

PLYMOUTH EDUCATION PROFILE

November 23, 2004

1. Overview

Plymouth's academic institutions distinguish the town from surrounding communities. Plymouth State University and Plymouth Regional High School bring a large number of students, their families and nearby residents to Plymouth for education and employment, which in turn generates activity in Plymouth's streets and downtown business. The University offers sporting events and performances making Plymouth an entertainment center for the region. The Plymouth Schools are considered by many to be among the best in the area making Plymouth a desirable place for families. For these reasons and others, the institutions help to shape Plymouth's identity. This section of the master plan provides a profile of these schools to better understand their contributions to the community.

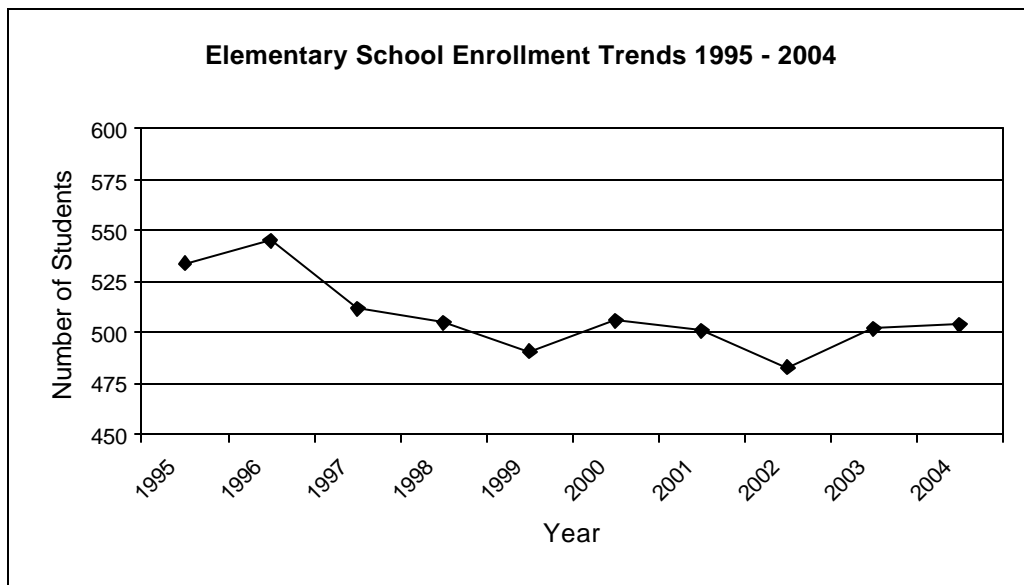
2. Plymouth Elementary and Plymouth Regional High Schools

Plymouth children attend the Plymouth Elementary School starting in kindergarten and going through eighth grade. The school is located off Highland Street on Old Ward Bridge Road adjacent to the Plymouth Regional High School (PRHS). PRHS is a four-year comprehensive public high school with a vocational center and alternative high school program. It serves Plymouth teenagers as well as teens from seven surrounding communities. The School Administrative Unit (SAU #48) is also located on Old Ward Bridge Road situated between the school facilities in the part of Plymouth zoned "Civic/Institutional."

The Plymouth School Board, a five-member board elected by town residents, governs the Plymouth Elementary School. It is responsible for students in kindergarten to eighth grade. The Pemi-Baker Regional School Board is a 12-member board with elected representatives from the eight communities that comprise the district. They serve students from grade 9 through grade 12. Both school boards develop and adopt policies for their respective schools and plan for facility needs. They also develop the school budgets that are acted on by voters in the districts. The SAU provides general administrative services to all schools in the district and supervises the expenditure of all funds appropriated for public schools.

A. Plymouth Elementary School Enrollment Trends

The Plymouth Elementary School has a capacity of 600 students. Enrollment peaked in 1996 to 545 students, probably as the effects of the baby boom echo (the children of baby boomers entering elementary school) began to recede. Current enrollment is 504 students, which is about 100 students below the school's capacity of 600.



Source: NH Department of Education and SAU #48.

