

Reframing the **QUESTION** of **EQUITY**



Understanding the Growing
Importance of Success
for Community Colleges'
Part-Time Students





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for Community Colleges' Part-Time Students



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About Our Work

About EAB

At EAB, our mission is to make education smarter. We harness the collective power of more than 1,200 educational institutions to uncover and apply proven practices and game-changing insights.

And since complex problems require multifaceted solutions, we work with each school differently to apply these insights through a customized blend of **research, technology, and services**.

Who We Serve

From kindergarten to college and beyond, EAB partners with education leaders, practitioners, and staff to accelerate progress and drive results in four strategic areas: enrollment management, student success, graduate program growth, and resource optimization.

We are honored to work with the most progressive **colleges, universities, community colleges, K-12 districts, independent schools, and graduate programs** in the country.



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The Equity Challenge: Identifying Scalable Solutions

Each year, EAB's researchers poll our community college members to ask: "What issues in higher education keep you up at night?" Topics related to student success always top the list, but this year we observed something noteworthy. The **issue of equity has risen to the top across multiple surveys** administered by EAB. "Closing the achievement gap in critical populations" was ranked as one of the top three greatest concerns among college presidents.

Over the past two decades, colleges have enrolled a greater percentage of disadvantaged students, but **these students are not graduating** at rates comparable to those of their peers. Worse, they are leaving our colleges with debt and no credential to show for their effort.

While the social imperative is clear, even the most pragmatic college administrator knows the importance of graduating more students. With current college enrollment declines across most of the country, "risk sharing" proposals under consideration in the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, and performance-based funding models affecting colleges in 35 states, the **current climate demands aggressive action** to support student success.

EAB has responded to this call to action. The purpose of this white paper is to **explain why we need to focus more on part-time students** to close the achievement gap in community colleges. A comprehensive, best practices study to identify the most effective strategies for advancing part-time student success and closing long-standing achievement gaps will be released from the **Community College Executive Forum** later this year.

Community College Student Populations Are Increasingly Diverse

Students from historically underrepresented populations bring diverse experiences.

College access has been a primary concern of higher education leaders for nearly two decades. These efforts have paid off. Historically underrepresented populations are increasing on campus. We have made slight progress in narrowing the college access gap between white and black students and significant progress in the gap between Hispanic and white student enrollment. We also see low-income students enrolling at higher rates than their wealthier peers.

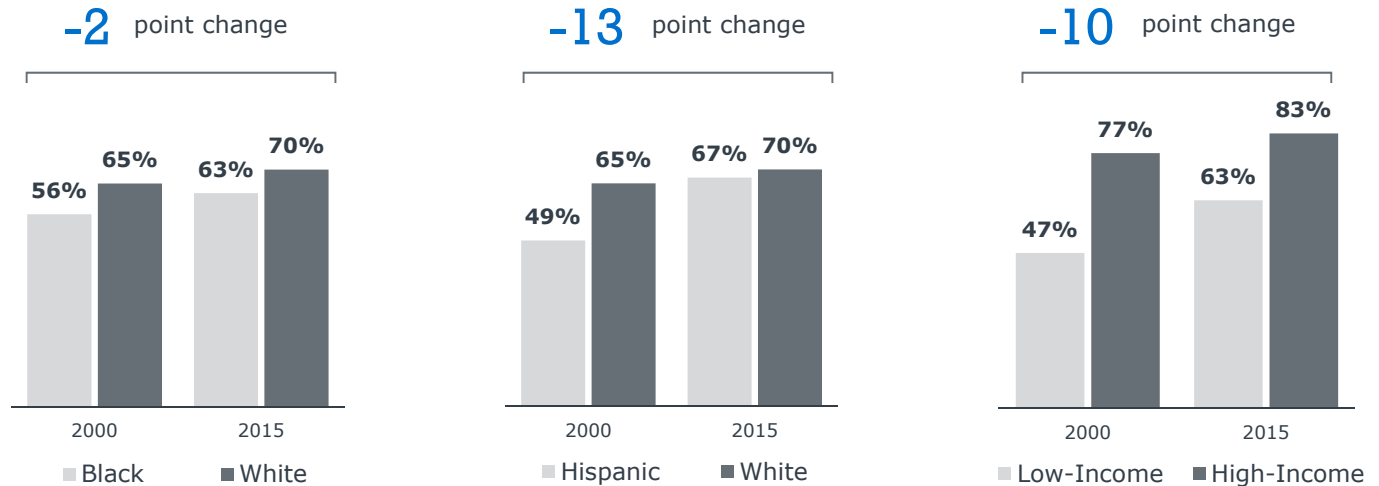
Underrepresented minorities (URM) are more likely than white students to attend community colleges, and that has resulted in campuses becoming majority nonwhite for the first time in history. Diversity is further enhanced by students' backgrounds. Many students are the first in their families to attend college, most seek financial aid, some are military-affiliated, others have disclosed disabilities, most work, and still others are single parents.

