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.

IN RHODE ISLAND ...

Kara Morissette finished her postsecondary degree more than a dozen years after she started while working a full-time job and raising a family.

Kara was terrified of taking online classes and felt that the systems would be difficult to navigate.

It took a few weeks to adjust to the formats of the discussion posts and assignments, but once I established a routine, it became easy to manage. I loved being able to complete the work on my own schedule and not having to attend a structured class on weeknights. I also was comforted that the professors were easy to contact and were very helpful and understanding.

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

To better understand how Rhode Island 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

Rhode Island’s total student enrollment is 84,572.

75%

Rhode Island students attend full-time.

FEDERAL STUDENT AID

About 65% of Rhode Island’s college students and their families take out federal student loans, compared to nationwide. 70% nationwide.

1 Incl...
SNAPSHOT: How do Rhode Island’s numbers stack up?

TUITION & FEES

Rhode Island’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 Rhode Island students obtained bachelor’s degrees 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 Rhode Island’s numbers stack up?

ATTAINMENT continued

As of February 2019, 46.5% of Rhode Island 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

Rhode Island Education Levels for Residents Ages 25-64

- High School Graduate or less: 3.0%
- Some college, no credential: 22.0%
- Certificate: 8.4%
- Associate Degree: 14.7%
- Bachelor’s Degree: 38.9%
- Graduate or Professional Degree: 13.1%

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

- Hispanic: 61%
- White: 63%
- African-American: 32%
- American Indian: 31%
- Asian & Pacific Islander: 47%

National Average: 47.6%
Rhode Island: 49%


SNAPSHOT: How do Rhode Island’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/

Rhode Island 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 Rhode Island 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?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AFFORDABILITY</th>
<th>PART-TIME VS.</th>
<th>COMPLETION</th>
<th>WORK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>49% FINANCIALLY</td>
<td>40% PART-TIME</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>64% WORK WHILE IN COLLEGE</td>
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<tr>
<td>INDEPENDENT</td>
<td></td>
<td>with additional financial, work, and family obligations leave school in their first year⁵</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31% AT OR BELOW</td>
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<tr>
<td>FEDERAL POVERTY LINE</td>
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### 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 institutions⁴.

### VETERAN-STATUS

- **4%** 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
⁵ https://www.luminafoundation.org/todays-student-statistics