According to NH Department of Education data:

- Plymouth's kindergarten through grade 8 enrollment has seen minor fluctuations during the past ten years. In 1995, 534 students attended Plymouth Elementary School. A decade later the number of K-8 students has dropped to 504 students (almost a 6% decrease).
- During this same ten year period the town's population was relatively unchanged.
- As noted in data collected by the NH Department of Education, student enrollments in towns throughout the State of New Hampshire have generally been increasing. The number of students increased by 10% between 1994 and 2003, while Plymouth's student population declined by almost 6% during the same time period.

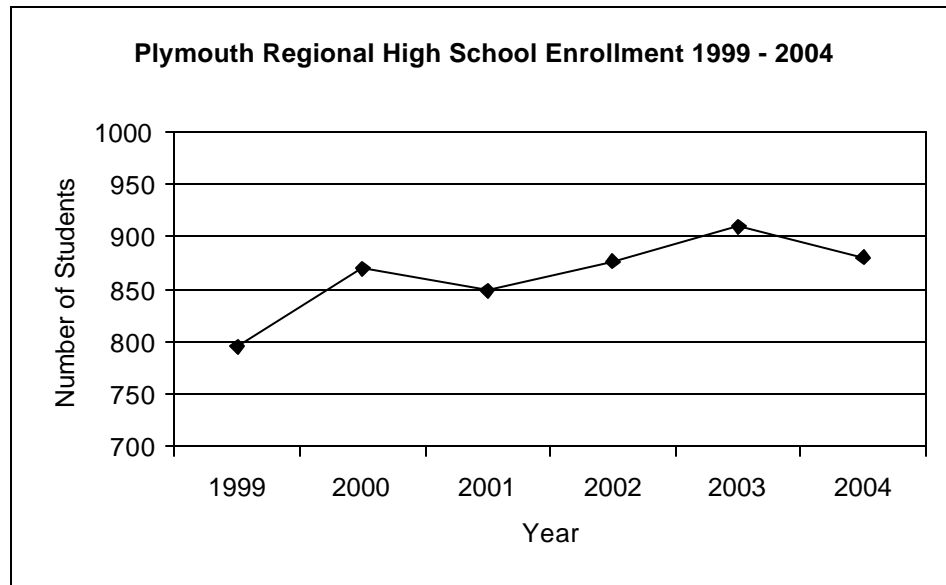
Elementary School Statistics Plymouth 1998-2003 School Years					
	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004
Kindergarten	45	40	44	35	44
Elementary (1-8)	438	466	457	448	438
Home schooled	NA	5	3	8	6
Total elementary-aged children	483	511	504	491	488
Students eligible for free or reduced cost lunch	NA	NA	NA	35.9%	34.9%
Attendance	95.9%	95.8%	96%	95.7%	NA
Students per teacher	NA	NA	17	17	21

Source: New Hampshire Department of Education. NA = data not available

- Home schooling has accounted for generally less than 1% of the total elementary-aged population and has seen insignificant fluctuations in the last four years. During the same four-year period, approximately 1.5% of elementary-aged students were home-schooled in New Hampshire with numbers increasing slightly annually.
- More than one-third of the elementary-aged students at Plymouth Elementary School is eligible for free or reduced cost lunches. Data prior to 2002 was unavailable.
- Plymouth maintains small class sizes with an average student to teacher ratio of 17 to 1 during the last three years. NH Department of Education Rule Ed 306.16 specifies a maximum allowable class size of 25 for grades 1 and 2 and 30 students for higher grades.

B. Plymouth Regional High School Enrollment Trends

According to the SAU, Plymouth Regional High School has a capacity of 1,000 students. In contrast to the elementary school enrollment trends, high school enrollment has been rising.



