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

Danette Howard, Senior Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer at Lumina Foundation, advocates for being more clear about how equity is defined within the context of postsecondary attainment.

“Racial justice and fairness must be at the center of a redesigned postsecondary system... racial inequality has a grim history in our country that we can’t shy away from as we work to increase access, success and attainment. We must continue to confront it and recommit to dismantling it. Every single day.”
SNAPSHOT: How do Mississippi’s numbers stack up?

To better understand how Mississippi 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

Mississippi’s total student enrollment is 173,973

75%

Mississippi students attend full-time.

FEDERAL STUDENT AID

About 57% of Mississippi’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
SNAPSHOT: How do Mississippi’s numbers stack up?

TUITION & FEES

Mississippi’s institutions of higher education tuition & fees are below 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, above-average rates of Mississippi students obtained associate’s degrees and certificates compared to the rest of the nation, but below-average rates of Mississippi students obtained bachelor’s degrees.

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

ATTAINMENT continued

As of February 2019,

40.8%

of Mississippi 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.³

Mississippi Education Levels for Residents Ages 25-64

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

³http://strongernation.luminafoundation.org/report/2019/#state/MS
SNAPSHOT: How do Mississippi’s numbers stack up?

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/

Mississippi workers with higher levels of postsecondary attainment have more earning power than their peers with less than a bachelor’s degree. The median earnings of Mississippi 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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>49% FINANCIALLY INDEPENDENT</td>
<td>40% PART-TIME</td>
<td>38% OF STUDENTS</td>
<td>64% WORK WHILE IN COLLEGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31% AT OR BELOW</td>
<td></td>
<td>with additional financial, work, and family obligations leave school in their first year(^3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.\(^4\)

WORK  

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 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.

---

\(^3\) https://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/server_files/files/Completion%20Grants%20release%208_16_17%20FINAL.pdf  
\(^4\) 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