These students' experiences enrich college classrooms, but there is a problem. Too few of them graduate.

Historically Underrepresented Populations Are on the Rise

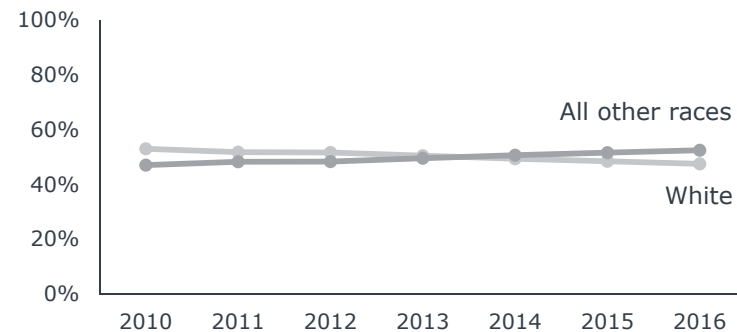
College Enrollment by Race and Income as Percentage of Student Group

Percentage point decline in college access gap

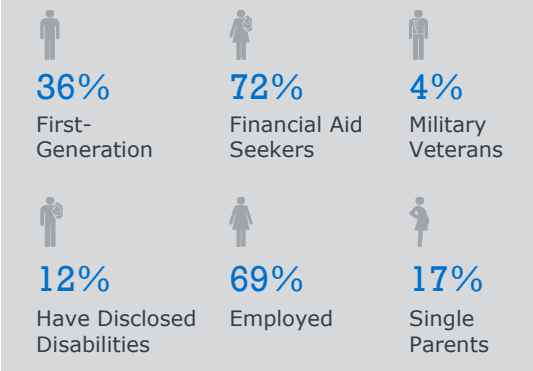


College Enrollment by Race as Proportion of Student Body

Minority Student vs White Student Enrollment



Diverse Student Perspectives



Sources: "Percentage of Recent High School Completers Enrolled in 2- and 4-year colleges, by race/ethnicity: 1960 through 2015," National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16_302.20.asp; "Percentage of Recent High School Completers Enrolled in 2- and 4-year colleges, by income level: 1975 through 2015," NCES, nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16_302.30.asp; "Community College FAQs," CCRC, ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/Community-College-FAQs.html; "AACC Fast Facts 2018," AACC, aacc.nche.edu/research-trends/fast-facts/; EAB interviews and analysis.

Progress in College Access Has Not Led to Improved Graduation Rates

Achievement gaps persist, even as access improves.

Improved access among historically underrepresented populations suggests future community college enrollment will be increasingly comprised of URM and economically disadvantaged students. Yet, there have been enduring achievement gaps between these students and their more advantaged peers.

Despite investments in student success, overall community college graduation rates have remained stubbornly flat.

In addition, outcomes among historically underrepresented students do not reflect the gains made in college access. In fact, degree attainment gaps between Hispanic and white students have remained virtually unchanged, and the gap between black and white students has actually increased slightly.

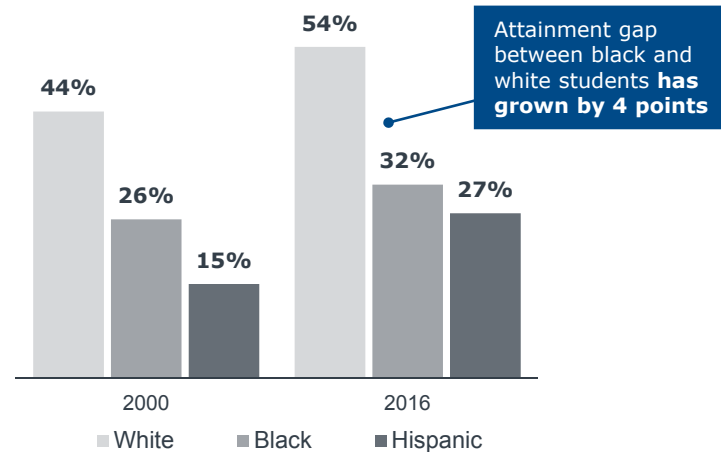
Low-income, first-generation students fare no better. While most start at two-year colleges intent on earning a degree, they are nearly four times more likely than their peers to leave college after their first year.