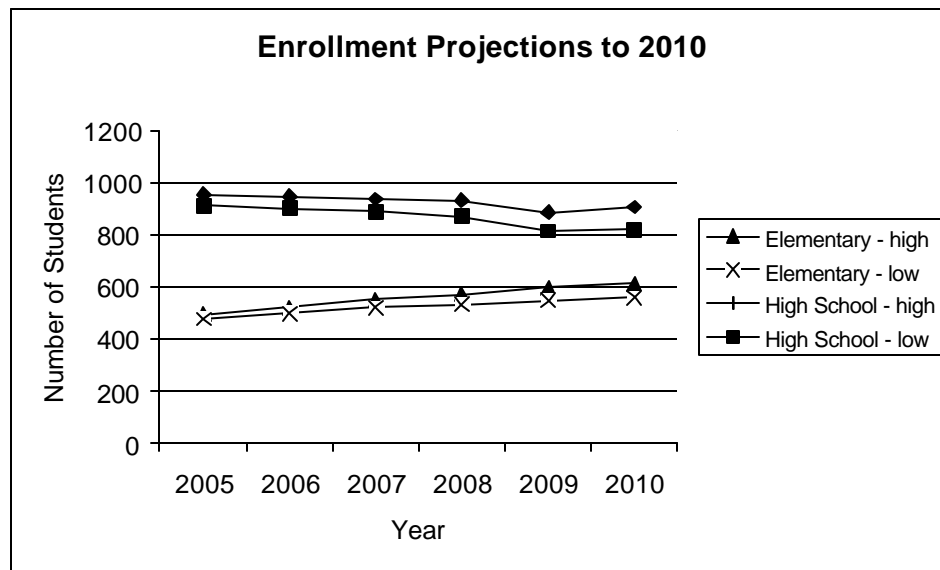
Source: .NH Department of Education

- Enrollment in the past decade peaked in 2003 with 909 students. It has been noted that the influence of the baby boom echo is still being felt and some of the outlying communities may be growing faster than Plymouth.
- Fall 2004 figures indicate a return to the 2002 enrollment, which is still below the high school's capacity of 1,000 students. Overcrowding at the high school does not seem to be a problem at this time.

C. Enrollment Projections

Student enrollment projections were developed by Applied Economic Research in June 2003 for the Phase I analysis exploring the feasibility of school impact fees. Russ Thibeault, the author of the *School Impact Fee Feasibility Analysis*, used the cohort-survival method to develop enrollment projections. It is the standard school

enrollment projection technique and generally, is quite accurate for projection periods of ten years or less. Two projections were developed; one reflecting recent trends and the second reflecting a greater rate of development based on a recent housing study for Plymouth. According to the Phase I analysis, the following projections cover the range of probable future enrollment.



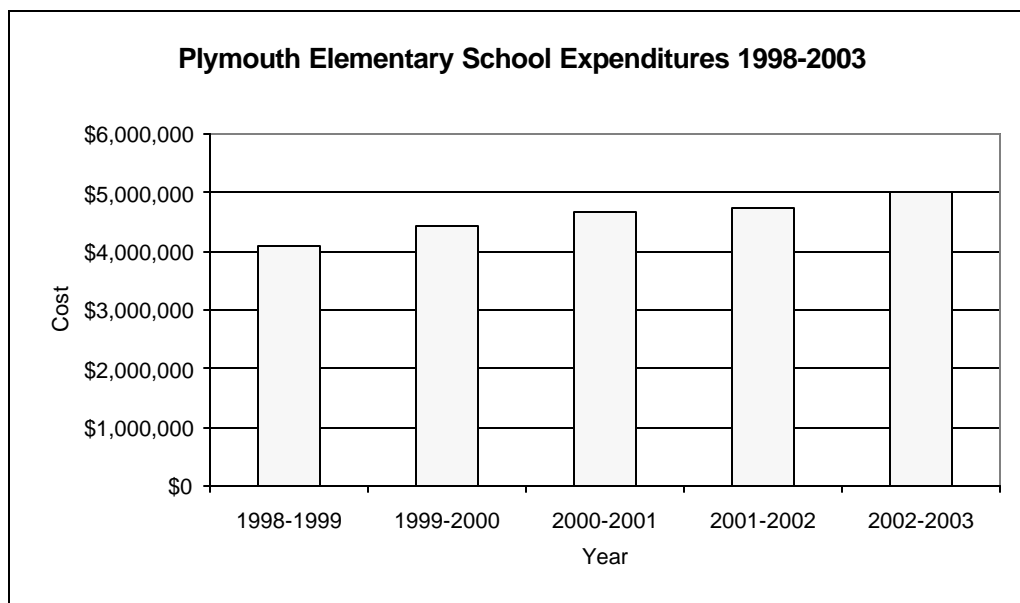
Source: *School Impact Fee Feasibility Analysis* by Applied Economic Research, June 2003

- Student enrollment at the Plymouth Elementary School will rise slightly and then remain relatively flat for the foreseeable future.
- It is anticipated that high school enrollment will dip slightly within the next five years and then remain constant for the foreseeable future, like the enrollment projections for K-8.
- Based on these projections, both schools appear to have adequate capacity to accommodate anticipated growth.
- It is recommended that the Plymouth School District and the Pemi-Baker Regional School District revisit these projections on an annual basis using the most current information available including birth data and building permit activity.

D. Education Costs

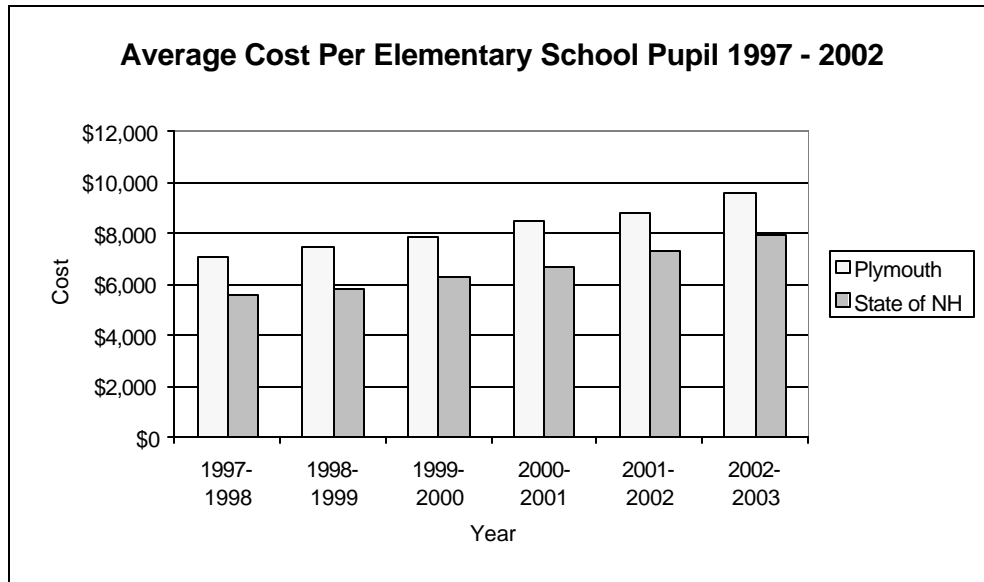
Like most school districts in New Hampshire and across the nation, the Plymouth School District has seen an increase in the total recurring expenditures at the Plymouth Elementary School during the past five years. According to the NH Department of Education:

- The total recurring costs at the elementary school increased by 22.7% between 1998 and 2003 from \$4,082,708 to \$5,009,906. These figures have not been adjusted for inflation.



