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

A native of Charleston, South Carolina, Michelle Cooper, President of the Institute for Higher Education Policy, is one of the nation’s most effective voices in championing access, success, and equal educational opportunities for all students pursuing postsecondary education.

“...The promise of higher education is truly fulfilled when all students who begin the task of earning a degree successfully complete the journey. America’s colleges are among the best in the world. They are catalysts for not simply an individual’s transformation, but the transformation of our nation’s communities as well. Policy solutions that put students first are our best chance at helping colleges fulfill this potential.”
SNAPSHOT: How do South Carolina’s numbers stack up?

To better understand how South Carolina 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

South Carolina’s total student enrollment is 249,242

70%

South Carolina students attend full-time.

FEDERAL STUDENT AID

About 65% of South Carolina’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 South Carolina’s numbers stack up?

TUITION & FEES

South Carolina’s institutions of higher education tuition & fees are above the national average.

ATTAINMENT

In 2016-2017, about-average rates of South Carolina students obtained postsecondary degrees or credentials as 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 South Carolina’s numbers stack up?

ATTAINMENT continued

As of February 2019,

43.7% of South Carolina 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.\(^3\)

---

South Carolina Education Levels for Residents Ages 25-64

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School Graduate or less</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college, no credential</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Degree</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate or Professional Degree</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


---

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>African-American</th>
<th>American Indian</th>
<th>Asian &amp; Pacific Islander</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Average</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


---

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

South Carolina 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 South Carolina residents is below the national average.


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. FULL-TIME**
- 40% **PART-TIME**

**COMPLETION**
- 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