Increased diversity on campus demands progress on achieving equitable outcome for all students.

Historically Underrepresented Populations Struggle to Graduate

Earned Degree by Race/Ethnicity

25- to 29-Year-olds with an Associate Degree



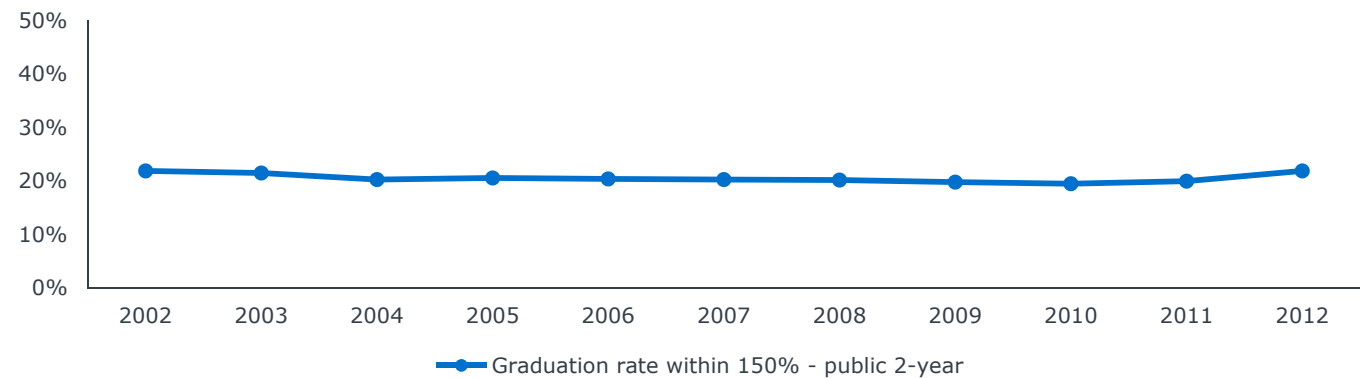
Low-income, first-generation students are

4X

more likely to **drop out** after their first year as their peers without either risk factor

Graduation Rate Within 150%—Public 2-Year

By Starting Cohort Year



Sources: "Percentage of persons 25 to 29 years old with selected levels of educational attainment, by race/ethnicity and sex: Selected years, 1920 through 2016," National Center for Education Statistics, nces.ed.gov/ipeds/data/ipeds-tables/ipeds2016-tables/dt16_104.20.asp; "Moving Beyond Access," The Pell Institute, 2008; "Completing College: A National View of Student Completion Rates – Fall 2011 Cohort," National Center for Education Statistics; nces.ed.gov/ipeds/data/ipeds-tables/ipeds2016-tables/dt16_326.20.asp; EAB interviews and analysis.

Have We Been Looking at the Achievement Gap All Wrong?

Our part-time student population is comprised of some of our most vulnerable students.

We know that students who attend college full-time are more likely to graduate than part-time students. However, 60% of community college students enroll part-time and 83% will enroll part-time or stop out at least once before they graduate.

Although conventional wisdom suggests that equity is a separate issue from the success of part-time students, low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented minority students are all more likely than their more advantaged peers to attend college part-time at some point.

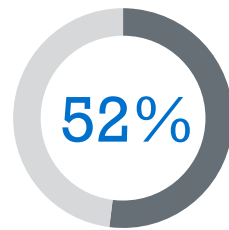
Part-time enrollment adversely affects graduation rates across all student populations and disproportionately affects completion among URM. For many of these students, life's competing priorities ensure that attending full-time will never be a viable option.

To advance equitable outcomes, we need to support the part-time students who make up the majority of our student body.