Source: .NH Department of Education

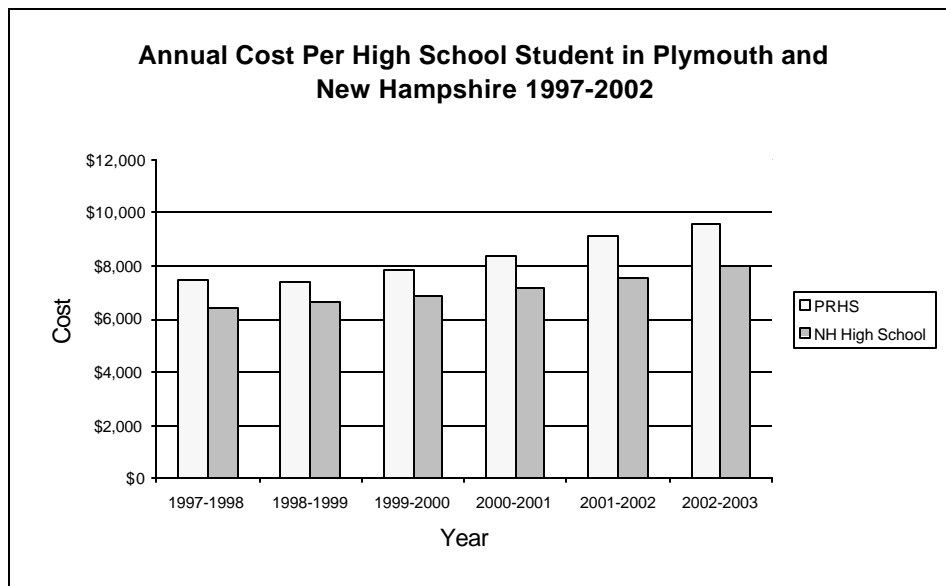
- During the same period of time, the average cost per Plymouth Elementary School student increased from \$7,070 to \$9,567 or 35% in six years.
- Plymouth's costs per elementary student since 1997 have been higher than the State's average by roughly 20%.



Source: .NH Department of Education

As noted previously, Plymouth’s public high school students attend PRHS.

- Plymouth’s cost per high school pupil has increased from \$7,070 per year in 1997 to \$9,569 per year in 2002. This 27.6% increase is only slightly more than the State's five year increase of 24.7%.
- The 2002 State average costs per student were 20% lower than the per student costs at Plymouth Regional High School.



Source: New Hampshire Department of Education

E. Facility Needs

In the fall of 2003, the Pemi-Baker Regional School Board authorized the long-range study and review of its present facilities in light of future growth and program needs. After extensive debate and evaluation of data, the committee determined that:

- Population growth is mostly stable and primarily in the 60 and older age group with a PRHS enrollment peak with the next two years; and
- From a developmental standpoint the current structure of the area elementary schools feeding students to the high school best meets the current demands.

[Additional infrastructure assessment will occur during the data collection for community facilities and services.]

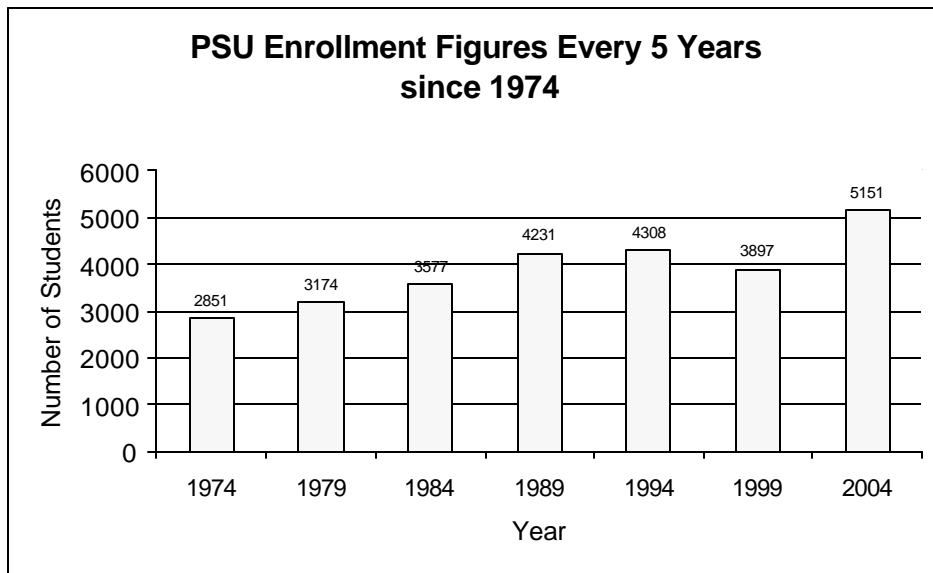
3. Plymouth State University

With a core campus of over 46 buildings on approximately 170 acres in Plymouth and Holderness, Plymouth State University is a dominant factor in the character of the Plymouth. Boundaries between PSU and the town are often blurred which has reinforced their mutual interdependence and upon occasion created challenges. As the university evolves, so the town will evolve. This section will discuss the history of the university, recent enrollment trends and key PSU planning assumptions. Details of PSU's master plan will be incorporated as their plan becomes available.

