

101: TODAY'S STUDENTS



WHO ARE TODAY'S STUDENTS?

34%

are older than 25



39%

are enrolled **part-time**¹



22%

of undergraduates are **parents**²



16%

of undergraduates live **on campus**³



STUDENT RACIAL/ETHNICITY CHARACTERISTICS

The proportion of undergraduate students who **identify as being a race or ethnicity other than white** has increased⁴

1996

2016

30% vs. **45%**

The proportion of students who **identify as Hispanic** has nearly doubled⁵

1996

2016

10.3% vs. **19.8%**

undergraduate students who **identified as Black**⁶

2016

15%

ADDITIONAL IDENTITIES

56%

percent of college students are **first-generation**⁷



5%

of students at postsecondary institutions are **veterans**⁸



20%

of students surveyed in an American College Health Association survey with 45,000 undergraduate respondents said they **identify as a gender identity other than heterosexual**⁹



HOW ARE TODAY'S STUDENTS DIFFERENT FROM THOSE IN THE PAST?

Today's students are diverse in age, race, and income level. They're more mobile than previous generations 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. Younger workers are changing jobs as many as four times by age 32, so lifelong learning and continuing education are quickly becoming the norm. Despite the changing demographic realities, the federal role in supporting postsecondary education is largely the remnant of policies designed for a time when most students graduated high school and immediately went to a four-year university or trade school. Federal policy needs to be updated to support a system that works for everyone, including today's students—a system where postsecondary providers can deliver the skills and knowledge that employers seek, where programs are flexible and support student success, and in which all types of learning, including on-campus, online, competency-based, and more, are fully recognized.

HOW DO TODAY'S STUDENTS ATTEND COLLEGE?

COLLEGE TYPES

39%

of undergraduates attend a **two-year college**¹⁰



78%

of undergraduates attend a **public college or university**¹¹



ONLINE LEARNING

35%

of all students have taken **at least one online course**¹²



16%

of all students are enrolled in **exclusively distance education courses**¹³



TRANSFER STATUS

35%

Transfer to at least one different institution in their postsecondary career.¹⁴



Students lose, on average, **one semester's worth of coursework** when they transfer colleges.¹⁵



Those at **public and private non-profit community colleges** are the most likely to transfer at least once.¹⁶



WHAT CHALLENGES DO TODAY'S STUDENTS FACE?

INSUFFICIENT FUNDING

The proportion of undergraduate students who have a family income at or below the federal poverty level has grown since 2000.¹⁷

35%

of undergraduates receive a Pell Grant¹⁸



17%

of college students have been homeless in the past year¹⁹



39%

experience food insecurity²⁰



approximately **454K**

undocumented students are enrolled in higher education.²¹



approximately **216K**

of those undocumented students are DACA-eligible.²²

Undocumented students are generally ineligible to receive financial aid, although some states have extended state financial aid to DACA-eligible students.

DEPENDENT STATUS

49%

of undergraduate students are financially independent.²⁴



COMPLETION

60%

complete a degree or credential within six years of enrolling.²³



WORK

64%

of undergraduate students work while in college.²⁵



21%

of all undergraduate students work 40 or more hours per week.²⁶



5%

of undergraduate students receive funds from the Federal Work Study program²⁷



The most common occupations for students across all age groups are food and personal services.²⁸



ENDNOTES

¹ Table 303.10. Digest of Education Statistics, 2019 Table and Figures, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_303.10.asp?current=yes.

² "Parents in College By the Numbers." Ascend, The Aspen Institute and the Institute for Women's Policy Research, April 2019, https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/C481_Parents-in-College-By-the-Numbers-Aspen-Ascend-and-IWPR.pdf.

