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

As a returning student, Mary Arevalo struggled with balancing work and family responsibilities with school. Mary’s strong support team comprised of mentors, advisors, and instructors provided words of encouragement to help push her towards completion of her college degree.

“"It’s difficult to overstate just how important student services and academic advisors can be to a student’s success and their journey to a career—especially for online students, adult learners, and other so-called non-traditional students. It can make all the difference. It certainly did for me."

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

To better understand how Pennsylvania 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**

Pennsylvania’s total student enrollment is 730,472. 73% of Pennsylvania students attend full-time.

**FEDERAL STUDENT AID**

About 70% of Pennsylvania’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 Pennsylvania’s numbers stack up?

TUITION & FEES

Pennsylvania’s 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

ATTAINMENT

In 2016-2017, above-average rates of Pennsylvania students obtained bachelor’s degrees compared to 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 Pennsylvania’s numbers stack up?

ATTAINMENT continued

As of February 2019,

46.6%

of Pennsylvania 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

Pennsylvania Education Levels for Residents Ages 25-64

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


³http://strongernation.luminafoundation.org/report/2019/#state/PA
**SNAPSHOT:** How do Pennsylvania’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/*](https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/certificates/)*

Pennsylvania 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 Pennsylvania residents with a bachelor’s degree is below the national average.

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Earnings in the Past 12 Months, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. [https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_09_5YR_S1501&prodType=table]*

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>Pennsylvania</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>$21,932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate</td>
<td>$42,088</td>
<td>$30,152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>$54,300</td>
<td>$35,412</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Median Earnings by Educational Attainment for Pennsylvania Residents Aged 25 and Over**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Attainment</th>
<th>National Average</th>
<th>Pennsylvania</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school graduate (includes equivalency)</td>
<td>$20,924</td>
<td>$21,932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate (includes equivalency)</td>
<td>$28,672</td>
<td>$22,562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college or associate’s degree</td>
<td>$34,412</td>
<td>$35,412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>$54,300</td>
<td>$51,094</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>National Average</th>
<th>Pennsylvania</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>65%</td>
<td>$54,300</td>
<td>$51,094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63%</td>
<td>$51,094</td>
<td>$50,699</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.</th>
<th>COMPLETION</th>
<th>WORK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>49%</strong></td>
<td><strong>40%</strong></td>
<td><strong>38%</strong></td>
<td><strong>64%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINANCIALLY INDEPENDENT</td>
<td>PART-TIME</td>
<td>OF STUDENTS</td>
<td>WORK WHILE IN COLLEGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31% AT OR BELOW</td>
<td>FEDERAL POVERTY LINE</td>
<td>with additional financial, work, and family obligations leave school in their first year³</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 institutions.⁴

### VETERAN-STATUS

4% OF UNDERGRADS ARE VETERANS

But they face unique challenges, such as applying competencies learned in military service to civilian careers and academics.

### 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](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](https://www.luminafoundation.org/todays-student-statistics)