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 UTAH,
Dr. Jason Taylor, Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership & Policy at the University of Utah, focuses on helping states and colleges increase degree attainment among the “some college, no degree” population with a practice called degree reclamation.

“We want to identify the re-engagement tactics that are most effective, and if those tactics yield differing results among low-income students and students of color as compared to their peers...What degree reclamation strategies are most effective in increasing degree attainment and closing equity gaps?”
SNAPSHOT: How do Utah’s numbers stack up?

To better understand how Utah 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

Utah’s total student enrollment is 347,082

71%

Utah students attend full-time.

FEDERAL STUDENT AID

About 59% of Utah’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 Utah’s numbers stack up?

TUITION & FEES

Utah’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, about-average rates of Utah students obtained postsecondary degrees and credentials 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 Utah’s numbers stack up?

ATTAINMENT continued

As of February 2019,

52.2%

of Utah 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.¹

¹http://strongernation.luminafoundation.org/report/2019/#state/UT

Utah Education Levels for Residents Ages 25-64

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


As of February 2019,

48%

47%

31%

25%

40%

80%

40%

60%

80%

24% 20% 47% 48% 31% 34% 25% 21% 63% 52%

Hispanic White African-American American Indian Asian & Pacific Islander

National Average Utah

SNAPSHOT: How do Utah’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/

Utah 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 Utah 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.


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National Average Earnings of U.S. Workers By Educational Attainment

- **High School Graduate**
  - National: $29,202
  - Utah: $24,925

- **Certificate**
  - National: $34,946
  - Utah: $28,672

- **Associate**
  - National: $42,088
  - Utah: $30,916

- **Bachelors**
  - National: $54,300
  - Utah: $34,412

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Median Earnings by Educational Attainment for Utah Residents Aged 25 and Over

- **Less than high school graduate**
  - National: $20,924
  - Utah: $24,925

- **High school graduate (includes equivalency)**
  - National: $24,925
  - Utah: $28,672

- **Some college or associate’s degree**
  - National: $34,043
  - Utah: $34,412

- **Bachelor’s degree**
  - National: $47,035
  - Utah: $51,094

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Percentage of Jobs that will Require Postsecondary Education by 2020

- **National Average**
  - 65%

- **Utah**
  - 64%
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 INDEPENDENT</td>
<td>40% PART-TIME</td>
<td>38% OF STUDENTS leave school in their first year⁵</td>
<td>64% WORK WHILE IN COLLEGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31% AT OR BELOW FEDERAL POVERTY LINE</td>
<td></td>
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</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

WHAT CHALLENGES DO TODAY’S STUDENTS FACE?

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.

HOW CAN FEDERAL POLICY HELP SET TODAY’S STUDENTS UP FOR SUCCESS?

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](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)