

DECLINING BY DEGREES: Higher Education at Risk Fact Sheet

College students are older than you may think.

- The average age is 26. More than 14 million undergraduates are enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities. About 47% are of “traditional” age (19 – 23 years old), but another 43% are 24 or older.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics

Students don't spend a lot of time studying.

- About 35% of college students report they study less than 10 hours a week. Nearly 60% report that they study less than 15 hours a week.

SOURCE: National Survey of Student Engagement 2004

America's college graduation rate is no longer the world's highest.

- The United States is now 5th in the world in college graduation rates, falling behind Great Britain, Finland, the Netherlands, and New Zealand.

SOURCE: National Commission on the High School Senior Year, “Raising Our Sights: No High School Senior Left Behind Final Report”

College is becoming less affordable for most American families.

- Low-income families are hit hardest. In 1980, the cost of attending a 2-year public college for low-income families represented 6% of their income, today it's 12%. For a 4-year public college, it was 13% in 1980, today it's 25%.

SOURCE: National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, “Losing Ground, a National Status Report on the Affordability of American Higher Education”

Today students work more and borrow more to pay for college.

- Sixty-eight percent of undergraduates work 16 or more hours per week, 36% work 36 or more hours per week.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, “National Postsecondary Student Aid Study: 1999-2000”

- About 65% of students graduate with student loan debt; the average debt has nearly doubled over the past eight years to \$16,928.

SOURCE: The State Public Interest Research Group, Higher Education Project, “The Burden of Borrowing: A Report on the Rising Rates of Student Loan Debt”

The best predictor of whether or not you'll go to college is family income.

- Only about 50% of high school graduates from low-income families go on to college, but nearly 90% of high school graduates from high-income families do.

SOURCE: Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, “Access Denied: Restoring the Nation's Commitment to Equal Educational Opportunity”

- 75% percent of the students attending the 146 most selective colleges in the U.S. are from the highest income quartile; only 3% from the lowest income quartile.

SOURCE: The Century Foundation, “Socio-economic Status, Race/Ethnicity and Selective College Admissions”

- The lowest achieving affluent student has as good of a chance of attending college as the highest achieving low-income student.

SOURCE: Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, "Access Denied: Restoring the Nation's Commitment to Equal Educational Opportunity"

Higher education is big business.

- Higher education employs about 3 million people, including more than 600,000 full-time faculty members and untold numbers of part-time teachers. In all, it is about a \$175 billion business.

SOURCE: Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac 2004-2005

The number of people going to college has grown astronomically over the last century.

- At the turn of the century, only about 2% percent of the college-age population was enrolled in higher education. Today that number is close to 40%.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics; Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac 2004-2005

- The number of people attending college in America (including graduate students) has quadrupled since 1960 from 3,639,847 to 16,611,711.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics