

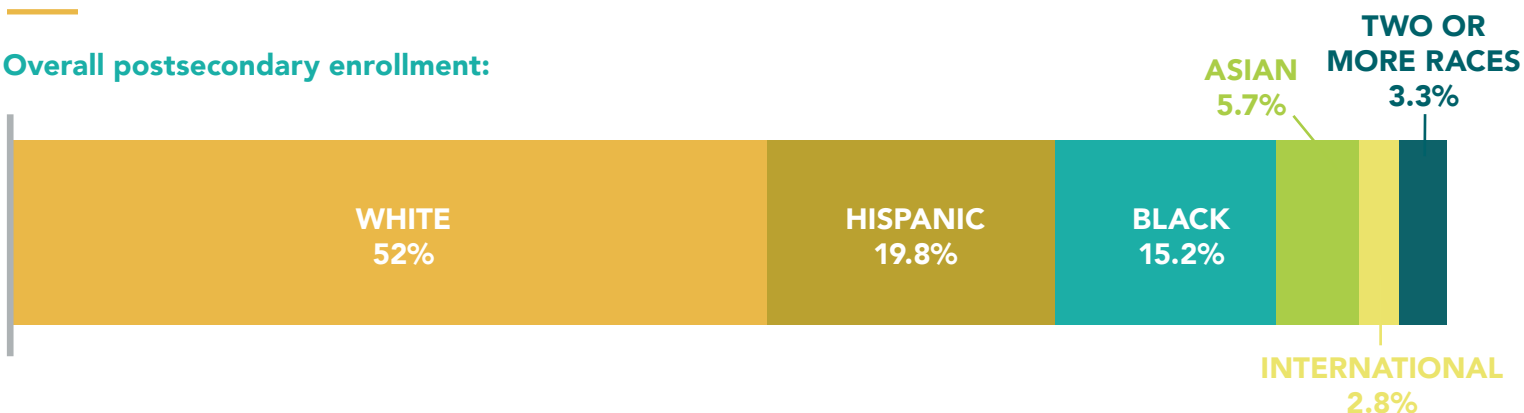
# EQUITY GAPS IN HIGHER EDUCATION



There is a significant and persistent disparity in educational attainment between different groups of students. Equity gaps between students of different races and ethnicities often begin in K-12 education—87 percent of white students graduate high school on time, compared to 76 percent of Hispanic and 73 percent of African Americans students. These gaps—the results of many years of systemic inequity, in which students of color often lack the same resources, support, and opportunities—continue into and through postsecondary education.

## ENROLLMENT<sup>1</sup>

### Overall postsecondary enrollment:



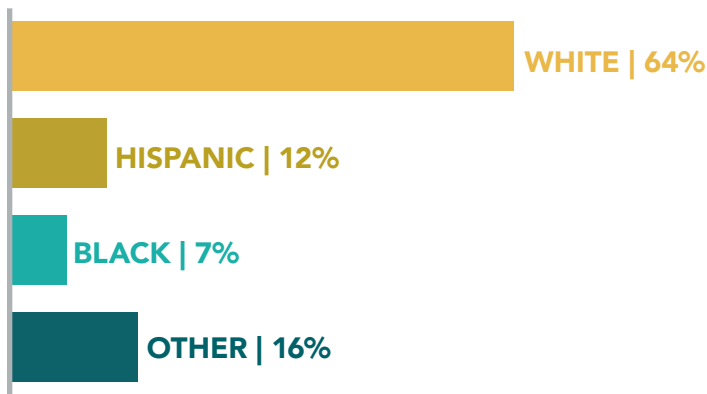
### At selective institutions:

- Black and Hispanic students make up only 19 percent of enrollment at selective public colleges while being 36 percent of the college-aged population.<sup>2</sup>
- Only 8.1 percent of students at selective public universities are from families in the lowest income quintile.<sup>3</sup>

**A selective institution is an institution which does not admit every student, they make admissions decisions based on available seats and their admissions criteria.**

The average four-year institution accepts two-thirds applicants, while the most selective institutions in the country accept less than a third. Enrollment in selective institutions boosts student success, including graduation rates and expected income outcomes for low-income, Black, and Hispanic students. In fact, students who attend selective institutions earn 20 percent more on average than those who attend nonselective institutions.<sup>4</sup>

