

# Yesterday's Non-Traditional Student is Today's Traditional Student

Today's typical college student is no longer an 18-year-old recent high-school graduate who enrolls full-time and has limited work and family obligations. Students today are older, more diverse, and have more work and family obligations to balance. **The percentage of undergraduates who are:**

<b>Adults Age 25 or Older (2012)</b>	<b>40%</b>	Four in 10 undergraduate students are 25 years or older, a 4 percentage point increase from 2008. <sup>1</sup> From 2012 to 2022, the non-traditionally aged student enrollment in college is projected to grow more than twice as fast as for traditional age students (8.7% and 21.7%, respectively). <sup>2</sup>
<b>Independent Students (2012)<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>51%</b>	More than half of undergraduate students are classified as independent students, who are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 24 years or older</li> <li>• Married</li> <li>• Responsible for legal dependents other than a spouse</li> <li>• Orphans or wards of the court (or were wards of the court until age 18)</li> <li>• Veterans of the U.S. armed services or</li> <li>• Homeless or at risk of homelessness</li> </ul>
<b>Enrolled in a Public Two-Year College (2012)</b>	<b>38%</b>	Fall 2010 was the last time that community colleges saw an increase, albeit a small one, in enrollment. Since then, community colleges have experienced year-to-year decreases in enrollment, the largest between fall 2010 and spring 2011. Enrollment at community colleges nationwide declined by more than 3% between fall 2011 and fall 2012. During the last 12-month period between fall 2012 and fall 2013, the enrollment decrease at community colleges has held steady at around 3%. <sup>4</sup>
<b>Enrolled Part-time (2012)<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>37%</b>	Undergraduate part-time enrollment has remained relatively steady since 1980, but with growing gaps between the price of tuition and the availability of grant aid, more students may enroll part-time and combine work and school. Fifty-nine percent of community college students attended part-time; whereas, only 27 percent of undergraduate students attending public four-year institutions attended part-time. <sup>6</sup>
<b>Minority Students (2012)<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>42%</b>	Black and Hispanic students are 16.1 and 16 percent of the undergraduate student population, respectively. According to projections these groups will make up 42 percent of the student population in 2021. This projected increase is mainly attributed to the expected 25 and 42 percent in expected overall growth in black and Hispanic populations compared to 4 percent growth for white students. <sup>8</sup>
<b>Low-income (2012)</b>	<b>51%</b>	Analysis by the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) finds that in just five years between 2008 and 2012, the proportion of college students who had low incomes rose dramatically, from 40 percent of undergraduate students with incomes under 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), in 2008, to 51 percent in 2012. <sup>9</sup> Without income to cover basic living expenses, these students will most likely have to work more to cover direct and indirect college costs, increasing time to degree completion. <sup>10</sup>
<b>Employed Part-time (2012)<sup>11</sup></b>	<b>39%</b>	Demos reported that working while in school to finance one's education is necessary for the majority of young college students. For young community college students specifically, 63 percent would be unable to attend college if they did not work. <sup>12</sup>
<b>Employed Full-time (2012)<sup>13</sup></b>	<b>27%</b>	Working full-time can be a challenge for students who are balancing their course loads, school work, and family responsibilities, yet almost a third of all undergraduates work 35 hours or more per week.
<b>Parents (2012)<sup>14</sup></b>	<b>26%</b>	A little over a quarter of students are parents. Workforce investments and education may produce benefits for adult participants as well as their children. For example, encouraging evidence shows that when mothers with low education complete additional education, their children appear to have improved language and reading skills. <sup>15</sup>
<b>Single Parents (2012)<sup>16</sup></b>	<b>15%</b>	Despite the fact that student parents are more likely to receive federal tuition assistance in the form of Pell Grants than non-parents, (43 percent and 23 percent respectively) single student parents have an average annual unmet need of \$6,117 compared to \$3,650 for non-parent students, and \$3,289 for married parents. <sup>17</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Author’s calculations using NCES PowerStats, Source: “2011-12 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:12),” U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, calculated 12/09/2014.

<sup>2</sup> <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2014/2014051.pdf>, Author’s calculations using Table 21. Actual and projected numbers for total enrollment in all postsecondary degree-granting institutions, by age group, sex, and attendance status: Fall 1997 through fall 2022, Projections of Education Statistics to 2022, February 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Author’s calculations using NCES PowerStats, Source: “2011-12 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS: 12),” U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, calculated 12/09/2014.

<sup>4</sup> Jolanta Juszkievicz, *Recent National Community College Enrollment and Award Completion Data*, American Association of Community Colleges, 2014, [http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Publications/Reports/Documents/Enrollment\\_AwardData.pdf](http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Publications/Reports/Documents/Enrollment_AwardData.pdf), See Table 1.

<sup>5</sup> “2011-12 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS: 12),” U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Digest of Education Statistics 2012. See Table 240. Total undergraduate fall enrollment in degree-granting institutions, by attendance status, sex of student, and control and level of institution: Selected years, 1970 through 2011. The 2011 cell adds up to: 37.114% of students who were part time. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2014/2014015.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> “Table 303.60. Total fall enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by level of enrollment, sex of student, and other selected characteristics: 2012,” *Advance Release of Selected 2013 Digest Tables*, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, December 2014. Note that Table 240 in the Digest of Education Statistics 2012 presents a slightly larger percentage but that is because the source is the IPEDs fall enrollment survey so only students enrolling in the fall, whereas NPSAS is based on the full year.

<sup>7</sup> The selected races and ethnicities total presented Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander and American Indian/Alaska Native . U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2011-12 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:12).

<sup>8</sup> These projections are also not broken out by undergraduate and post baccalaureate whereas they are for the 2012 numbers Table 263 from the Digest of Education Statistics. See: “Table 29. Actual and projected numbers for enrollment of U.S. residents in all postsecondary degree-granting institutions, by race/ethnicity: Fall 1996 through fall 2021”, Projections of Education Statistics to 2021, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, September 2011.

<sup>9</sup> IWPR analysis of U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2007-08 and 2011-2012 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:08 and NPSAS:12) presented in: Barbara Gault, Lindsey Reichlin, and Stephanie Román College Affordability for Low-Income Adults: Improving Returns on Investment for Families and Society, IWPR, April 2014.

<sup>10</sup> Judith Scott-Clayton, *What Explains Trends in Labor Supply Among U.S. Undergraduates, 1970-2009?*, National Bureau of Economic Research, 2012, <http://www.nber.org/papers/w17744.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Author’s calculations using NCES PowerStats, Source: “2011-12 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:12),U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, calculated 12/10/2014.

<sup>12</sup> Vivian Orozco and Nancy K. Cauthen, *Work Less, Study More, and Succeed: How Financial Supports Can Improve Postsecondary, Success Demos*, 2009, [http://www.demos.org/sites/default/files/publications/WorkLessStudyMore\\_Demos.pdf](http://www.demos.org/sites/default/files/publications/WorkLessStudyMore_Demos.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Author’s calculations using NCES PowerStats, Source: “2011-12 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:12),U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, calculated 12/10/2014.

<sup>14</sup> Author’s calculations using NCES PowerStats, Source: “2011-12 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:12),” U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, calculated 12/12/2014.

<sup>15</sup> Neil Ridley and Elizabeth Kenefick, *Research Shows the Effectiveness of Workforce Programs: A Fresh Look at the Evidence*, Center for Law and Social Policy, May 2011, <http://www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/workforce-effectiveness.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> Author’s calculations using NCES PowerStats, Source: “2011-12 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS: 12),” U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, calculated 12/10/2014.

<sup>17</sup> College Students with Children are Common and Face Many Challenges in Completing Higher Education, Briefing Paper, IWPR# C404, Bethany Nelson, Megan Froehner, and Barbara Gault, March 2013.

**Thanks to the National Center for Education Statistics for providing valuable assistance on the data presented in this document.**