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

Sarah Ancel, Senior Vice President at Complete College America, advocates for helping returning adult students earn their postsecondary degree or credential.

“When colleges give adults a workable full-time schedule, grant credit for what adults know, and provide a coach to help when life gets in the way, it’s not just a Better Deal for Returning Adults. It’s a Better Deal for Families, our Country, and Future Generations.”
SNAPSHOT: How do Montana’s numbers stack up?

To better understand how Montana 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

Montana’s total student enrollment is 51,039.

70%

Montana students attend full-time.

FEDERAL STUDENT AID

About 65% of Montana’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

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SNAPSHOT: How do Montana’s numbers stack up?

TUITION & FEES

Montana’s institutions of higher education tuition & fees are below the national average at public four-year institutions.

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 Montana students obtained bachelor’s degrees compared to the rest of the nation, but below-average rates of Montana students obtained associate’s degrees and certificates.

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

ATTAINMENT continued

As of February 2019, 44.7% of Montana 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.\(^3\)

Montana Education Levels for Residents Ages 25-64

- High School Graduate or less: 10.0%
- Some college, no credential: 33.9%
- Certificate: 22.6%
- Associate Degree: 10.1%
- Bachelor’s Degree: 21.5%
- Graduate or Professional Degree: 2.0%


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

- Hispanic: 24% National Average: 35% Montana: 35%
- White: 47% National Average: 43% Montana: 31%
- African-American: 43% National Average: 35% Montana: 25%
- American Indian: 29% National Average: 26% Montana: 25%
- Asian & Pacific Islander: 63% National Average: 52% Montana: 52%


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

Montana 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 Montana residents is below the national average.


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

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