### Enrollment at selective public colleges:<sup>5</sup>

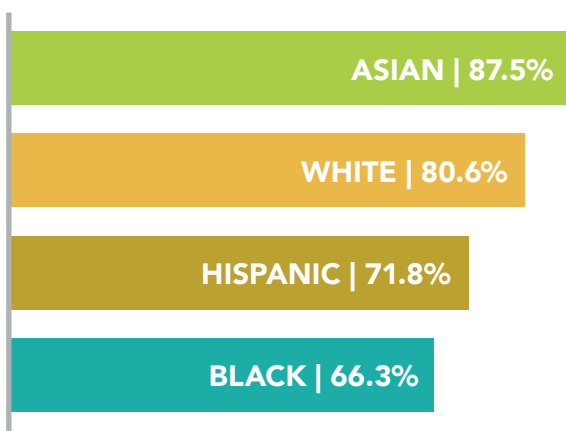


Equity gaps persist at selective institutions, even among students who were high-achieving in their secondary education.

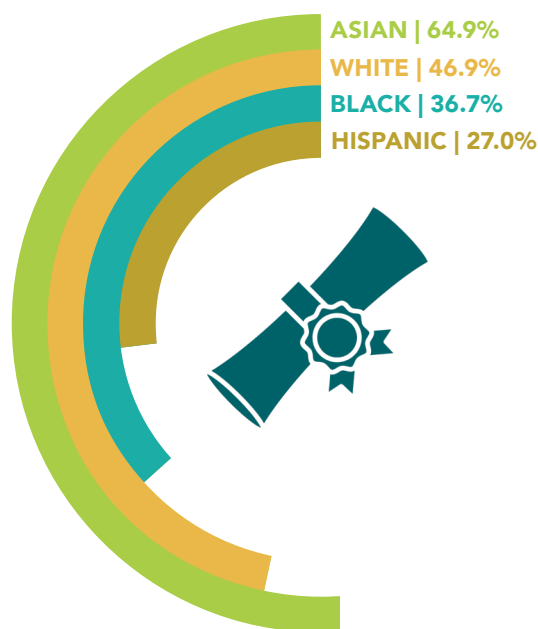
- Of low income students who achieved SAT and/or ACT scores in the top 10 percent of SAT/ACT scores, only 34 percent will enroll in the nation's most selective colleges, compared to 78 percent of students in the higher economic quartile.<sup>6</sup>
- Only 19 percent of Black and Hispanic students with above average SAT and/or ACT scores go to selective public colleges, compared to 31 percent of white students with similar scores.<sup>7</sup>

## COMPLETION AT ALL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

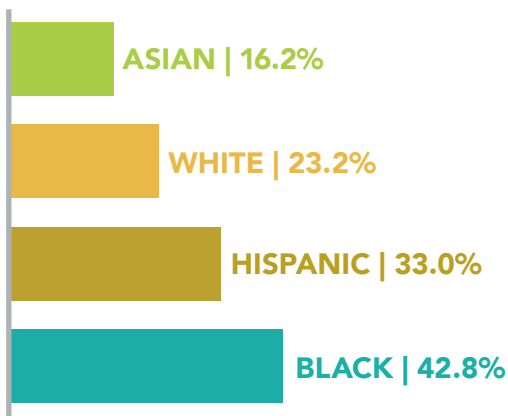
### Persistence rates<sup>8</sup> among students who entered college in fall 2018:<sup>9</sup>



### Percent of adults ages 25 and older who had earned an associate degree or higher in 2019:<sup>11</sup>



### For students who entered college in fall 2012, the percentage of degree-seeking students who dropped out of a postsecondary institution after six years was:<sup>10</sup>

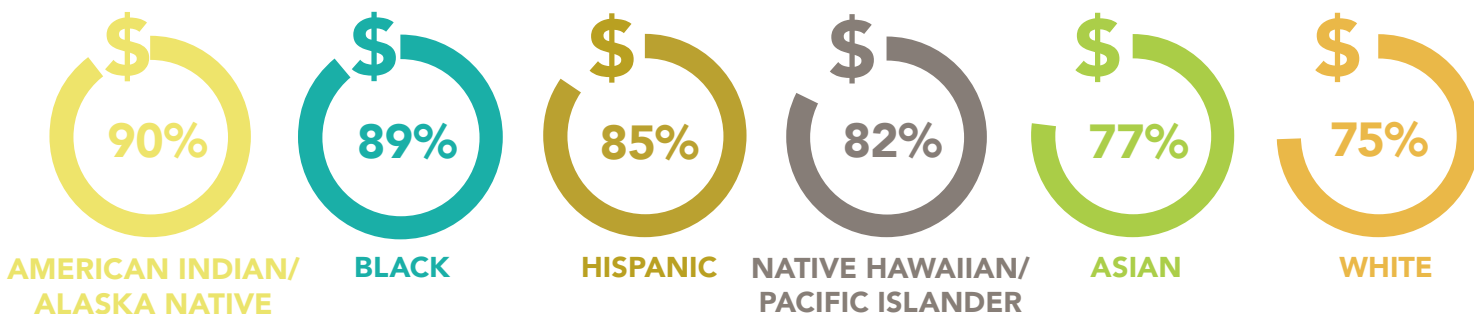


Even at selective colleges, there are gaps in completion by race:

