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

Laura Keane, Chief Policy Officer at uAspire, advocates for closing the college achievement gap.

“To address these attainment gaps we must expand the definition of access. Access is not only opening the doors to begin a postsecondary degree, but also removing the systemic barriers along the way to completion.”
SNAPSHOT: How do Alabama’s numbers stack up?

To better understand how Alabama 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

Alabama’s total student enrollment is **308,597**

69% Alabama students attend full-time.

FEDERAL STUDENT AID

About 63% of Alabama’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 Alabama’s numbers stack up?

TUITION & FEES

Alabama’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
Source: College Board. Average Tuition and Fees and Room and Board in Current Dollars, 2017-18 and 2018-19.

ATTAINMENT

In 2016-2017, above-average rates of Alabama students obtained bachelor’s degrees compared to the rest of the nation.

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

ATTAINMENT continued

As of February 2019,

40% of Alabama 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.\(^3\)

Alabama Education Levels for Residents Ages 25-64

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Alabama</th>
<th>National Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School Graduate or less</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college, no credential</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Degree</td>
<td>42.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate or Professional Degree</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

- Hispanic: 22% (Alabama), 20% (National Average)
- White: 46% (Alabama), 39% (National Average)
- African-American: 30% (Alabama), 27% (National Average)
- American Indian: 24% (Alabama), 31% (National Average)
- Asian & Pacific Islander: 62% (Alabama), 58% (National Average)


\(^3\)http://strongernation.luminafoundation.org/report/2019/#state/AL
SNAPSHOT: How do Alabama’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/

Alabama workers with higher levels of postsecondary attainment have more earning power than their peers with less than a bachelor’s degree.


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


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### National Average Earnings of U.S. Workers By Educational Attainment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Attainment</th>
<th>National Average</th>
<th>Alabama</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School Graduate</td>
<td>$29,202</td>
<td>$20,924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>$34,946</td>
<td>$28,672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate</td>
<td>$42,088</td>
<td>$34,412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>$54,300</td>
<td>$51,094</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Median Earnings by Educational Attainment for Alabama Residents Aged 25 and Over

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Attainment</th>
<th>National Average</th>
<th>Alabama</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school graduate</td>
<td>$20,924</td>
<td>$19,742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate (includes equivalency)</td>
<td>$28,672</td>
<td>$26,442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college or associate’s degree</td>
<td>$34,412</td>
<td>$31,208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>$51,094</td>
<td>$47,022</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Percentage of Jobs that will Require Postsecondary Education by 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>National Average</th>
<th>Alabama</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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WHAT CHALLENGES DO TODAY’S STUDENTS FACE?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AFFORDABILITY</th>
<th>PART-TIME VS. FULL-TIME</th>
<th>COMPLETION</th>
<th>WORK COMMITMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>49%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINANcially Independent</td>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td>of students with additional financial, work, and family obligations leave school in their first year</td>
<td>Work while in college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEDERAL POVERTY LINE</td>
<td></td>
<td></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

VETERAN-STATUS 4%

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.

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