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 NEBRASKA, first-generation student and son of immigrants Diego Tum-Monge expressed frustration over costs in postsecondary education that he had not accounted for.

“...For many low-income students, hidden costs of college can interfere with their ability to perform academically and ultimately cause them to take a leave of absence. First-generation and low-income students are some of the hardest working peers I’ve ever known. We should have access to college and its benefits, but any hidden costs shouldn’t keep us from walking that graduation stage, like I will, and confidently say, I knew I could do this. Mama, I made it for you.

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

To better understand how Nebraska 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

Nebraska’s total student enrollment is 136,608.

64% Nebraska students attend full-time.

FEDERAL STUDENT AID

About 68% of Nebraska’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 Nebraska’s numbers stack up?

TUITION & FEES

Nebraska’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 Nebraska students obtained bachelor’s degrees compared to the rest of the nation, but below-average rates of Nebraska 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 Nebraska’s numbers stack up?

ATTAINMENT continued

As of February 2019,

48.2%

of Nebraska 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

Nebraska Education Levels for Residents Ages 25-64

![Pie chart showing education levels]

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

![Bar chart showing percentage of residents by race]

³http://strongernation.luminafoundation.org/report/2019/#state/NE
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/

Nebraska 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 Nebraska residents is below the national average for residents with some college and/or a postsecondary degree.


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. COMPLETION**
- 40% part-time
- 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.

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