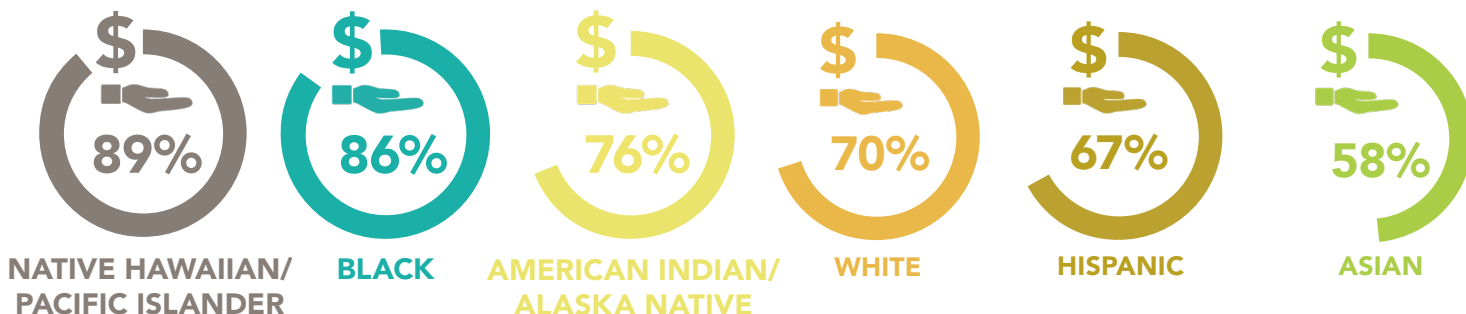
- White students have an **86 percent** graduation rate at selective institutions; Black and Hispanic students (grouped together) have an **81 percent** graduation rate.<sup>12</sup>
- Graduation rates for Pell Grant recipients at selective institutions are **78 percent**, compared to an **82 percent** overall graduation rate.<sup>13</sup>

# FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID

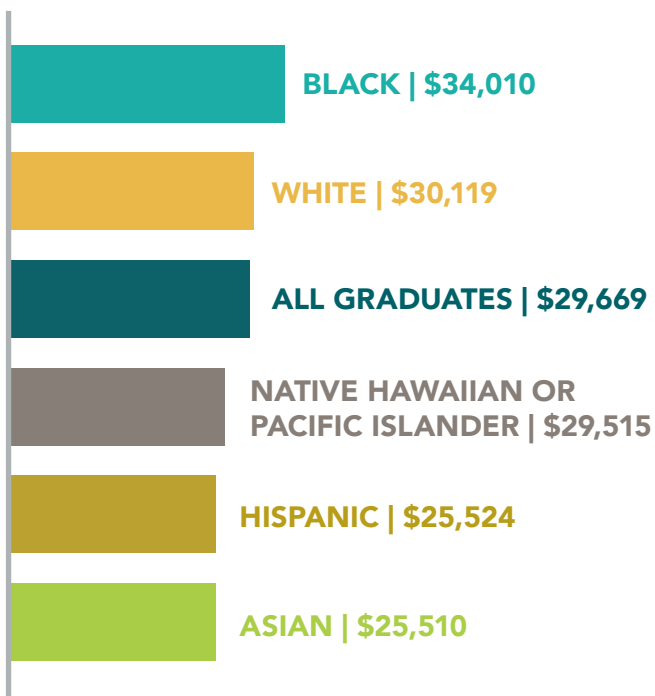
Percent of students who receive grant aid:<sup>14</sup>



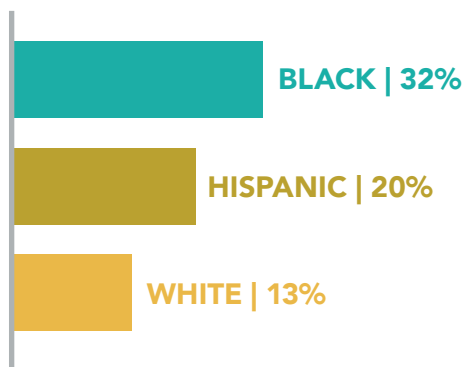
Proportion of bachelor's degree recipients with federal student loan debt:<sup>15</sup>



