CAEL
Linking Learning and Work

Since 1974, CAEL has worked with colleges and universities nationwide to improve adult student persistence. CAEL's tailored approach assesses each institution's specific needs, laying the groundwork for programming and policies that encourage adult students to persist and reach their academic goals.

For more information on these or other CAEL services, contact highereducationservices@cael.org or 312-499-2640.

Meaningful learning, credentials and work for every adult.

www.cael.org

CAEL | ENCOURAGE ADULT STUDENT COMPLETION

Linking Learning and Work

Adults are every bit as committed to their pursuit of a degree or credential as their younger peers. But adult students face a number of unique challenges they must overcome. It is no surprise then that less than 40 percent of adult learners meet their academic completion goals.[1] With the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), your institution can reverse that trend.

The average student loan debt is
$28,400
for students who must take out loans to pay for their education.[1]

[1] *The Institute for College Access & Success*

Only
1/3
of non-first-time students who reenroll in a postsecondary degree program **successfully completed their degree.**[2]

[2] *National Student Clearinghouse*

Approximately
½
of U.S. undergraduate students **fail to persist to degree completion.**[3]

[3] *Lumina Foundation*

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The right knowledge of best practices for supporting the adult learner can make all the difference when it comes to addressing student completion and career goals. Led by adult learner experts, CAEL's professional development programming can prepare instructors and staff to support adult students in reaching their educational goals.

[1] *Completing College: A National View of Student Attainment Rates Fall 2009 Cohort, National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2015*

## PARTNERSHIPS WITH EMPLOYERS

By 2020, it is estimated that 65 percent of jobs will require some college, with 35 percent requiring at least a bachelor's degree.[2] Adult students recognize the importance of gaining a postsecondary education to remain competitive in the workplace, and they expect their institution to have insight into local high-demand skills and jobs to guide their academic journeys. CAEL helps colleges and universities build partnerships with employers to highlight factors driving local job creation, ensure programming addresses the needs of local employers and reveal career opportunities within the community.

PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION

When students can gain college credit for what they already know or can do, they save money and reach completion goals faster. Combat adult student attrition by working with CAEL to offer Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) and competency-based education programming. Leverage CAEL's extensive experience to develop a program that fits your institution's needs, including faculty development, program promotion assistance and support for scaling your program.
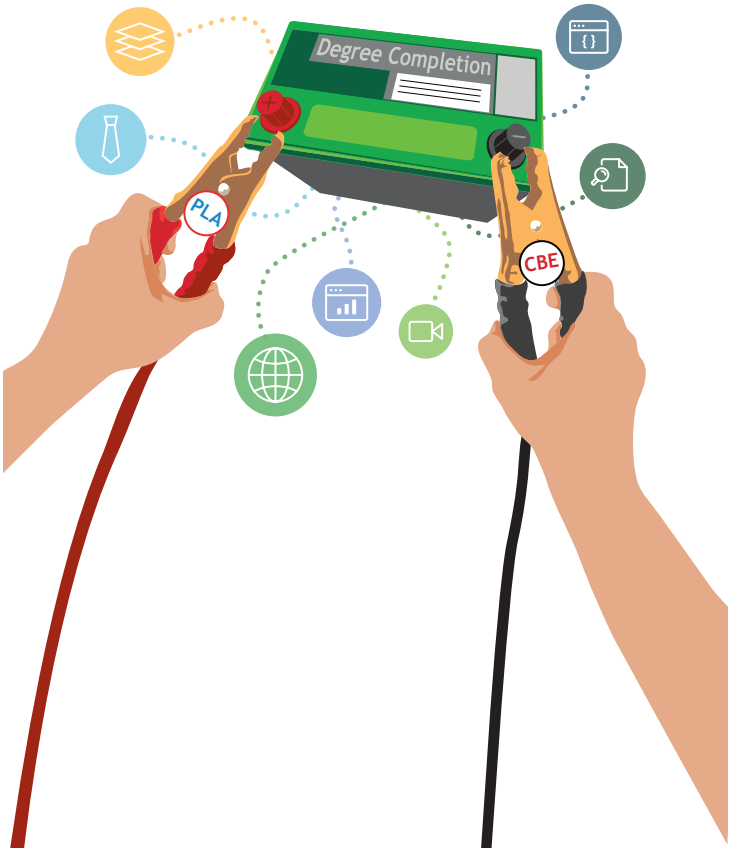
[2] *Recovery: Job Growth and Education Requirements Through 2020, Georgetown University, 2014*

CAEL
Linking Learning and Work

Since 1974, CAEL has worked with colleges and universities nationwide to improve enrollment rates for adult learners. CAEL's tailored approach assesses each institution's specific needs, providing solutions suitable however far along they are in the process of building a foundation of adult student support.

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CAEL | INCREASE ADULT STUDENT ENROLLMENT
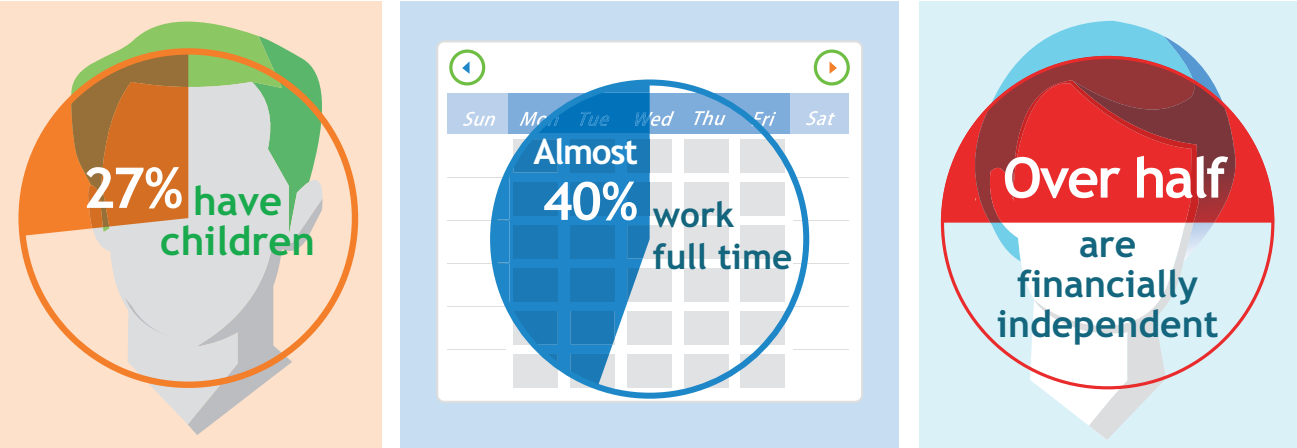
GO

The typical student of today looks very different from the typical student of the past, with different needs and expectations to match. To attract the growing population of adult students, you must ensure your institution has support systems in place to improve their chances of academic success.

The Changing Face of Today's Student

27% have children

Almost 40% work full time

Over half are financially independent

Adult Learner 360
CATALYST FOR SUCCESS

Adult Learner 360 provides a snapshot of where your institution is right now when it comes to supporting adult students. Adult Learner 360 surveys both institution stakeholders and adult students to highlight strengths and weaknesses in an institution's adult learner support, and provides actionable steps for improvement.
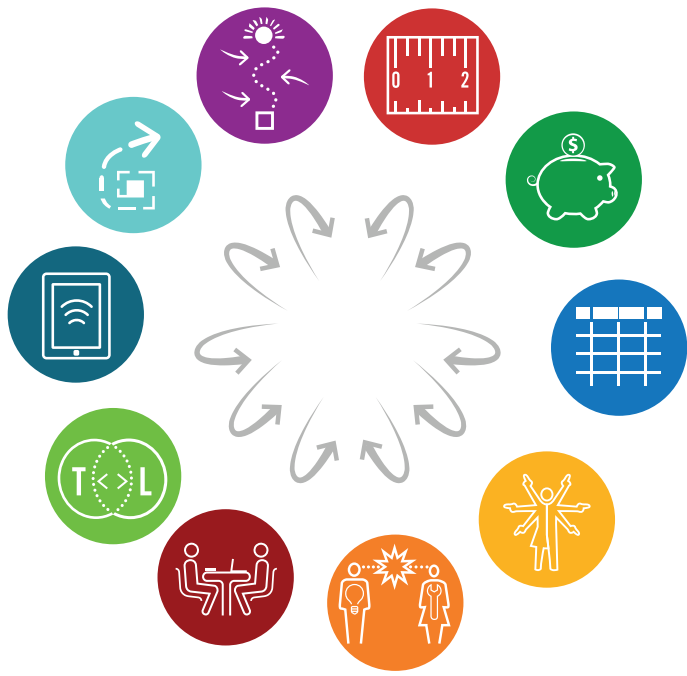
PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT

Many adults have gained knowledge outside of the classroom that can earn them college credit. Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is a powerful tool to expedite the degree or credential earning process, motivating students to enroll at your institution. CAEL can help your institution develop, implement and scale up its PLA program to empower adult students to begin—and complete—their educational journeys.

MARKETING TO ADULT LEARNERS

Many institutions are accustomed to marketing to high school graduates. They know where to find them and what messaging to use. But they may not be as comfortable marketing to adult learners, even though they make up a much larger piece of potential market. CAEL can help your admissions, enrollment and marketing staff reach this audience effectively, and determine an intake flow that is more appropriate for busy adults.
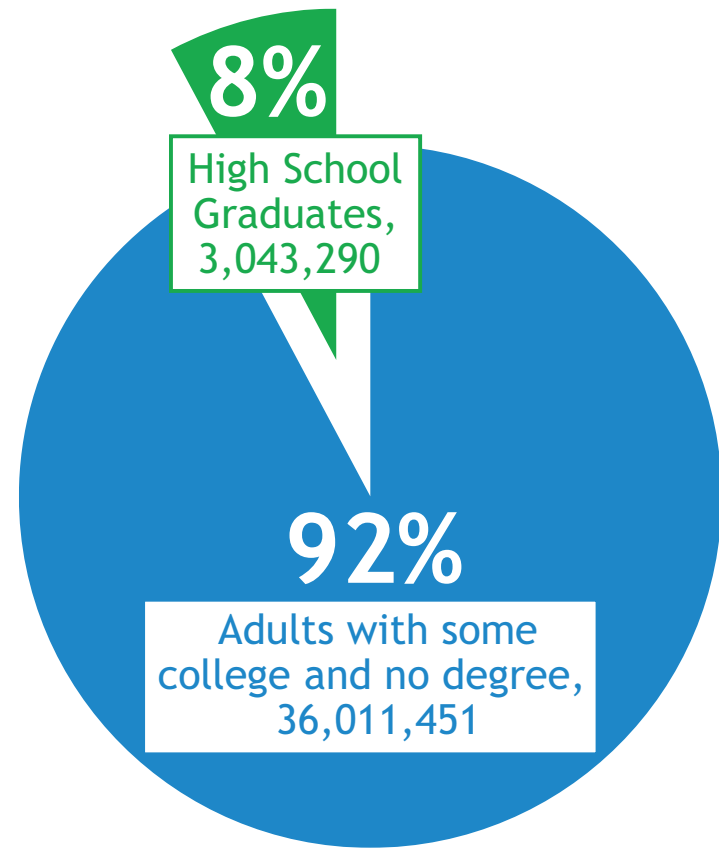
8% High School Graduates, 3,043,290

