

101: TODAY'S STUDENTS



Updated 2022

TODAY'S STUDENTS ARE DIFFERENT FROM PREVIOUS GENERATIONS.

THEY ARE:

More diverse in age, race, and income level.

33% are older than 25¹, 42% are not white alone², 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 campus³, with their peers commuting to campus, engaging in schooling online, or both.

Balancing enrollment and employment.

38% are enrolled part-time⁴, and students who are enrolled part-time are typically working more hours per week than their full-time peers.⁵

Responsible for family affairs beyond the classroom.

22% of undergraduates are parents⁶, 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

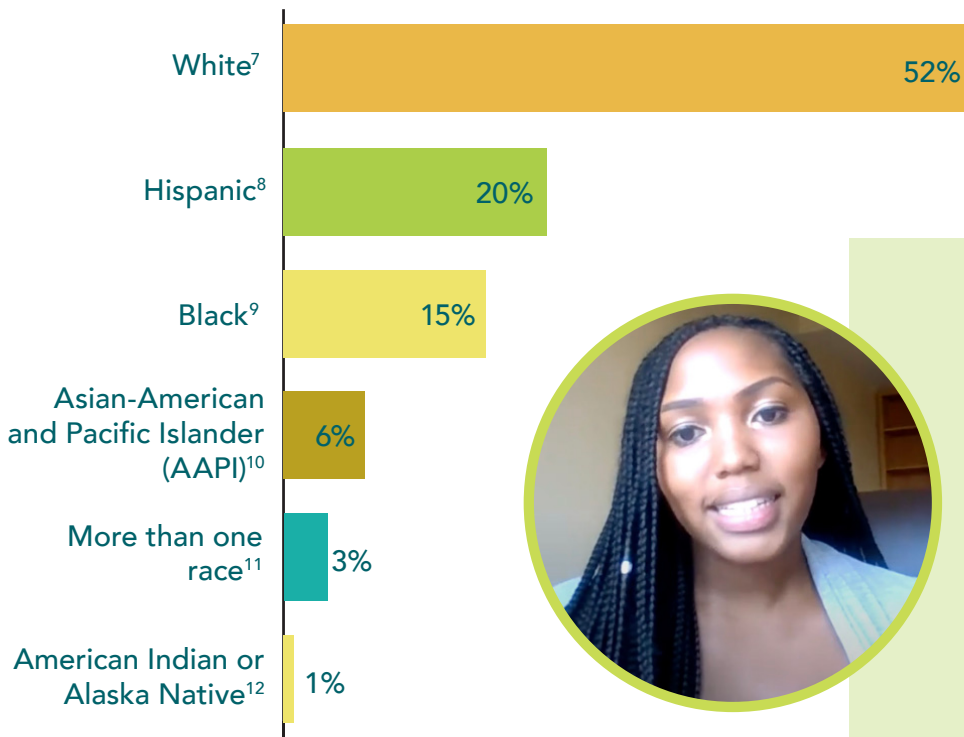
22%  are parents

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:



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.

ADDITIONAL IDENTITIES:

56%

are first-generation¹³



6%

at postsecondary institutions are veterans¹⁴



17%

identify as a sexual orientation other than heterosexual¹⁵



2%

identify as transgender or gender non-conforming¹⁶



A woman with short dark hair, wearing a red and blue plaid shirt over a white t-shirt, is seated in a black wheelchair. She is reaching up with her right hand to touch a yellow pencil hanging from a blue locker. She is looking upwards and to the right. The background shows a row of blue lockers in a well-lit room.

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 college¹⁷



78%

of undergraduate students attend a public college or university¹⁸



LEARNING MODALITY:

75%

of undergraduate students have taken at least one online course¹⁹



44%

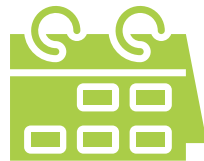
of undergraduate students were exclusively enrolled in distance education courses during the peak of the coronavirus pandemic²⁰

TRANSFER STATUS:

38%

of students transfer to at least one different institution in their postsecondary career²¹

Students lose, on average, one semester's worth of coursework when they transfer colleges²²



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.²³



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:

34%

receive a Pell grant²⁴



48%

experience housing insecurity²⁵



14%

were homeless in the past year²⁶



39%

experience food insecurity²⁷



18%

receive SNAP benefits²⁸



32%

received emergency aid²⁹



\$830

average emergency aid per student³⁰



52%

did not apply for supports because they did not know how³¹



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:

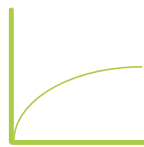
35%

have at least moderate anxiety³²



14%

reported worsening mental health during and after the pandemic³³



IMMIGRATION:

454k

undocumented students are enrolled in higher education³⁴



216k

undocumented students are DACA*-eligible³⁵

* Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals



FINANCIAL STATUS:

51%



of undergraduate students are financially independent³⁶

COMPLETION:

62%



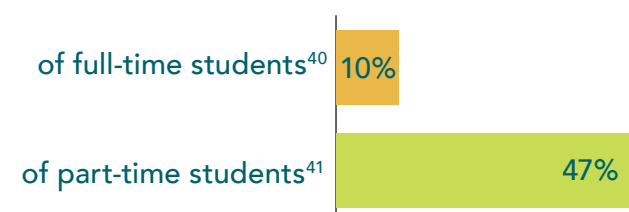
complete a degree or credential within six years of enrolling³⁷

WORK:

proportion of undergraduate students who work while in college:



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



The most common occupation for students across all age groups is sales and office support.⁴³



In the 2017-18 school year,

567,786



undergraduate students received funds from the Federal Work-Study program⁴²



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

¹ "Number of students, by age category, enrolled in postsecondary institutions in the fall." U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/TrendGenerator/app/answer/2/8>.

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³ Robert Kelchen. "A Look at College Students' Living Arrangements." May 2018, https://robertkelchen.com/2018/05/28/a-look-at-college-students-living-arrangements/#_ftn2.

⁴ "Total undergraduate fall enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by attendance status, sex of student, and control and level of institution: Selected years, 1970 through 2029." U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, January 2021. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d20/tables/dt20_303.70.asp.

⁵ "College Student Employment," U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 2020, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/coe_ssa.pdf.

⁶ Lindsey Reichlin Cruse, Tessa Holtzman, Barbara Gault, David Croom, and Portia Polk, "Parents in College By the Numbers." Ascend at the Aspen Institute and the Institute for Women's Policy Research, April 2019, https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/C481_Parents-in-College-By-the-Numbers-Aspen-Ascend-and-IWPR.pdf.

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⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

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¹² Ibid.

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¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ "Undergraduate Enrollment." U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 2022, <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cha>.

¹⁸ "Total fall enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by attendance status, sex of student, and control of institution: Selected years, 1947 through 2029," U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 2019, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_303.10.asp?current=yes.

¹⁹ "Number and percentage of students enrolled in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by distance education participation, location of student, level of enrollment, and control and level of institution: Fall 2019 and fall 2020," U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, November 2021, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d21/tables/dt21_311.15.asp.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Doug Shapiro, Afet Dundar, Faye Huie, Phoebe Khasiala Wakhungu, Ayesha Bhimdiwala, Angel Nathan, and Youngsik Hwang, "Transfer and Mobility: A National View of Student Movement in Postsecondary Institutions, Fall

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²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Miriam Feldblum, Steven Hubbard, Andrew Lim, Christian Penichet-Paul, and Hanna Siegel,

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³⁶ Lindsey Reichlin Cruse, Eleanor Eckerson, and Barbara Gault, "Understanding the New College Majority: The Demographic and Financial Characteristics of Independent Students and their Postsecondary Outcomes," The Institute for Women's Policy Research, February 2018, https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/C462_Understanding-the-New-College-Majority_final.pdf.

³⁷ "Completing College National and State Reports." National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, February 2022, <https://nscresearchcenter.org/completing-college/>.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² "National Student Aid Profile: Overview of 2020 Federal Programs," National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, 2020, https://www.nasfaa.org/uploads/documents/2020_NASFAA_National_Profile.pdf.

⁴³ Anthony Carnevale, Nicole Smith, Michelle Melton, and Eric Prince, "Learning While Earning: The New Normal." Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce, 2015, <https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/WorkingLearners-Report.pdf>.