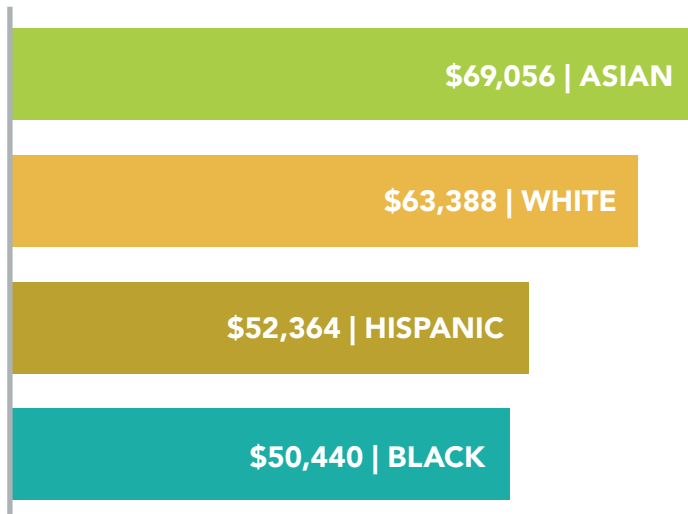
Average amount borrowed by bachelor's degree recipients:<sup>16</sup>



Borrowers who defaulted on a loan within 12 years:<sup>17</sup>



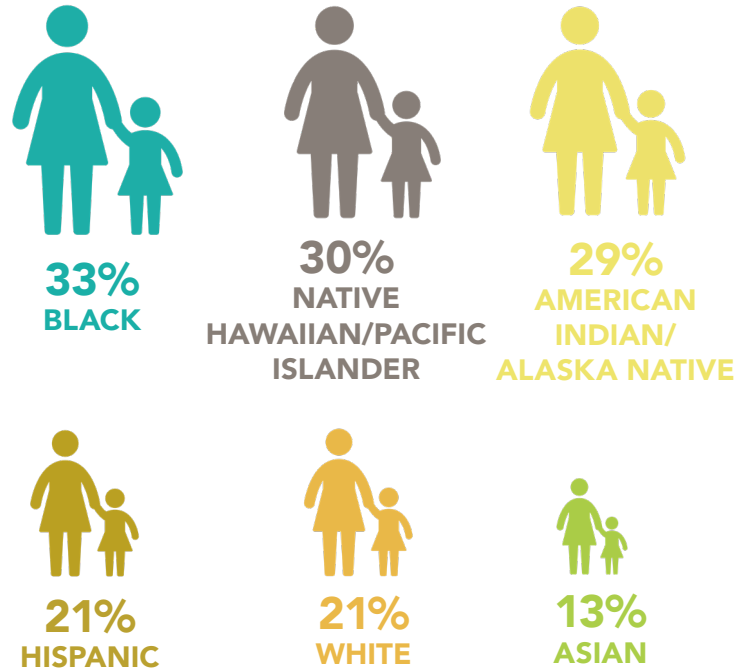
Median earnings for individuals with at least a bachelor's degree:<sup>18,19</sup>



Students who attend selective institutions earn 20 percent more on average than those who attend nonselective institutions.<sup>20</sup>