92% Adults with some college and no degree, 36,011,451

CAEL
Linking Learning and Work

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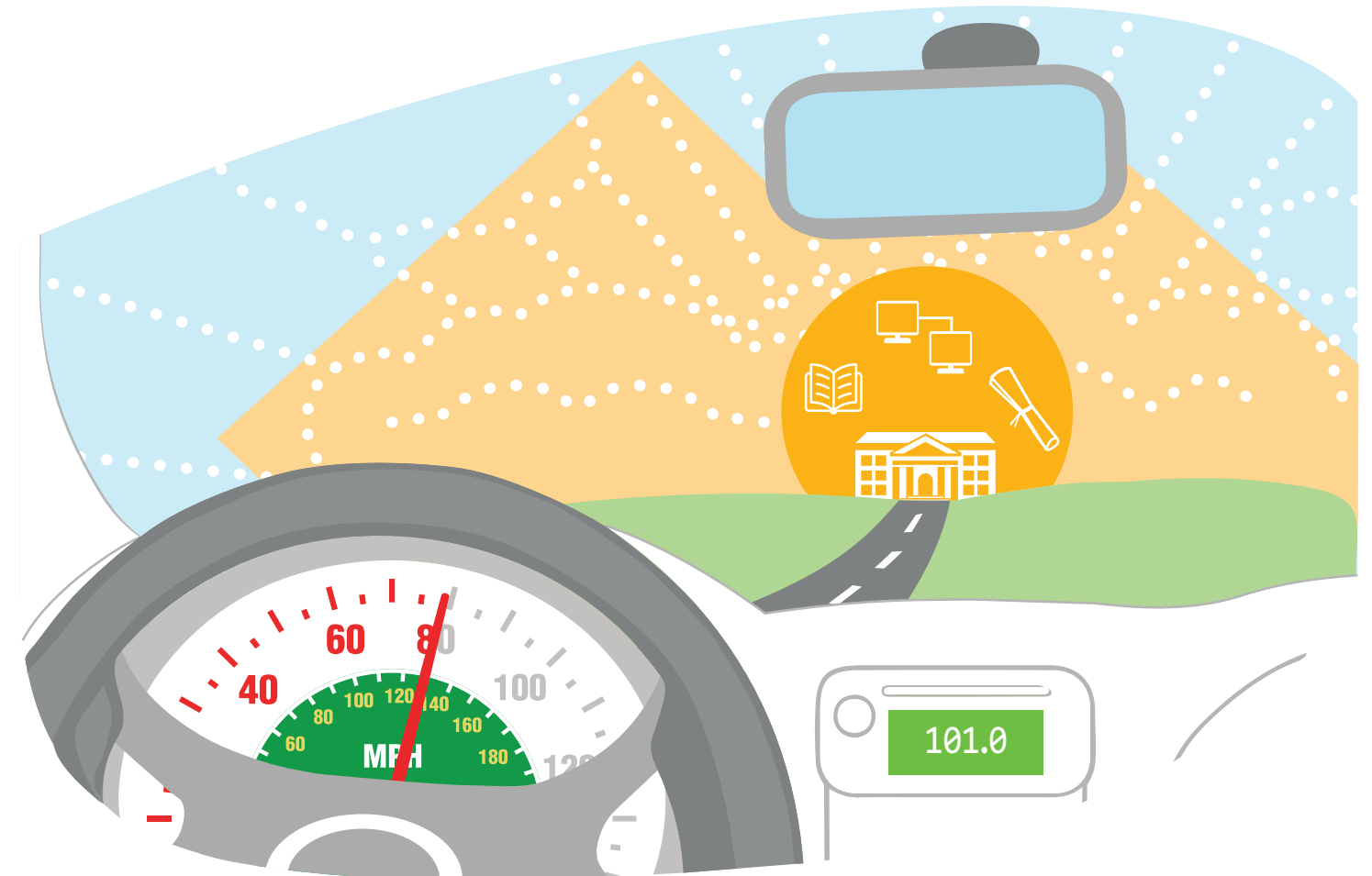Meaningful learning, credentials and work for every adult.
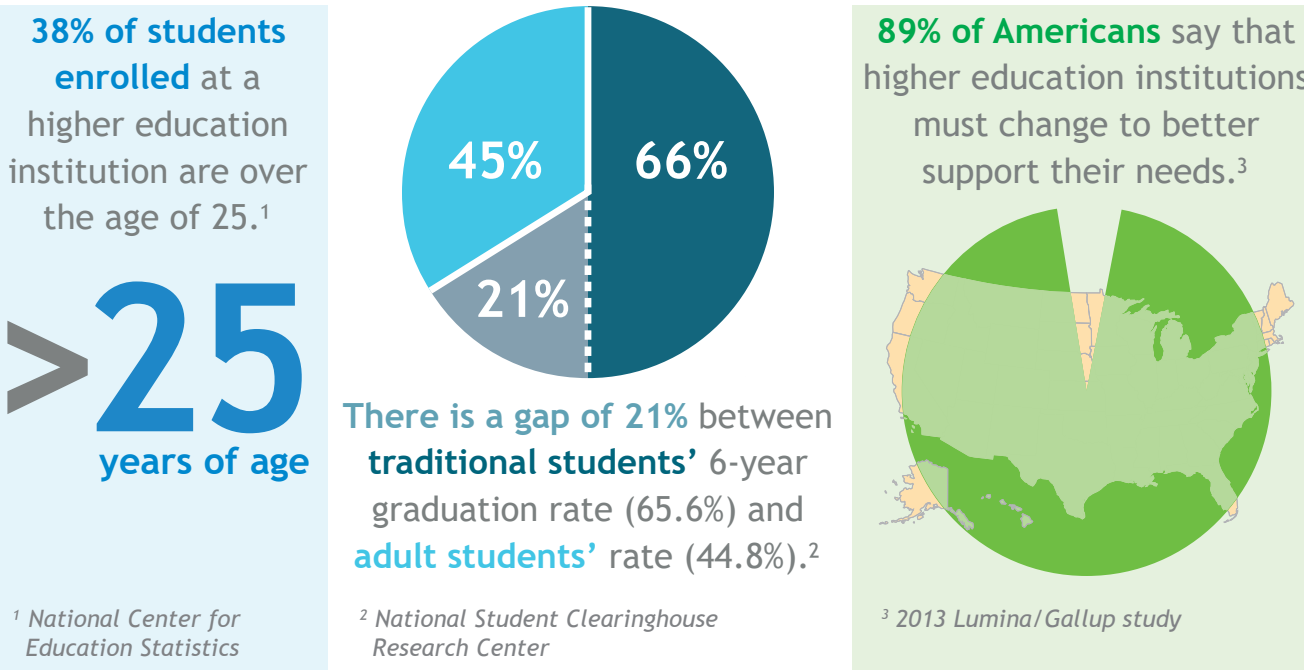
www.cael.org

CAEL | IMPROVE ADULT STUDENT PERSISTENCE

Linking Learning and Work

Your adult students are driven to succeed, yet there are many roadblocks that can get in the way of their academic pursuits. Unlike younger students fresh out of high school, adult students are less likely to reach graduation due to their additional work and family responsibilities.

The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) can help your institution to improve their odds. CAEL can guide your institution to implement policies and programming that have proven effective for increasing adult student persistence and improving completion outcomes.
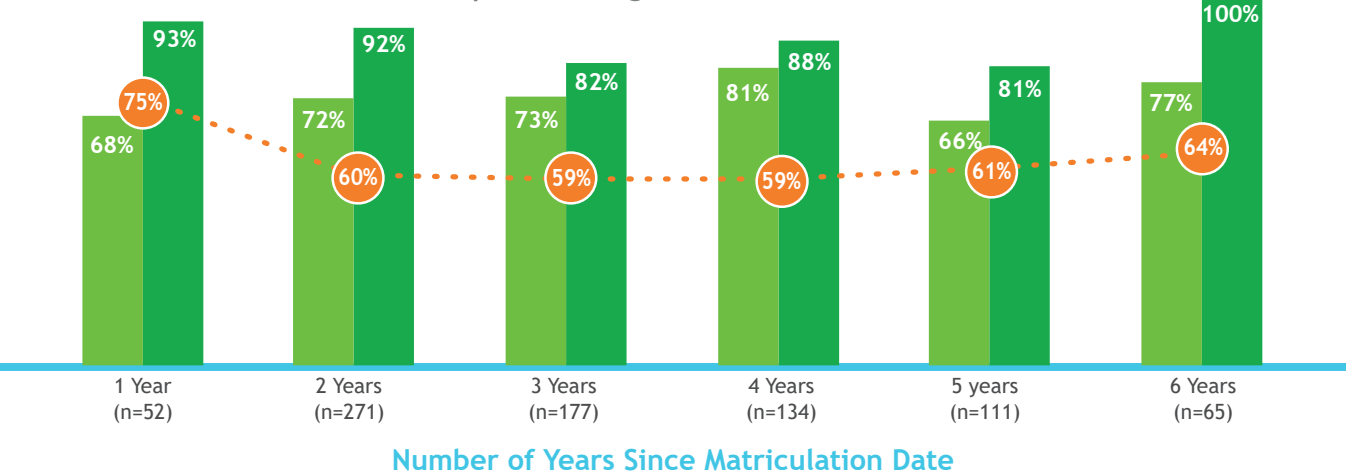
38% of students enrolled at a higher education institution are over the age of 25.[1]

>25 years of age

45% 66% 21%

There is a gap of 21% between **traditional students'** 6-year graduation rate (65.6%) and **adult students'** rate (44.8%).[2]

89% of Americans say that higher education institutions must change to better support their needs.[3]

[1] National Center for Education Statistics

[2] National Student Clearinghouse Research Center

[3] 2013 Lumina/Gallup study

Adult Learner 360
CATALYST FOR SUCCESS

Adult students often must balance family life and a career while in pursuit of their postsecondary education. Ensure your institution provides the support they need with Adult Learner 360, CAEL's survey toolkit which assesses institutional support for today's learner. Adult Learner 360 provides a snapshot of adult student support based on CAEL's Ten Principles for Effectively Serving Adults, areas of focus that enhance persistence.

PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT

Percent of Students Who Completed Degree or Are Still Enrolled

	1 Year (n=52)	2 Years (n=271)	3 Years (n=177)	4 Years (n=134)	5 years (n=111)	6 Years (n=65)
Earned portfolio credit	93%	92%	82%	88%	81%	100%
Did not earn portfolio credit	68%	72%	73%	81%	66%	77%
Non-LearningCounts Comparison	75%	60%	59%	59%	61%	64%

Number of Years Since Matriculation Date

■ Earned portfolio credit ■ Did not earn portfolio credit ● Non-LearningCounts Comparison Group of Similar Adult Students

Students who gain credit for what they already know are more likely to persist toward meeting their education goals. Students who take advantage of prior learning assessment (PLA) have shown greater persistence than students who have not, to the tune of an average of 9.9 more credits than non-PLA students.[1] CAEL provides support for institutions looking to implement PLA, including training, workshops, and tools and services to build a foundation for PLA. In a recent study, students with the highest level of engagement with LearningCounts—those who earned portfolio credit—showed the highest persistence, with with 81%-100% of student cohorts either still enrolled or graduated.[2]

ADULT STUDENT ADVISING

The right student advising is critical to student retention and graduation. That's why we assist advisors to:

• Understand the characteristics and unique needs of the adult learner
• Use assessments to help identify appropriate careers for your students
• Decode the array of career choices in the labor market
• Decipher career pathways in ways that are meaningful for adult students

• Realize how students' transferable skills can give them a boost toward earning their degree and success in the job market
• Become familiar with a variety of resources related to advising adult students from financial aid to career exploration
• Help adults leverage social networking tools

[1] Fueling the Race to Postsecondary Success, CAEL, 2010

[2] What Happens When Learning Counts? Measuring the Benefits of Prior Learning Assessment for the Adult Learner, CAEL, 2017

CLEP and Completion:

The Causal Impact on College Graduation of Earning Credit Through CLEP

The College-Level Examination Program® (CLEP®) offers students an opportunity to earn college credits by demonstrating mastery in over 30 unique subjects. Not surprisingly, students with high CLEP scores are more likely to complete college. But how much of this completion boost is attributable to earning a credit-granting CLEP score? New research from the University of Georgia, Georgia State University, Vanderbilt University, and the College Board isolates the *causal* impact of earning a credit-granting CLEP score. This study is the first of its kind to identify the graduation boost directly attributable to passing a CLEP exam.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Researchers considered all CLEP exam takers who tested between 2008 and 2015, and they followed these students through college enrollment to college completion. CLEP exam scores and demographics were collected from the College Board and college enrollment and completion from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC). To estimate the causal impact of earning CLEP credit, the researchers used an analytic technique known as regression discontinuity.

Regression discontinuity is a fairly straightforward approach to making causal claims in the absence of a randomized controlled trial. With this method, the researchers compared students who earned CLEP exam scores barely high enough to earn credit—often 50 on a 20–80 scale—to students who just missed the CLEP credit-granting score. These two groups of students are essentially identical, with the former analogous to a *treatment group* in a randomized controlled trial and the latter analogous to a *control group*.
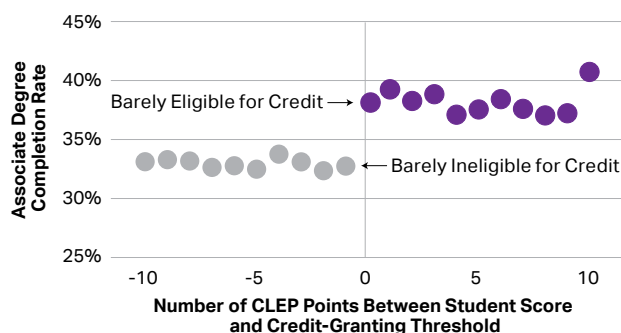
RESULTS

Figure 1: Associate Degree Completion Rates Among Two-Year College Enrollees, by CLEP Performance Relative to College-Specific Minimum Credit-Granting Policy.

