TODAY’S STUDENTS ARE DIFFERENT FROM PREVIOUS GENERATIONS.

THEY ARE:

More diverse in age, race, and income level.
33% are older than 25, 42% are not white alone, and the increasingly first-generation and low-income student population experience challenges with basic needs insecurity.

Commuting from off-campus housing.
Just 16% of undergraduates live on campus, with their peers commuting to campus, engaging in schooling online, or both.

Balancing enrollment and employment.
38% are enrolled part-time, and students who are enrolled part-time are typically working more hours per week than their full-time peers.

Responsible for family affairs beyond the classroom.
22% of undergraduates are parents, responsible for their own success — as well as the livelihood of their families.

TODAY’S STUDENTS:

42% identify as a race other than white

16% live on campus

38% are enrolled part-time

22% are parents

The educational journeys of today’s students are as diverse as their backgrounds and lived experiences. Especially in the wake of COVID-19, today’s students share one common theme: overcoming barriers and hardships of their own on their way to higher learning.
HOW DO TODAY’S STUDENTS DIFFER FROM YESTERDAY’S?

RACE AND ETHNICITY:

proportion of students who identify as:

- White 52%
- Hispanic 20%
- Black 15%
- Asian-American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) 6%
- More than one race 3%
- American Indian or Alaska Native 1%

ADDITIONAL IDENTITIES:

- 56% are first-generation
- 6% at postsecondary institutions are veterans
- 17% identify as a sexual orientation other than heterosexual
- 2% identify as transgender or gender non-conforming

STUDENT VOICE

Aya Waller-Bey, Georgetown University

Aya is a first-generation college student who navigated the federal student aid process, which presented several challenges due to her family’s circumstances.
Who are today’s students?
They are lifelong learners seeking upward mobility through continuing education.
HOW DO TODAY’S STUDENTS ATTEND COLLEGE?

INSTITUTION TYPES:

- **34%** of undergraduate students attend a two-year college

- **78%** of undergraduate students attend a public college or university

LEARNING MODALITY:

- **75%** of undergraduate students have taken at least one online course

- **44%** of undergraduate students were exclusively enrolled in distance education courses during the peak of the coronavirus pandemic

TRANSFER STATUS:

- **38%** of students transfer to at least one different institution in their postsecondary career

  Students lose, on average, one semester’s worth of coursework when they transfer colleges

  Those at two-year colleges are the most likely to transfer at least once.

  The most common transfer type is from a public two-year institution to a public four-year institution.

STUDENT VOICE

**Bri Sislo-Schutta, University of Minnesota Twin Cities**

Bri’s firsthand experience as a student enrolled in college during COVID-19 amplifies the unique needs of today’s students and how the pandemic affected student populations differently.
WHAT CHALLENGES DO TODAY’S STUDENTS FACE?

BASIC NEEDS INSECURITY:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>34%</td>
<td>receive a Pell grant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48%</td>
<td>experience housing insecurity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14%</td>
<td>were homeless in the past year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39%</td>
<td>experience food insecurity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18%</td>
<td>receive SNAP benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32%</td>
<td>received emergency aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$830</td>
<td>average emergency aid per student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52%</td>
<td>did not apply for supports because they did not know how</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

STUDENT VOICE

Cedric Dent Jr., Southeastern Louisiana University

Cedric is a Pell Grant recipient who had to borrow money from multiple family members to continue attending school when his federal financial aid ran short.
STUDENT VOICE

Drayton Jackson, Olympic College

Drayton is a parenting student who had to delay his educational goals to work due to financial uncertainties caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

MENTAL HEALTH:

- 35% have at least moderate anxiety
- 14% reported worsening mental health during and after the pandemic

IMMIGRATION:

- 454k undocumented students are enrolled in higher education
- 216k undocumented students are DACA*-eligible

FINANCIAL STATUS:

- 51% of undergraduate students are financially independent

COMPLETION:

- 62% complete a degree or credential within six years of enrolling

* Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals
WORK:

proportion of undergraduate students who work while in college:

- **of full-time students**: 43%
- **of part-time students**: 81%

proportion of undergraduate students who work 35 or more hours per week:

- **of full-time students**: 10%
- **of part-time students**: 47%

In the 2017-18 school year, **567,786** undergraduate students received funds from the Federal Work-Study program.

The most common occupation for students across all age groups is sales and office support.

STUDENT VOICE

Christopher Ferguson, Baton Rouge Community College

Chris was a grocery store employee who got a life-changing opportunity for him and his family when he completed a workforce program created in conjunction with ExxonMobil.

For more information about Higher Learning Advocates, please contact Tanya Ang, Managing Director, Advocacy, at tang@higherlearningadvocates.org.
ENDNOTES


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