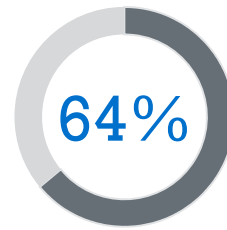
Historically Underrepresented Populations Attend College Part-time

Part-Time Enrollment for at Least One Term

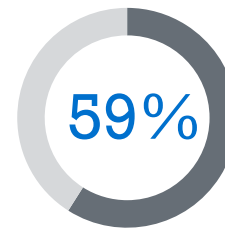
Comparison between underrepresented and advantaged student groups



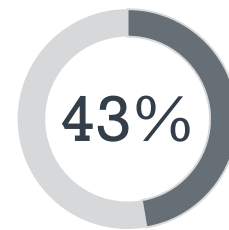
Low-income & first-generation



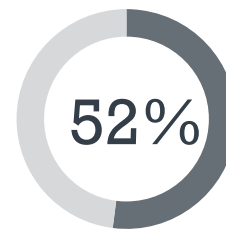
Hispanic students



Black students



Neither low-income nor first-generation



White students



83%

of all students will enroll part-time or stop out before graduation

Part-time enrollment disproportionately affects URM

-29%

Percentage point decline in completion rates among **part-time white** students, compared to full-time white students

-31%

Percentage point decline in completion rates among **part-time black** students, compared to full-time black students

-39%

Percentage point decline in completion rates among **part-time Hispanic** students, compared to full-time Hispanic students

Sources: "Moving Beyond Access," The Pell Institute, 2008; "Even One Semester," Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2017; EAB interviews and analysis.

Closing the Achievement Gap Will Require a Shift in Focus

Target gaps between part-time student populations.

Because the proportion of underrepresented minority, low-income, and first-generation students is so high and they are more likely to attend part-time, student success initiatives that target full-time students will not close the achievement gap as effectively as focusing on part-time students.

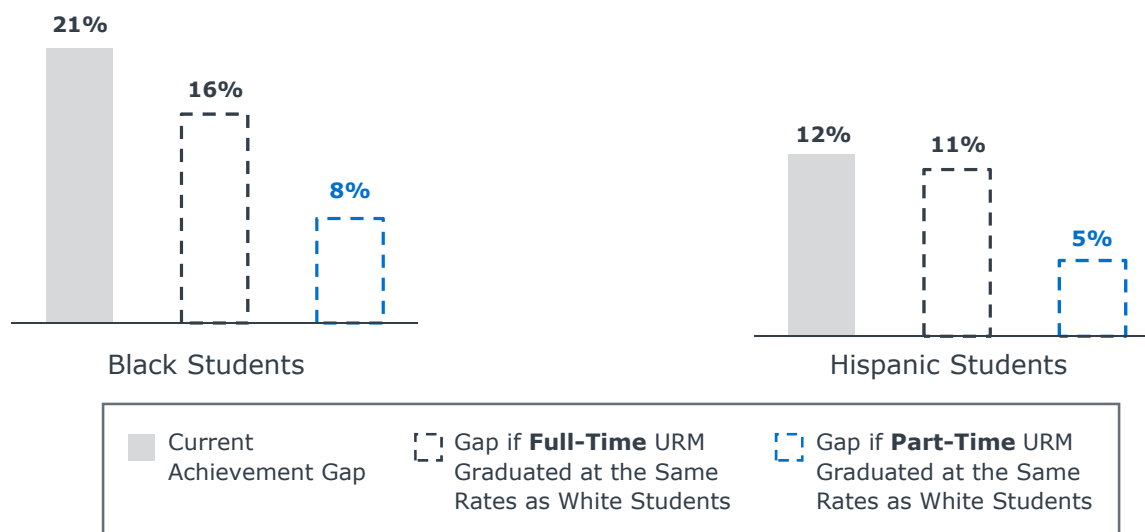
EAB has projected how the overall achievement gap would change if URM graduated at the same rates as their white peers. If full-time black and Hispanic students graduated at the same rates as full-time white students, the overall achievement gap between black and white students would improve by 5 points, but the gap between Hispanic and white students would change by just 1 point. However, if we focus on closing the achievement gap among part-time student populations, the gap between black and white students would close by 13 points—or 62%— and the gap between Hispanic and white students would improve by 7 points—or 58%.