To demonstrate the intuition behind our analytic methods, we show in Figure 1 the relationship between associate degree completion and the student's CLEP score on her first exam, expressed as the number of points exceeding or falling short of the minimum CLEP credit-granting score at the student's college. The purple dots represent CLEP scores eligible for college credit, and the gray dots represent CLEP scores ineligible for college credit. The rightmost gray dot and the leftmost purple dot represent CLEP scores differing by just one point, yet the difference in associate degree completion between these two points is 5–6 percentage points, from 33% to nearly 39%.
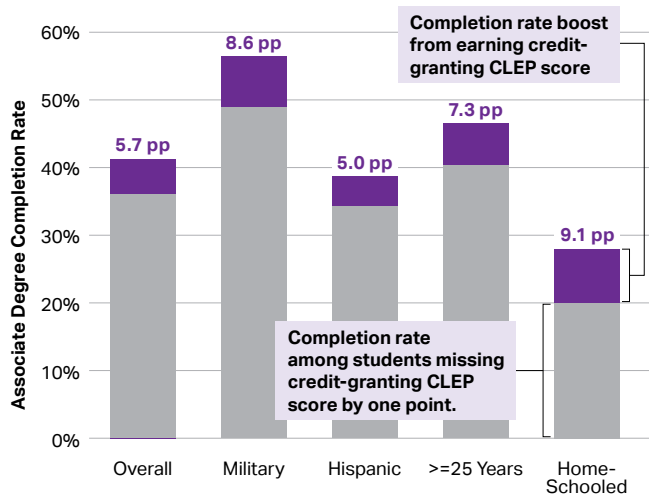
Figure 2: Associate Degree Completion Rate Increase from CLEP Credit Among Two-Year College Enrollees, by Student Subgroup.

Figure 3: Bachelor's Degree Completion Rate Increase from CLEP Credit Among Four-Year College Enrollees, by Student Subgroup.

In Figure 2, we graphically show discontinuities in associate degree completion by a student's CLEP score relative to the college-specific minimum credit-granting score. The height of the gray bar represents the average associate degree completion score among students one point shy of their college's minimum credit-granting CLEP score. The height of the purple bar indicates the additional completion boost, in percentage points (pp), attributable to earning CLEP credit. Among all students, earning a credit-granting CLEP score increases the probability of earning an associate degree by 5.7 percentage points, or 17.3% (calculated as 5.7/32.9). For military students and nontraditional students (>=25 years old), the impacts of earning a credit-granting CLEP score are even larger—8.6 percentage points (18.1%) and 7.3 percentage points (19.5%), respectively.
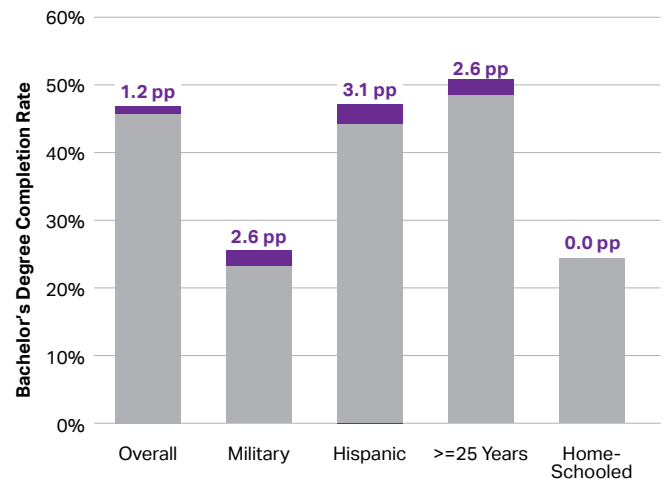
Figure 3 shows the bachelor's degree completion boost from earning a credit-granting CLEP score among students enrolled in four-year colleges. Earning a credit-granting CLEP score increases the probability of bachelor's degree completion by 1.2 percentage points, or 2.6%. That estimate is larger for military students (2.6 percentage points), Hispanic students (3.1 percentage points), and students older than 24 (2.6 percentage points). The bachelor's degree completion boosts are more modest than the associate degree boosts because the credits required for a bachelor's degree are generally about twice the number required for an associate degree.

Overall, credit through CLEP exams is one of the most cost-effective paths to increasing college completion rates, especially for students seeking an associate degree. This study shows that an $85 exam is a cost-effective way to reduce duplicative coursework and ensure that students earn degrees and enter the workforce in a timely fashion.

You can access the research paper at **ssrn.com/abstract=2933695**.

Holistic Advising: The Key to Persistence
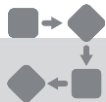## Among Low-Income Adult Community College Students

Adult students enter community college with a variety of backgrounds demanding **customized support** that recognizes the diverse experiences they bring to the higher education environment.