A. From Normal School to Plymouth State University - Trends

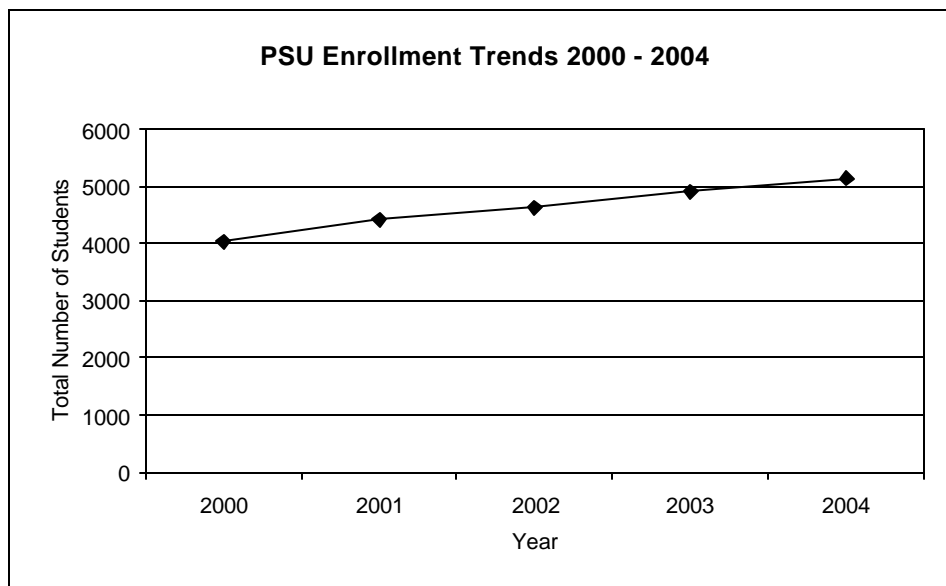
Plymouth State University was founded in 1871 as a normal school. It has evolved from a normal school to a teacher's college to a state college and in 2003 to a state university. It is a coeducational, residential university with an enrollment of approximately 3,800 undergraduate students and 1,500 graduate students. According to the PSU web site, "Plymouth State preserves the brick-and-ivy look of its New England small-college heritage while integrating state-of-the-art technology and facilities into an attractive, contemporary campus design."

As PSU has evolved, its student population has increased. The following enrollment trends include all undergraduates and graduates.



Source: PSU 10/04

- Over three decades, PSU has increased its total student body by about 80%.



Source: PSU 10/04

- Since 2000, there has been a 27% increase in student population with a doubling of the graduate program.
- Based on the draft PSU Master Plan, it is anticipated that PSU enrollment may increase by approximately 8% from 5,151 in 2004 to 5,553 by 2014.

B. Planning at PSU

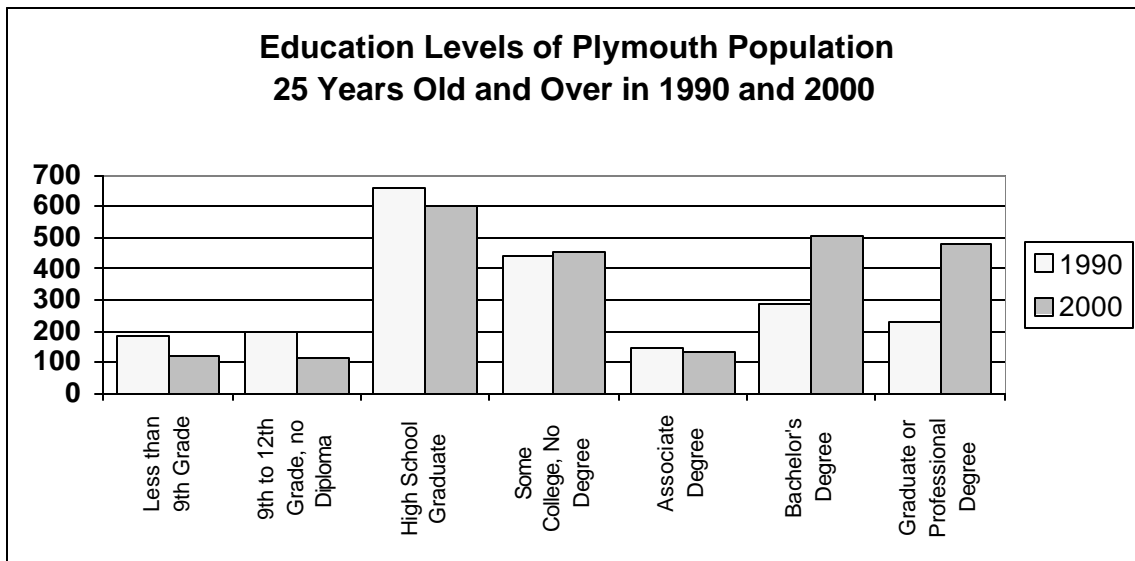
Planning at Plymouth State University is ongoing and recently has included the preparation of the University Master Plan. The Plan identifies key planning assumptions as the university looks to the next ten years in Plymouth and Holderness. These assumptions include:

- (1) Minimal growth in traditional student population
- (2) 65% undergraduate students housed on campus
- (3) New residence halls should:
 - be small in scale
 - be built in suite-style configurations
 - provide for 280 to 320 gross square feet per student
- (4) Existing Residence Halls should:
 - be renovated according to need
 - include a mix of singles, doubles and suites
- (5) Right-size classrooms to achieve 25 square feet per person (*national standard*)

[Details including proposed new space and designs from the PSU Master Plan will be incorporated into this document following when the final draft of the plan is available sometime in December.]

4. Other Educational Opportunities

Plymouth has seen a change in the education levels of its population since the 1990 Census. The numbers of people with a Bachelor's degree and or a graduate degree have nearly doubled. This trend, although more pronounced in Plymouth, is similar to the rest of the country in that college degrees are becoming as important for employment opportunities as a high school diploma was thirty years ago.



Source: US Census 1990 and 2000

With a well-educated community comes the demand for adult education offerings. Such offerings are available at PSU and SLL through the state university system as well as other private institutions. The Internet also has made lifelong learning opportunities more accessible to Plymouth residents.

In addition to public education opportunities in Plymouth, there are a number of private schools.

[This data has been difficult to locate. Would like types of facilities, name & numbers so there is a more complete picture of what is available in Plymouth.]

5. Planning Considerations

[Ideas to think about - thoughts generated by forum & survey and by no means comprehensive]

Goal: Promote coordination and cooperation of public school and town planning efforts.

- (1) Schedule periodic meetings between Planning Board and School Boards to encourage communication and coordination of town and school plans.
- (2) Revisit school enrollment projections on an annual basis using the most current information available including birth data and building permit activity.
- (3) Continue to share school's recreational and meeting room facilities with the town.
- (4) Encourage high level of public involvement in decision-making for school facilities.
- (5) Coordinate major school capital expenditures with the town's capital budget in order to minimize the tax rate increase in any one-year.
- (6)

Goal: Create a healthy balance between the community and the university so that neither dominates nor has an adverse impact on the other.

- (1) Enhance interaction between town government, residents of Plymouth, and PSU.
- (2) Plymouth administrators, boards, commissions, and committee should work closely with PSU on land use and development issues, through shared master planning results and conceptual project plans, and regular discussion of issues of common concern.
- (3) Attention should be paid to the "boundary" between PSU activities and adjoining neighborhoods. Careful planning, setbacks and where possible buffers should be considered to provide reasonable transition from institutional use to residential use, to protect the character of the neighborhood and to protect residents from noise, light, activity, odor, university pedestrian traffic and vehicle traffic.
- (4)