To reduce achievement gaps in a meaningful way, we need to engage students who have limited time on campus and address the institutional barriers that disproportionately affect part-time students.

Part-Time Student Success Has Significant Effect on Overall Achievement Gap

Achievement Gap Between White and Black Students and White and Hispanic Students

Projected changes if URM performed the same as white students



Overall achievement **gap between black and white** students **improves**

24%

if full-time black students graduated at the same rates as full-time white students

62%

if part-time black students graduated at the same rates as part-time white students

Overall achievement **gap between Hispanic and white** students **improves**

8%

if full-time Hispanic students graduated at the same rates as full-time white students

58%

if part-time Hispanic students graduated at the same rates as part-time white students

Existing Onboarding Processes Hinder Part-Time Enrollment

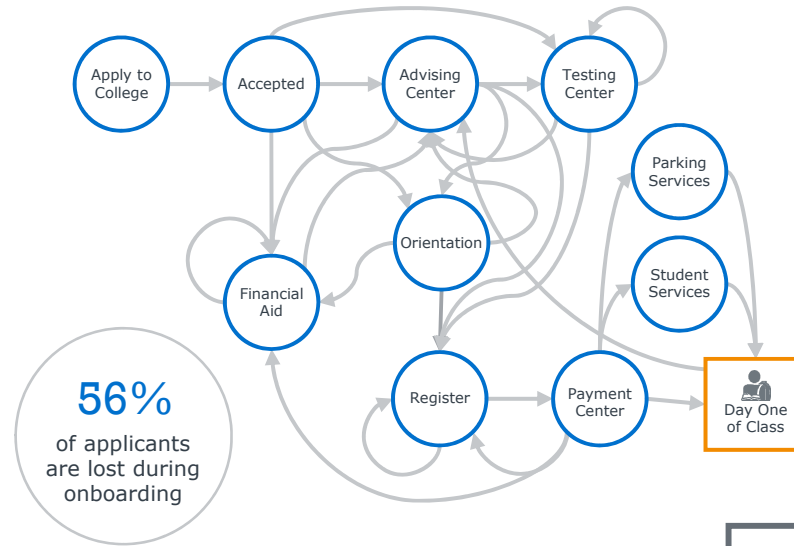
Offer a clear route from application to enrollment.

Community colleges lose more than half of their applicants before the first day of class. The complexity of the onboarding process presents challenges, even for the most determined applicant. For part-time students, and especially those who are first-generation and low-income, the process can be overwhelming.

Students are often unaware of the necessary steps to complete enrollment, and since 70% of part-time students work more than 20 hours per week, time spent on campus is limited. Many students lose momentum as they face unexplained delays, generic information, confusing terminology, and transfers between college departments.

To successfully navigate these challenges, students—part-time students, in particular—need individualized guidance throughout matriculation, nudging them along as they move through each step of the onboarding process.

Clarifying the Matriculation Process



Unexplained Delays

slow movement from step to step

Generic Information given to students with diverse needs

Confusing Terminology makes intake even more intimidating

Countless Transfers between departments to answer inquiries



“I can't call off work just to be on hold and then told to go to a different campus for financial aid.... If I could fix things over the phone or get told on the phone exactly what was needed I would be in classes right now.”

—Student survey response

Applied Practice: Guided Onboarding

About: Pikes Peak Community College (Pikes Peak) serves approximately 20,000 students across three campuses. Only 20% of students matriculate directly from high school, and 25% have a military affiliation. In 2015, 60% of applicants were lost prior to the first day of classes.

Challenge: After discovering that 93% of non-enrolled applicants did not go on to enroll at another institution, college leadership decided to survey lost applicants. Student responses revealed numerous communication breakdowns, including long turnaround times, unclear messaging, and inflexible practices.

Solution: Once clear about the challenges that applicants were facing, Pikes Peak implemented Navigate to streamline their onboarding process. Key services, such as advising and placement testing, were also redesigned to be more applicant-friendly.

