WHO ARE TODAY’S STUDENTS?

Nationally, today’s students are more diverse than any previous generation of college students: in age, race, and income level. They’re more mobile and may not live on campus. Most participate in the workforce, either full-time or part-time. Work and family responsibilities beyond the classroom—whether that is on-campus or online—often compete with today’s students’ educational goals.

NATIONWIDE, TODAY’S STUDENTS ARE:

- **37%** OLDER THAN 25
- **64%** WORKING WHILE IN COLLEGE
- **24%** PARENTING
- **13%** LIVING ON CAMPUS
- **40%** PART-TIME

IN COLORADO...

Russ Poulin, Director of Policy and Analysis at Western Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET) argues that “unlike the current process, higher education could actually use the scientific method to improve instruction and to steer away from “innovations” that are more hype than help.”

Institutions would benefit by knowing up front the outcomes to which they would be held accountable as well as the consequences of success or failure. Institutions would not be held to standards and definitions that are out-of-date, poorly defined, and/or not defined at all. Unlike the medical model, we can design it so that every institution can participate, adopt innovations with a demonstrated track record, and have their innovations recognized based upon evidence not reputation.”
SNAPSHOT: How do Colorado’s numbers stack up?

To better understand how Colorado compares to the national higher education landscape, look to the data below detailing trends in enrollment, federal student aid, tuition and fees, earnings, and attainment comparing national and state level data.

ENROLLMENT

Colorado’s total student enrollment is 368,930

57%

Colorado students attend courses full-time.

FEDERAL STUDENT AID

About 67% of Colorado’s college students take out federal student loans,¹ compared to 70% nationwide.²

¹Includes Direct Subsidized Loan, Direct Unsubsidized Loans, Parent PLUS, Grad PLUS, and Perkins Loan.

²https://www.cnbc.com/2017/07/03/this-is-the-age-most-americans-pay-off-their-student-loans.html


SNAPSHOT: How do Colorado’s numbers stack up?

TUITION & FEES

Colorado’s institutions of higher education require tuition & fees above the national average.

Source: College Board. Trends in College Pricing 2018. Figure 5 and 6. https://trends.collegeboard.org/college-pricing
Source: College Board. Average Tuition and Fees and Room and Board in Current Dollars, 2017-18 and 2018-19.

ATTAINMENT

In 2016-2017, Colorado students obtained certificates at almost twice the national average.

SNAPSHOT: How do Colorado’s numbers stack up?

ATTAINMENT continued

As of February 2019, about 56.5% of Colorado residents ages 25-64 have obtained a certificate or postsecondary degree.

NATIONALLY, 47.6% of Americans ages 25-64 have obtained a certificate or postsecondary degree.¹

Colorado Education Levels for Residents Ages 25-64

- High School Graduate or less: 14.5%
- Some college, no credential: 28.9%
- Certificate: 27.4%
- Associate Degree: 14.6%
- Bachelor’s Degree: 8.6%
- Graduate or Professional Degree: 6.0%

Percentage of Colorado Residents Ages 25-64 with at least an Associate’s Degree by Race

- Hispanic: 24% (23% National Average)
- White: 57% (57% National Average)
- African-American: 31% (38% National Average)
- American Indian: 25% (31% National Average)
- Asian & Pacific Islander: 63% (60% National Average)


¹ Source: http://strongernation.luminafoundation.org/report/2019/#state/CO
SNAPSHOT: How do Colorado’s numbers stack up?

EARNINGS AND EMPLOYMENT

Americans who earn a postsecondary degree or credential have higher wage potential.

Source: Georgetown University Center for Education and Workforce. Certificates: Gateway to Gainful Employment and College Degrees. https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/certificates/

Colorado workers with higher levels of postsecondary attainment have more earning power than their peers with less than a bachelor’s degree. However, the median earnings of Colorado residents is below the national average for residents with a bachelor’s degree.


The majority of jobs nationwide in 2020 will require education beyond high school.

### WHAT CHALLENGES DO TODAY’S STUDENTS FACE?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affordability</th>
<th>Part-Time vs.</th>
<th>Completion</th>
<th>Work</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>49% Financially Independent</td>
<td>40% Part-Time</td>
<td>38% of Students with additional financial, work, and family obligations leave school in their first year</td>
<td>64% Work While in College</td>
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<tr>
<td>42% At or Below Federal Poverty Line</td>
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<th>Parenting</th>
<th>Emergency Costs</th>
<th>Veteran-Status</th>
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<tr>
<td>24%</td>
<td>Early data from the University Innovation Alliance (UIA), a coalition of eleven public research universities, shows that about 4,000 Pell-eligible college seniors, who are in good academic standing, are at risk of being dropped from their classes or not allowed to graduate because less than $1,000 is owed to their institutions.</td>
<td>4% of Undergrads are Veterans but they face unique challenges, such as applying competencies learned in military service to civilian careers and academics.</td>
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### HOW CAN FEDERAL POLICY HELP SET TODAY'S STUDENTS UP FOR SUCCESS?

Outcomes are critical for today’s students—including completion, employment, equity, and value—to be gained from higher learning. Federal policy needs to catch up to the way that today’s students are learning and reward institutions and systems that deliver the strongest career and educational outcomes.

**Federal Financial Aid** should be redesigned with a focus on the needs of a wide range of students, especially those who work full- or part-time, are financially independent, or need to enroll in courses outside the traditional two-semester approach. Redesign approaches could include rethinking Pell eligibility for workforce programs, or simpler loan repayment to match today’s students’ needs.

**Data** gathered through federal, state, and workforce data systems should cover the full spectrum of today’s students, not just first-time, full-time students. Today’s students, families, schools, and taxpayers need clear information to make informed choices about higher learning.

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4 [https://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/server_files/files/Completion%20Grants%20release%208_16_17%20FINAL.pdf](https://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/server_files/files/Completion%20Grants%20release%208_16_17%20FINAL.pdf)

5 [https://www.luminafoundation.org/todays-student-statistics](https://www.luminafoundation.org/todays-student-statistics)