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/downloads.php>.
5. National Endowment for the Humanities Office of the General Counsel. "Freedom of Information Act Request 21-38 e-mail message to Carolyn Runyon," May 20, 2021.

Acknowledgements

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