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

Scott Cheney, Executive Director of Credential Engine, leads the nonprofit organization in bringing transparency and literacy to the credentialing marketplace with a focus on helping individuals make more informed decisions about credentials and their value.

“The new landscape of credentials holds tremendous potential. But without comprehensive, open, and transparent data, our marketplace of credentials lacks the ability to fully deliver its greatest impact for the American economy.”
SNAPSHOT: How do Wisconsin’s numbers stack up?

To better understand how Wisconsin 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
Wisconsin’s total student enrollment is 342,324.
61% Wisconsin students attend full-time.

FEDERAL STUDENT AID
About 66% of Wisconsin’s college students and their families take out federal student loans,¹ compared to 70% nationwide.²

1 Includes Direct Subsidized Loan, Direct Unsubsidized Loans, Parent PLUS, Grad PLUS, and Perkins Loan.
2 https://www.cnbc.com/2017/07/03/this-is-the-age-most-americans-pay-off-their-student-loans.html
SNAPSHOT: How do Wisconsin’s numbers stack up?

TUITION & FEES

Wisconsin’s institutions of higher education tuition & fees are below the national average at public four-year institutions and slightly above the national average at public two-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 Wisconsin 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 Wisconsin’s numbers stack up?

ATTAINMENT continued

As of February 2019, 50.5% of Wisconsin 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

Wisconsin Education Levels for Residents Ages 25-64

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

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

SNAPSHOT: How do Wisconsin’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/

Wisconsin 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 Wisconsin residents with a bachelor’s degree 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?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affordability</th>
<th>Part-Time VS.</th>
<th>Completion</th>
<th>Work</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>49% Financially Independent</td>
<td>40% Part-Time</td>
<td>38% of students with additional financial, work, and family obligations leave school in their first year</td>
<td>64% Work while in college</td>
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<tr>
<td>31% AT or Below 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 institutions.

#### 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)