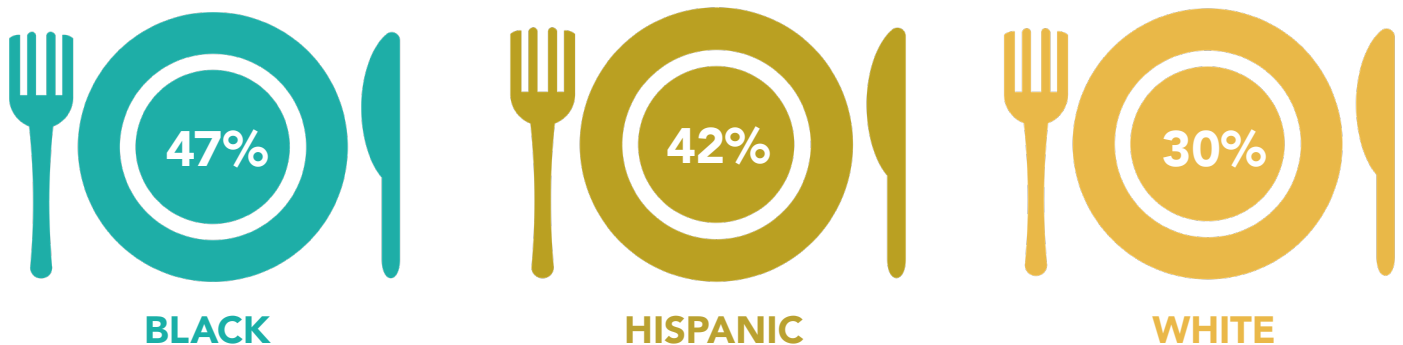
## STUDENT PARENTS

Percent of female students who are parents:<sup>26</sup>



## FOOD INSECURITY

Percent of students at four-year institutions who experience food insecurity:<sup>21</sup>



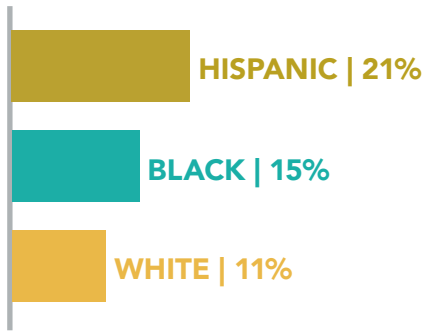
**46%**

OF PELL GRANT RECIPIENTS AT 4-YEAR INSTITUTIONS EXPERIENCE FOOD INSECURITY<sup>18</sup>



# COVID-19 IMPACT

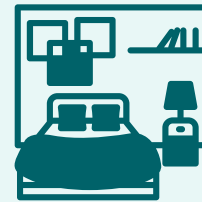
Percent of students that cancelled their college plans due to COVID-19 in Spring 2020.<sup>22</sup>



Students from families with incomes lower than \$75,000 were **twice as likely** to say that they cancelled college plans due to COVID-19 compared to wealthier families.<sup>23</sup>

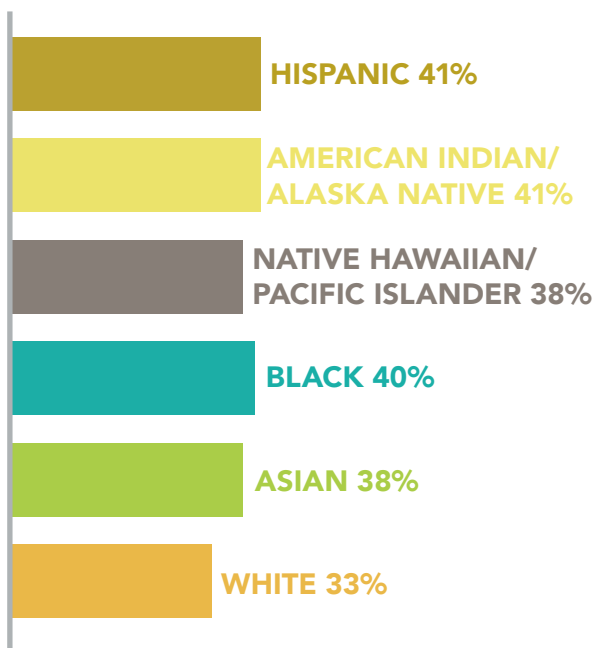


Low-income students faced almost double the amount of unexpected increases in technology spending and living expenses due to the pandemic when compared to wealthier students, while also experiencing the highest levels of income loss.<sup>24</sup>



# MENTAL HEALTH

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the percentage of undergraduate students who screened positive for depression:<sup>25</sup>



## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> American Council for Higher Education, *Race and Ethnicity of US Undergraduates*, <https://www.equityinhighered.org/indicators/enrollment-in-undergraduate-education/race-and-ethnicity-of-u-s-undergraduates/>.

<sup>2</sup> Carnevale, Anthony and Martin Van Der Werf et. al, *Our Separate and Unequal Public Colleges*, Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, 2018, pg.27.

<sup>3</sup> Burd, Stephen, *MOVING ON UP? What a Groundbreaking Study Tells Us about Access, Success, and Mobility in Higher Ed*, New America, 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Chakrabarti, Rajashri and Jiang, Michelle, *Education's Role in Earnings, Employment, and Economic Mobility*, Federal Bank of New York, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Carnevale, Anthony and Martin Van Der Werf et. al, *Our Separate and Unequal Public Colleges*, Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, 2018, pg.9.