IMPACT

\$72K

Additional revenue earned from enrolling a greater proportion of the total applicant pool in fall 2017

Academic Planning Tools Must Adapt to Part-Time Students

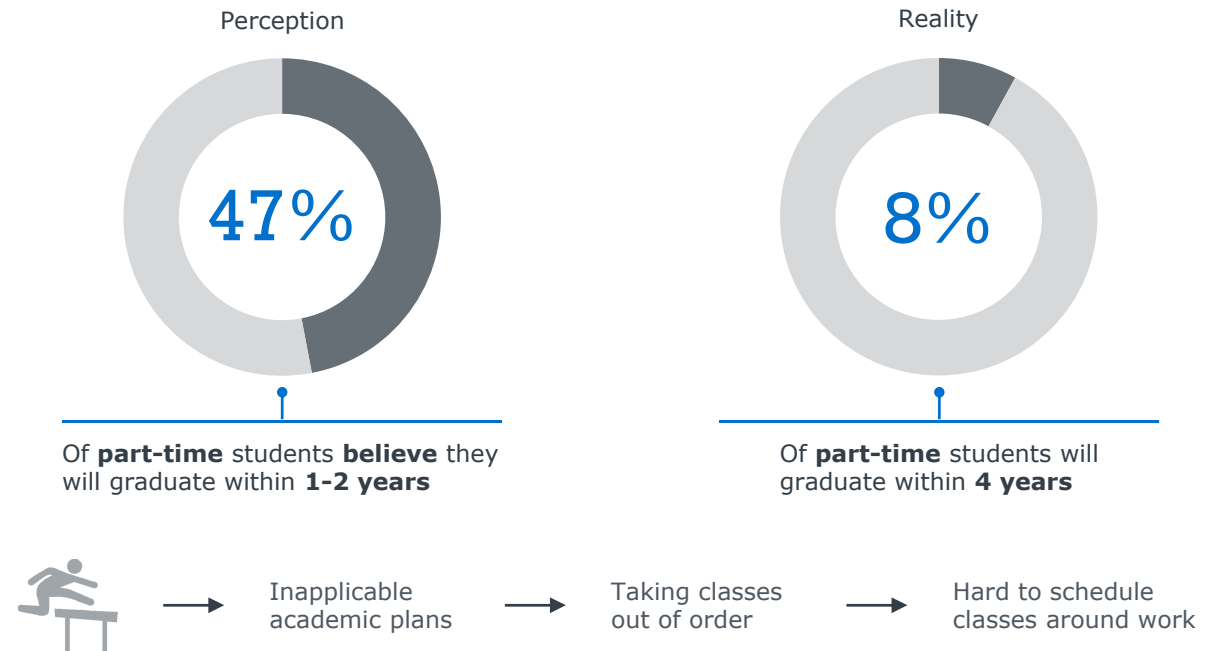
Academic planning tools need to be adaptable for use by part-time students.

In an effort to promote full-time enrollment, colleges often present academic plans in term-by-term formats designed for full-time students. **These plans exclude information about requisite course combinations, which makes it difficult for part-time students to interpret essential sequences.**

To further complicate matters, many students who exclusively attend college part-time have unrealistic expectations about how their pace will affect time to graduation. Yet, in many colleges, the only way students can confidently complete academic plans is by seeing their advisors—a challenge for students who can't spend additional time on campus. Since part-time students comprise such a large proportion of the enrollment, information must be adaptable to their circumstances.

To solve this challenge, students need access to tools that reflect their competing priorities and part-time enrollment, allowing them to develop a right-fit academic plan that integrates critical information about academic requirements, requisite courses, and time to degree.

Part-Time Students' Perception May Not Reflect Reality



Applied Practice: **Academic Planning**

About: Part of the TSCG System, Wiregrass Georgia Technical College serves over 4,000 students on four campuses. In June 2016, Wiregrass joined the Student Success Collaborative, and in April 2017, they launched Navigate.

Challenge: Prior to 2017, students had minimal insight into the academic planning process and relied on ARC advisors to create an optimal class schedule. With long advising appointments, advisors did not have capacity during peak enrollment times.

Solution: Wiregrass partnered with EAB to implement a student success technology that would streamline the onboarding experience and reshape the advising appointment.

4%

Increase in enrollee conversion rate from fall 2016 to 2017

Provide Traditional Student Experiences in Nontraditional Formats

Deliver student-centric student experiences.

