

# SUPPORTING STUDENT PARENTS

Expanding Generational of Postsecondary Education



## Staying Power of Education: Supporting Persistence for Student Parents

To meet North Carolina's attainment goal of 2 million 25–44-year-olds holding a high-quality credential or college degree by 2030, support for students with dependent children is crucial. With millions of parents completing some college and having no degree, this population represents a significant untapped opportunity for North Carolina's workforce pipeline.

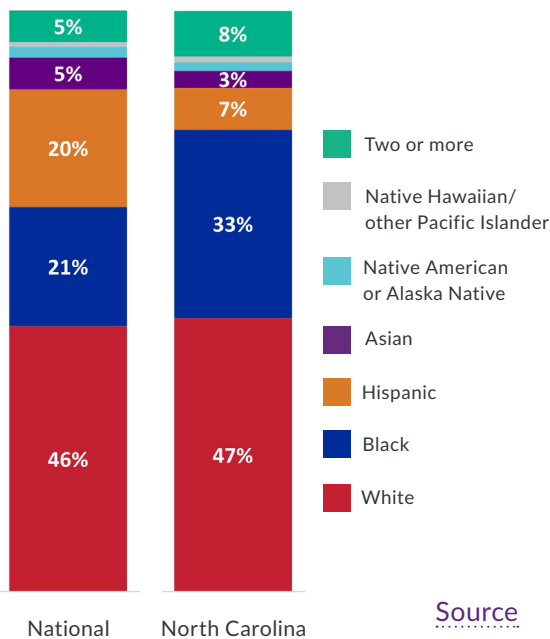
For many, higher education is a stepping stone to economic mobility, career success, and even better health and wellbeing. Many student parents are barred from postsecondary opportunities as they are juggling more than the average student, including childcare responsibilities, employment demands, and limited time. Supporting student parents is beyond just supporting parents, but investing in entire families to foster generations of collective economic growth and wellbeing.

### Student Parents in North Carolina

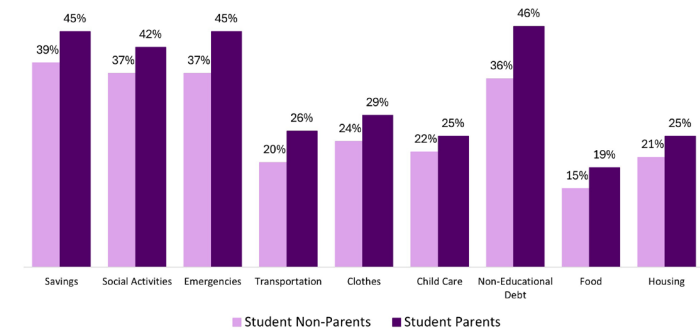
Parents engaged in postsecondary education in North Carolina are often experiencing an intersection of barriers to attaining a degree or industry credential. In North Carolina, 76 percent of students who are parents are women and 65 percent of student parents are over 30; the state also has a higher portion of Black student parents than the national average.

Students with dependents face unique obstacles compared to their non-parent peers. Student parents are 25 percentage points more likely to take out student loans than student non-parents. They are also more likely than student non-parents to report not having enough money to pay for basic needs, including childcare, food, and housing.

**Figure 1: Demographics of Student Parents | 2020**



**Figure 2: Students Reporting Difficulty Meeting Basic Needs | 2022**



Source

# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Parenting students juggle more than the average student, often balancing a full course load, a [full-time job](#), and being a full-time caretaker. These competing demands are not only time-intensive but financially taxing. These recommendations focus on mitigating challenges that prevent student parents from completing their postsecondary education and therefore limit their impact in the workforce and the state economy.

- **Improve data collection on student parents to better understand their basic needs within localized communities.**
  - The [California State University Channel Islands \(CSUCI\)](#) collects local college data on student parent enrollment as part of the Urban Institute's [Data-to-Action Campaign for Parenting Students](#). Data-to-Action team members "braid" together multiple data sources, such as applications and financial aid records, to document student parents. Through this approach, CSUCI has documented [61 percent more](#) student parents. Furthermore, once a CSUCI student is flagged as having a dependent (whether it was indicated on their application, FAFSA, etc.), they [remain flagged in following terms](#), ensuring accuracy in properly providing services.
- **Streamline childcare access by designating student-parents as a "priority population" for state-administered childcare subsidies.**
  - The [North Carolina Child Care and Development Fund \(CCDF\)](#) currently provides subsidies to low-income families to lessen childcare costs. However, narrow [eligibility requirements](#) and long waitlists can make it hard for parents to receive such subsidies. In Georgia, the state Department of Early Care and Learning [prioritizes student parents](#) who apply to their CCDF funded program, Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS). North Carolina could replicate this model, which could both encourage more student parent applications for subsidies and therefore expand child support for this population.
- **Develop accommodations related to limited flexibility in scheduling by offering student parents priority course registration.**
  - To overcome issues such as course scheduling conflicts, in 2022 the state passed the [California Assembly Bill 2881](#). This [mandated](#) that all California State University institutions and community colleges give student parents priority registration. This was done through partnership with the CSU Office of the Chancellor and individual technology teams on campuses to develop a system to collect student parent data. Students who were identified as parents receive prompts prior to registration that they must self-register for priority registration.

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Two-generation \(2Gen\) Approach](#) | This framework from the Aspen Institute explores supports for children and parents to develop family services that promote economic prosperity across both generations
- [Kids on Campus](#) | This Head Start initiative is currently implemented at two community colleges in North Carolina and expands access to childcare on campus.
- [Women with Children Program \(WWC\)](#) | This program offered at Misericordia University in Pennsylvania supports single mothers by providing access to essential resources for college as well as priority placement for work study opportunities and career planning.

