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 ILLINOIS,

first-generation student Daquawn Bruce was a financially independent community college transfer student. He had to work multiple jobs in order to pay for his living expenses while attending college. Daquawn’s tuition was fully covered, but housing was not, and he could not afford to live on-campus and he worked three jobs to help pay for his living expenses. Daquawn successfully graduated with a Bachelor’s of Arts degree in French and Political Science from Carthage College.

To learn more about Daquawn’s story, visit todaysstudents.higherlearningadvocates.org.
SNAPSHOT: How do Illinois’ numbers stack up?

To better understand how Illinois 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

Illinois’ total student enrollment is 767,689.

58% of Illinois students attend full-time.

FEDERAL STUDENT AID

About 63% of Illinois’ 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 Illinois’ numbers stack up?

TUITION & FEES

Illinois’ institutions of higher education tuition & fees are 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.

In 2016-2017, below-average rates of Illinois students obtained postsecondary degrees compared to the rest of the nation, but above-average rates of Illinois students obtained certificates.

Note: Certificates only include less than one year and at least one year but less than 4 years.

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SNAPSHOT: How do Illinois’ numbers stack up?

**ILLINOIS**

**ATTAINMENT continued**

As of February 2019, **51.2%**

of Illinois 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.\(^3\)

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**Illinois Education Levels for Residents Ages 25-64**

- High School Graduate or less: 13.7%
- Some college, no credential: 33.9%
- Certificate: 22.8%
- Associate Degree: 8.7%
- Bachelor’s Degree: 14.8%
- Graduate or Professional Degree: 6.0%

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>National Average</th>
<th>Illinois</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian &amp; Pacific Islander</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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

Illinois 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 Illinois residents is above the national average.


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

WHAT CHALLENGES DO TODAY’S STUDENTS FACE?

**AFFORDABILITY**
- 49% financially independent
- 31% at or below Federal Poverty Line

**PART-TIME VS.**
- 40% part-time

**COMPLETION**
- 38% of students with additional financial, work, and family obligations leave school in their first year

**WORK**
- 64% work while in college

**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.

**VETERAN-STATUS**
- 4% of undergrads are veterans

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
5 https://www.luminafoundation.org/todays-student-statistics