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 TENNESSEE ...

Mike Krause, Executive Director of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission and member of Higher Learning Advocates’ Champions Network, advocates for higher education accessibility and affordability policies that place “non-traditional” learners at the center.

If we are asking a working mother or veteran to get out of their comfort zone and pursue higher education, we must be willing to expand the traditional definitions of students on our campuses to ensure anyone who enrolls is on a path to success.

MIKE KRAUSE’S POLICY POWER PLAYS:

- Make today’s students the center of policy decisions.
- Simplify the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
- Strengthen competency-based education to acknowledge skills and knowledge students already have.
SNAPSHOT: How do Tennessee’s numbers stack up?

To better understand how Tennessee 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

Tennessee’s total student enrollment is **339,551**

71% Tennessee students attend courses full-time.

FEDERAL STUDENT AID

About 60% of Tennessee’s college students and their families 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

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Integrated Postsecondary Data System (IPEDS), Enrollment by Student Level survey, Fall 2017 preliminary data. Includes undergraduate and graduate fall enrollment.


SNAPSHOT: How do Tennessee’s numbers stack up?

TUITION & FEES

Tennessee’s institutions of higher education tuition & fees are mainly on-par with the national average.

Source: College Board. Trends in College Pricing 2018. Figure 5 and 6. https://trends.collegeboard.org/college-pricing

ATTAINMENT

In 2016-2017, Tennessee students obtained certificates 10 percentage points higher than the national average.

Note: Certificates only include less than one year and at least one year but less than 4 years.
SNAPSHOT: How do Tennessee’s numbers stack up?

ATTAINMENT continued

As of February 2019, 42.7% of Tennessee 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

Tennessee Education Levels for Residents Ages 25-64

- High School Graduate or less: 10.2%
- Some college, no credential: 18.5%
- Certificate: 6.0%
- Associate Degree: 42.1%
- Bachelor’s Degree: 8.0%
- Graduate or Professional Degree: 15.2%

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

- Hispanic: 24%
- White: 47%
- African-American: 38%
- American Indian: 31%
- Asian & Pacific Islander: 28%
- National Average: 35%
- Tennessee: 35%

¹http://strongernation.luminafoundation.org/report/2019/#state/TN
SNAPSHOT: How do Tennessee’s numbers stack

EARNINGS AND EMPLOYMENT

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

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

Tennessee 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 Tennessee residents is below the national average.


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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</thead>
<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^{5}</td>
<td>64% WORK WHILE IN COLLEGE</td>
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<tr>
<td>31% AT OR BELOW FEDERAL POVERTY LINE</td>
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PARENTING
24%

EMERGENCY COSTS
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.\textsuperscript{4}

WORK
64%
WORK WHILE IN COLLEGE

VETERAN-STATUS
4% OF UNDERGRADS ARE VETERANS
but they face unique challenges, such as applying competencies learned in military service to civilian careers and academics.

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
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.

\textsuperscript{4} https://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/server_files/files/Completion\%20Grants\%20release\%208\_16\_17\%20FINAL.pdf
\textsuperscript{5} https://www.luminafoundation.org/todays-student-statistics