³ Kelchen, Robert. "A Look at College Students' Living Arrangements." May 2018, https://robertkelchen.com/2018/05/28/a-look-at-college-students-living-arrangements/#_ftn2

⁴ Espinosa, Lorelle, Turk, Jonathan, Taylor, Morgan, and Chessman, Hollie. "Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education: A Status Report." American Council on Education, 2019, <https://www.equityinhighered.org/indicators/enrollment-in-undergraduate-education/race-and-ethnicity-of-u-s-undergraduates/>.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ RTI International. "First-generation College Students: Demographic Characteristics and Postsecondary Enrollment." National Association of Student Affairs Professionals: Center for First-Generation Student Success, 2019 <https://firstgen.naspa.org/research-and-policy/national-data-fact-sheets-on-first-generation-college-students/national-data-fact-sheets>.

⁸ Bond Hill, Catharine, Kurzweil, Martin, Davidson Pisacreta, Elizabeth, and Schwartz, Emily. "Enrolling More Veterans at High-Graduation-Rate Colleges and Universities." Ithaka S+R, January 2019, <https://sr.ithaka.org/publications/enrolling-more-veterans-at-high-graduation-rate-colleges-and-universities>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ginder, Scott, Kelly-Reid, Janice, and Mann, Farrah. "Postsecondary Institutions and Cost of Attendance in 2017-18; Degrees and Other Awards Conferred, 2016-17; and 12-Month Enrollment, 2016-17." Institute of Education Sciences, November 2018, <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2018/2018060REV.pdf>.

¹¹ Table 303.10. Digest of Education Statistics, 2019 Table and Figures, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_303.10.asp?current=yes

¹² "Number and percentage distribution of students enrolled at Title IV institutions, by control of institution, student level, level of institution, distance education status of student, and distance education status of institution: United States, fall 2018." IPEDS Data Explorer, Spring 2019, <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/search/ViewTable?tableId=26394&returnUrl=%2Fipeds%2Fsearch%2FView%3FresultType%3Dtable%26page%3D1%26sortBy%3Drelevance%26surveyComponents%3DFall%2520Enrollment%2520%28EF%29%26surveyComponents%3DFinance%2520%28F%29%26surveyComponents%3DAcademic%2520Libraries%2520%28AL%29%26surveyComponents%3DHuman%2520Resources%2520%28HR%29%26collection-Years%3D2018-19%26sources%3DTables%2BLibrary%26source%3Dspring#>.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Author's analysis of Beginning Postsecondary Students Survey:12/17 data.

¹⁵ "Students Need More Information to Help Reduce Challenges in Transferring College Credits." Government Accountability Office, August 2017, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/690/686530.pdf>.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Chen, Xianglei and Nunnery, Annaliza. "Profile of Very Low and Low-Income Undergraduates in 2015–16." Institute of Education Sciences, October 2019, <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2020/2020460.pdf>.

¹⁸ "Trend Generator: Financial Aid: What is the percent of undergraduate students awarded Pell grants?" National Center for Education Statistics, accessed April 30, 2020, <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/TrendGenerator/app/answer/8/35>.

¹⁹ Baker-Smith, Christine, Coca, Vanessa, Goldrick-Rab, Sara, Looker, Elizabeth, Richardson, Brianna, and Williams Tiffani. "#RealCollege 2020: Five Years of Evidence on Campus Basic Needs Insecurity." The Hope Center, February 2020, https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/2019_RealCollege_Survey_Report.pdf.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Feldblum, Miriam, Hubbard, Steven, Lim, Andrew, Penichet-Paul, Christian, and Siegel, Hanna. "Undocumented Students in Higher Education How Many Students are in U.S. Colleges and Universities, and Who Are They?" Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration and New American Economy, April 2020, <https://www.presidentsimmigrationalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/2020-04-16-NAE-PA-Report-Undocumented-Students-in-Higher-Education.pdf>.

²² Ibid.

²³ "Completing College National and State Reports." National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, March 2020, <https://nscresearchcenter.org/completing-college/>.

²⁴ Author's analysis of National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey:16 data.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Carnevale, Anthony, Smith, Nicole, Melton, Michelle, and Price, Eric. "Learning While Earning: The New Normal." Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce, 2015, <https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/Working-Learners-Report.pdf>.