Balancing Priorities

Adult Learner Context	Recommended Practice
Family obligations affect students' pace toward completion	Provide campus **childcare options**, connection to **community resources**, and late-term course starts to ease the pressure of competing family obligations
Financial concerns weigh heavily on adult students. For some, maintaining benefits like TANF, SNAP, or WIC can seem like a part-time job	Build **tight conections** between the college and social-services agencies and community-based organizations to provide resources that can keep students in school by addressing urgent non-curricular issues.
High-cost materials force some low-income students to choose between textbooks and groceries or other necessities	Provide **affordable textbook options** or OER materials to address students' affordability concerns

Curricular Complexity

Adult Learner Context	Recommended Practice
Adult students bring a wide variety of **educational experiences**, such as transfer credit, college-level testing, and military or other professional experience	Establish ways to inform students about, and connect them to, these **"accelerators"** early. Earning credit for existing knowledge provides beneficial momentum toward program completion
Returning adult students often have **satisfactory academic progress (SAP) concerns** from previous enrollment attempts that demand special attention	Train advisors on SAP and **maintain close relationships** with financial aid staff
Requirements for competitive admission programs can leave students **confused about which classes can be completed** within their desired program prior to admission. This leads to time lost as they await admission decisions	**Highlight coursework** in competitive admission programs that must be completed to be considered for admission, as well as coursework that CAN be completed without being admitted

The best practices are the ones that work for **you.**℠

Holistic Advising: The Key to Persistence

Career Focus

Adult Learner Context	Recommended Practice
Adult students typically **work while enrolled**	Show students how **their work experience is an asset** in the classroom (i.e. how project management skills apply to group work)
	Cater to the needs of working adults with **online** course options or offerings during **off-peak hours**
	Offer **prior learning assessments** to demonstrate college-level learning that happened outside of college
Adult students tend to enroll in college for the purposes of **earning a promotion** at their job or **launching a new career**	Provide **labor market information** during the major selection process to provide relevant data for informed decision-making
	Advertise **career-planning** events to support resume development and interview preparation
	Facilitate exposure to the profession through **experiential learning** activities, such as mentoring, externships, and informational interviewing
	Engage with the **employer community** to pipeline students to hard-to-fill jobs

Connection to College and Peers

Adult Learner Context	Recommended Practice
Personalized attention and advisor **accessibility** promote a sense of having an ally in students' efforts to persist	**Assign caseloads** to advisors and provide a tool for advisors to **track details** about the student
	Provide new tools for students to **contact advisors** such as live-chat advising, email advising, texts, and phone outside of standard business hours
	Encourage proactive **faculty engagement** with adult students to prevent isolation, especially in classes with few enrolled adults
Students seek **peer-to-peer connection**, even though they have little time to spend on campus	Offer **cohort programming** options that allow students to bond with each other across multiple semesters
	Arrange **virtual engagement** opportunities via platforms students use (such as Facebook)
	Make campus events **family friendly**, so adult students don't have to choose between their kids and academics

Contact Our Research Expert to Learn More
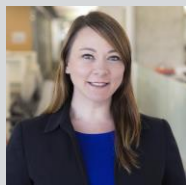
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Christina based this content on her 2017 dissertation on holistic advising.
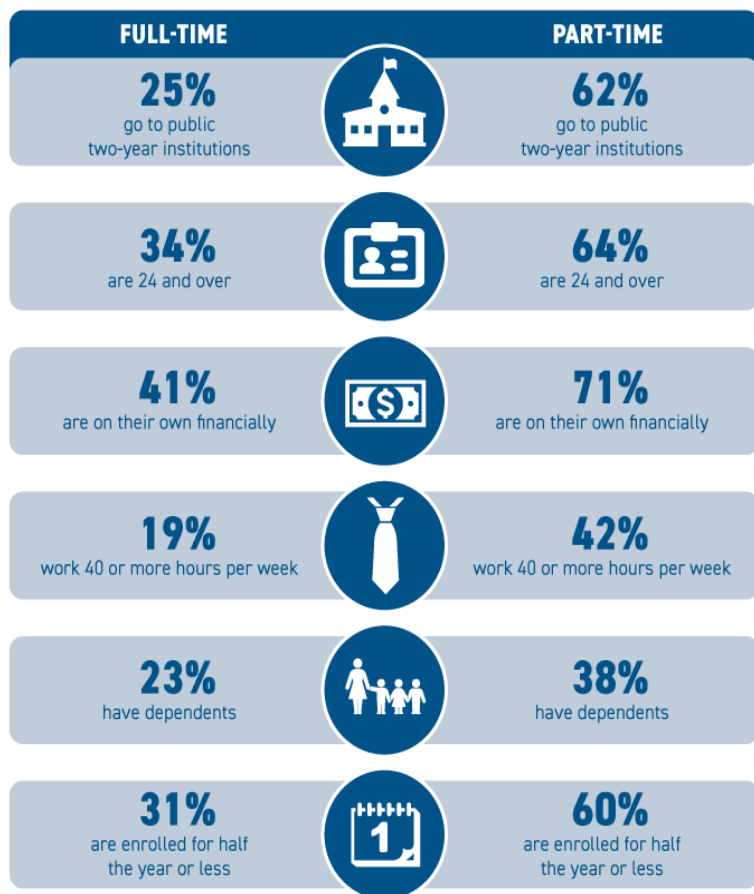
Center for American Progress

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

How are part-time students different from full-time students?

FULL-TIME		PART-TIME
25% go to public two-year institutions	🏫	**62%** go to public two-year institutions
34% are 24 and over	🪪	**64%** are 24 and over
41% are on their own financially	💵	**71%** are on their own financially
19% work 40 or more hours per week	👔	**42%** work 40 or more hours per week
23% have dependents	👨‍👩‍👧	**38%** have dependents
31% are enrolled for half the year or less	📅	**60%** are enrolled for half the year or less

Source: Authors' analysis of 2011-2012 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study data from National Center for Education Statistics, "Datalab," available at https://nces.ed.gov/datalab/ (last accessed August 2017).