<sup>6</sup> Hoxby, Caroline M. and Avery, Christopher, *Key Findings from The Hidden Supply of High-Achieving, Low-Income Students*, The Brookings Institute, 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Carnevale, Anthony and Martin Van Der Werf et. al, *Our Separate and Unequal Public Colleges*, pg. 26.

<sup>8</sup> Persistence rate is measured by the percentage of students who return to college at any institution for their second year.

<sup>9</sup> National Student Clearinghouse, *First-Year Persistence and Retention 2018 Beginning Cohort*, 2020, <https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/PersistenceRetention2020.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> National Student Clearinghouse, *Completing College: A National View of Student Completion Rates-Fall 2012 Cohort*, 2018, <https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/SignatureReport16.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> United States Census Bureau, *Educational Attainment in the United States: 2019*, <https://www.census.gov/content/census/en/data/tables/2019/demo/educational-attainment/cps-detailed-tables.html>.

<sup>12</sup> Carnevale, Anthony and Martin Van Der Werf et. al, *Our Separate and Unequal Public Colleges Executive Summary*, pg. 20, [https://1gyhoq479ufd3yna29x7ubjn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/SAUStates\\_ES.pdf](https://1gyhoq479ufd3yna29x7ubjn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/SAUStates_ES.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> Carnevale, Anthony and Martin Van Der Werf, *The 20% Solution: Selective Colleges Can Afford to Admit More Pell Grant Recipients*, Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, 2017 <https://1gyhoq479ufd3yna29x7ubjn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/The-20-Percent-Solution-web.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> American Council on Education, *Share of Students Receiving Grant Aid*, 2016, <https://www.equityinhighered.org/indicators/>

[how-students-finance-undergraduate-study/share-of-students-receiving-grant-aid/](https://www.equityinhighered.org/indicators/how-students-finance-undergraduate-study/share-of-students-receiving-grant-aid/)

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> American Council for Higher Education, *Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education A Status Report*, 2019, <https://1xfsu31b52d33idl3twtos-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Race-and-Ethnicity-in-Higher-Education.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> Miller, Ben, Center for American Progress, *The Continued Student Loan Crisis for Black Borrowers*, December 2019, [https://cdn.americanprogress.org/content/uploads/2019/11/26071357/Student-Debt-BRIEF.pdf?\\_ga=2.7448434.1701425450.1606162069-1142635005.1594143978](https://cdn.americanprogress.org/content/uploads/2019/11/26071357/Student-Debt-BRIEF.pdf?_ga=2.7448434.1701425450.1606162069-1142635005.1594143978).

<sup>18</sup> US Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Median weekly earnings by educational attainment in 2014*, January 2015, <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2015/median-weekly-earnings-by-education-gender-race-and-ethnicity-in-2014.htm>.

<sup>19</sup> Note: The education level variable used was bachelor's degree and higher. To calculate annual earnings, we multiplied the median weekly earnings by 52

<sup>20</sup> Chakrabarti, Rajashri and Jiang, Michelle, *Education's Role in Earnings, Employment, and Economic Mobility*, Federal Bank of New York, 2018, <https://libertystreeteconomics.newyorkfed.org/2018/09/educations-role-in-earnings-employment-and-economic-mobility.html>.

<sup>21</sup> Hope 4 College, *Still Hungry and Homeless in College*, April 2018 <https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Wisconsin-HOPE-Lab-Still-Hungry-and-Homeless.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> Strada Center for Consumer Insights, *Public Viewpoint: COVID-19 Work and Education Survey*, June 2020, <https://www.stradaeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Public-Viewpoint-Report-Week-9.pdf>.

<sup>23</sup> United States Census Bureau, *Week 13 Household Pulse Survey: August 19 – August 31*, September 2020, <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2020/demo/hhp/hhp13.html#tables>.

<sup>24</sup> Greta Anderson, *Inside Higher Ed, More Pandemic Consequences for Underrepresented Students*, September 2020, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/09/16/low-income-and-students-color-greatest-need-pandemic-relief>.

<sup>25</sup> Chirikov, Igor, et. al, *Undergraduate and Graduate Students' Mental Health During the COVID-19 Pandemic*, 2020, <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/80k5d5hw>.

<sup>26</sup> Institute for Women's Policy Research, *Parents in College by the Numbers*, <https://iwpr.org/iwpr-issues/student-parent>

For more information about **Higher Learning Advocates** please contact **Emily Bouck West**, Deputy Executive Director, at [ebouckwest@higherlearningadvocates.org](mailto:ebouckwest@higherlearningadvocates.org).