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 KANSAS,

returning student Shelley Dixon decided to enroll at a local junior college to finish her teaching degree. Shelley had a hard time adjusting to independent study and taking classes completely online, but she persisted. She believed that having her teaching degree would give her an even “greater opportunity to influence students during one of the most turmoil-filled eras our country has witnessed for a long time.

“I need my degree to show students that it doesn’t matter how old you are when you finally achieve your dreams. As long as they hold onto those dreams, they will carry a small fire with them that can turn into a bonfire at a moment’s notice. Being able to ignite that fire in my very own students is the dream I have held on to these many years.”

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

To better understand how Kansas 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**

Kansas’ total student enrollment is **216,584**

58% Kansas students attend full-time.

**FEDERAL STUDENT AID**

About **65%** of Kansas’ 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 Education System (IPEDS), Enrollment by Student Level survey, Fall 2017 preliminary data. Includes undergraduate and graduate fall enrollment.


SNAPSHOT: How do Kansas’ numbers stack up?

TUITION & FEES

Kansas’ 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 Kansas students obtained certificates 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 Kansas’ numbers stack up?

ATTAINMENT continued

As of February 2019, 52% of Kansas 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

Kansas Education Levels for Residents Ages 25-64

![Pie chart showing education levels in Kansas]


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

![Bar chart showing percentage of residents with at least an Associate’s Degree by race]


SNAPSHOT: How do Kansas’ 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/

Kansas 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 Kansas residents is below the national average for high school graduates and residents with postsecondary degrees.


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% Federal Poverty Line

**PART-TIME VS. FULL-TIME**
- 40% Part-time

**COMPLETION**
- 38% of students leave school in their first year

**WORK COMMITMENTS**
- 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

**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.

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