CAP

Nearly 4 in 10 American college students are studying part-time. That's 6.5 million students out of the 17 million students enrolled in American colleges. About two-thirds of them are adults 24 years old and older.

The higher education system is failing too many of these students. Only about one-quarter of exclusively part-time students earn a degree within eight years of starting college. Even those who attend part-time for only a portion of their college career fare poorly; just more than half of these students eventually earn a degree. That is compared to about 80 percent of exclusively full-time students who attain a degree.

Too many part-time students never come close to finishing college and earning a degree. Four in 10 students who attend college exclusively part-time in their first year are not enrolled in classes the next year.
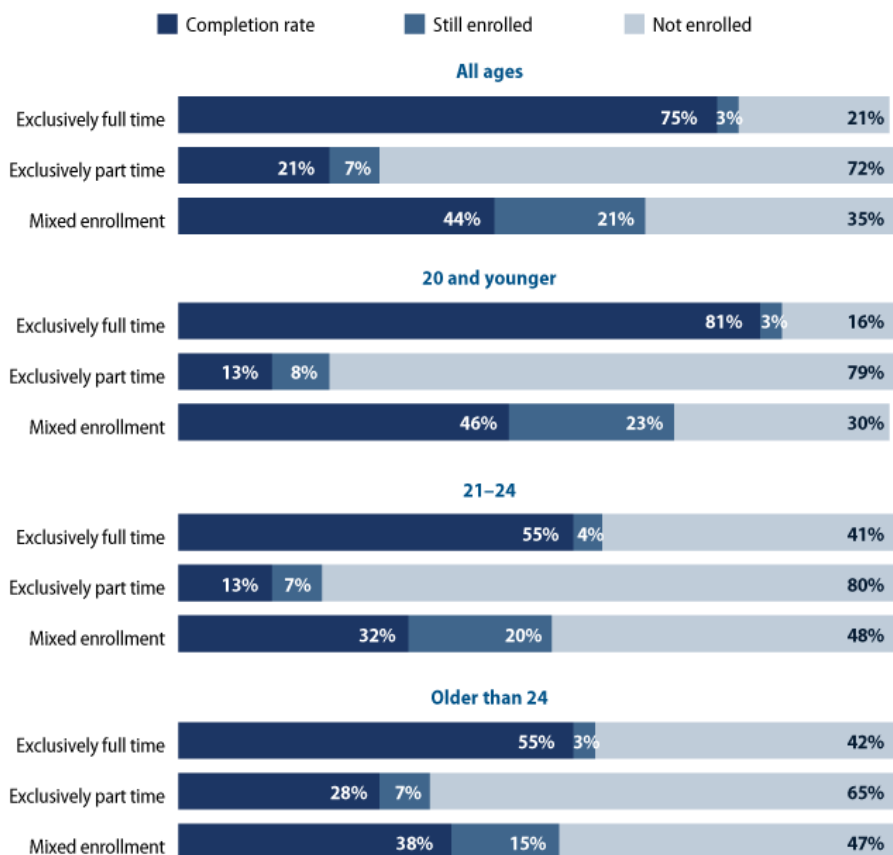
The Center for American Progress has called for institutional leaders, researchers, and policymakers to put part-time students at the center of the conversation about improving college success in order to build a competitive economy and offer more Americans a path to the middle class.

When state and federal policymakers and institutional leaders design or implement a new initiative, they must consider how it impacts part-time students. And if a policy seeks to encourage full-time study, it is key to know who gets left behind.

FIGURE 1

Completion rates by age

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

Legend: ■ Completion rate ■ Still enrolled ▢ Not enrolled

All ages

	Completion rate	Still enrolled	Not enrolled
Exclusively full time	75%	3%	21%
Exclusively part time	21%	7%	72%
Mixed enrollment	44%	21%	35%

20 and younger

	Completion rate	Still enrolled	Not enrolled
Exclusively full time	81%	3%	16%
Exclusively part time	13%	8%	79%
Mixed enrollment	46%	23%	30%

21–24

	Completion rate	Still enrolled	Not enrolled
Exclusively full time	55%	4%	41%
Exclusively part time	13%	7%	80%
Mixed enrollment	32%	20%	48%

Older than 24

	Completion rate	Still enrolled	Not enrolled
Exclusively full time	55%	3%	42%
Exclusively part time	28%	7%	65%
Mixed enrollment	38%	15%	47%

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 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://nscresearchcenter.org/signaturereport12/.

CAP

What we don't know about part-time students

One problem with serving part-time students is that we don't know enough about them. Among the questions that need to be answered:

- Is part-time attendance itself the problem or is it a symptom of other obstacles?

- When is it beneficial to push part-time students to take more credits and when is it not?

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

There is good news in the effort to better understand part-time students. In fall 2017, the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics released new Outcome Measures data on both full-time and part-time students at individual colleges and universities. This is an important new resource for institutional leaders, researchers, and policymakers to take a look at how the part-time students on their campus, or in their state or community, are doing.