Hidden in Plain Sight: Part-Time College Students in America

Marcella Bombardieri, Senior Policy Analyst, Center for American Progress
General Housekeeping

• You will be muted for the presentation part of today’s presentation
  – Mute will be turned off when we open the webinar to question and answers
• Use the chat box to ask questions during the presentation
• The recording will be available on the Adult Promise website
Hidden in Plain Sight

PART-TIME COLLEGE STUDENTS IN AMERICA

Marcella Bombardieri

Center for American Progress
Why we need to be thinking about part-time students

- 37% of college students are attending part-time. That’s 6.5 million students.
- They’ve traditionally been overlooked.
- Most will never graduate.
- The US needs 16 million more people to earn a postsecondary credential by 2025 than are currently projected to do so.
Pieces of the puzzle of part-time students

- Demographic profile from CAP analysis of Beginning Postsecondary Students (BPS) study and National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS)

- Completion data from National Student Clearinghouse Research Center

- New outcomes measures from IPEDS

- Varying definitions of what it means to be part-time
Enrollment intensity of students who entered Fall 2010

**This excludes most part-time students who drop out after a semester or attend at less than half-time status**

Source: Doug Shapiro and others, “Completing College: A National View of Student Attainment Rates – Fall 2010 Cohort” (Herndon, VA: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2016).
Outcomes for part-time students are abysmal

Eight-year completion rates by enrollment intensity

Source: Doug Shapiro and others, “Completing College: A National View of Student Attainment Rates – Fall 2010 Cohort” (Herndon, VA: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2016.)
Most part-time students don't get anywhere near graduation

- 41 percent of students who spend their freshman year attending part-time never make it to a second year of college

- African-American and male students are disproportionately likely to drop out by their sophomore year

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Beginning Postsecondary Students 2012-2014
## How are part-time students different from full-time students?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FULL-TIME</th>
<th>PART-TIME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go to public two-year institutions</td>
<td>go to public two-year institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>are 24 and over</td>
<td>are 24 and over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>are on their own financially</td>
<td>are on their own financially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work 40 or more hours per week</td>
<td>work 40 or more hours per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have dependents</td>
<td>have dependents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>are enrolled for half the year or less</td>
<td>are enrolled for half the year or less</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In some ways, part-time students mirror their full-time peers

• Income, gender and racial breakdowns do not differ dramatically
Part-time students by sector

- Public 4-year: 62%
- Private nonprofit 4-year: 19%
- Public 2-year: 7%
- Private for profit: 6%
- Others or attended more than one school: 6%

Source: 2011-2012 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study
FIGURE 2
Completion rates by type of institution
Percentage of students who complete a degree within six years, by the type of institution at which they started

![Bar chart showing completion rates by type of institution.](chart)

Source: Data are from students who began college in fall 2010. See Doug Shapiro and others, "Completing College: A National View of Student Attainment Rates – Fall 2010 Cohort" (Herndon, VA: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2016), available at https://nscsearchcenter.org/signaturereport12/.
### Completion rates by age

Percentage of students who complete a degree within six years, by age at first entry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Completion rate</th>
<th>Still enrolled</th>
<th>Not enrolled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>All ages</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusively full time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusive part time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mixed enrollment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>20 and younger</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusively full time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusively part time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed enrollment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>21–24</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusively full time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusively part time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed enrollment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Older than 24</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Exclusively full time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusively part time</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed enrollment</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Values may not total 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: Data are from students who began college in fall 2010 and include degree completion at their starting institution or elsewhere. See Doug Schoen and others, “Completing College: A National View of Student Attainment Rates – Fall 2010 Cohort” (Towson, MD: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2016), available at https://nscresearchcenter.org/significantreport/2/.
The black box of mixed enrollment students

Source: InsideTrack, “National study of non-first-time students shows full-time enrollment may not be appropriate for all.”
Part-time students are not getting enough financial aid

Part-time students are not getting enough financial aid

- 29 of the 100 largest state-funded financial aid programs only fund students who enroll full-time
- Other states do not explicitly exclude part-time students but in practice leave them out
- 43 of the 100 programs surveyed by ACS limit awards to a set number of school terms

Source: Education Commission of the States, “State Financial Aid and Enrollment Patterns.”
Missy: Going back to school while raising a family
What we do not know about part-time students
How does part-time student completion vary by college?
How does part-time student completion vary by college?
Is part-time attendance the disease or the symptom?

• Research shows that momentum is beneficial to getting through college

• We need to know more about what level of enrollment intensity works for nontraditional students
When is it beneficial to push part-time students to take more credits and when is it not?

• Students invited to join CUNY's ASAP program were 12 percentage points more likely than their peers to enroll full-time

• “It seems unlikely that such a requirement [for full-time enrollment] paired with far more limited financial and student service supports would be as fruitful,” the authors write.
Programs that tie aid to credit accumulation can have winners and losers

- Indiana policy requiring 30 credits a year to receive the maximum need-based award led students to take a higher credit load.

- But scholarship renewal dropped nine percentage points for one aid program and 12 points for the other.

- The authors noted that more time is needed to determine the long-term effects on outcomes including completion rates and student debt.

How do decisions about work hours affect part-time attendance?

• A randomized experiment found that students who got an average of $96 a week in additional grant aid only cut back on their work hours by an average of less than two hours a week.

Ivy: Following a child’s footsteps
Promising practices

• SHEEO Adult Promise Design Template
• Financial aid
• Scheduling reform and 12 month calendar
• Advising, mentoring, and tutoring
• Developmental education reform
• Childcare
• But we need to know much more about what works
CAP is calling for part-time students to be put at the center of the conversation about improving student success

- In a vacuum, full-time study is the better option.
- But for many students, it's not an option.
- The part-time student population is expected to grow by 18 percent between 2012 and 2023, compared to 14 percent for full-time students.
- We need answers for these students.