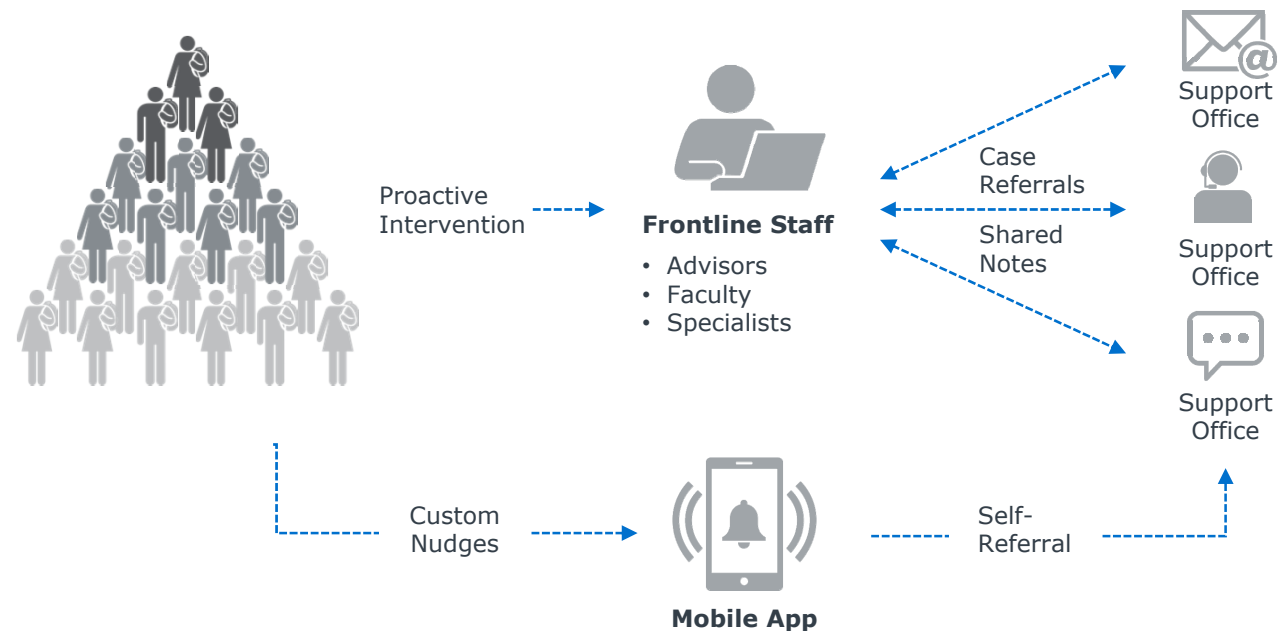
Competing priorities make it difficult for part-time students to benefit from the same experiences as traditional students. Evening classes often lack the same student support services, and part-time students often struggle to engage with peers, staff, or faculty on campus.

Technology can play an essential role in providing resources and engaging students who spend most of their time off campus. It provides an avenue for bringing the campus to the palms of students' hands, providing a network of support to help students solve problems and seek help.

Staff can also proactively engage students through targeted outreach, informing them of support resources, events, or encouraging them to enroll. These campaigns foster engagement that is too often absent for part-time students.

Ensuring students can connect to campus staff and services provides holistic care that is especially important for part-time students, allowing them to stay on track academically and connect to the resources they need when problems arise.

Technology-Enabled Support Can Elevate Part-time Student Experiences



Applied Practice: **Access to Student Resources**

About: Trident Technical College (TTC) is a public associate college with a total enrollment of approximately 13,000 students.

Challenge: Based on student success data, TTC converted their course schedule to compressed 7-week mini-mesters. While pass rates were up, their advising model was increasingly strained due to high student demand and limited faculty availability.

Solution: TTC partnered with EAB Navigate to improve the student onboarding, including replacement of their face-to-face orientation with a virtual experience through Navigate MyPath. Their student-centric approach is improving in-class experiences while improving student satisfaction overall.

13%

Improvement in course pass rates due to conversion from 14-week to 7-week terms

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Why Now? Enrollment Declines Force Improved Outcomes

Success among part-time students is essential to combat stalled adult enrollment and stagnating high school graduation rates.

Post-recession, the surge in adult learner enrollment fell sharply as adults reentered the workforce. Since 2013, adult learner enrollments across the two-year sector have continued to fall drastically.

Meanwhile, after decades of consistent growth, the number of high school graduates has begun to stagnate or even decline in many areas of the country. These shifts are especially pronounced in New England and the Midwest—areas dense with postsecondary options.

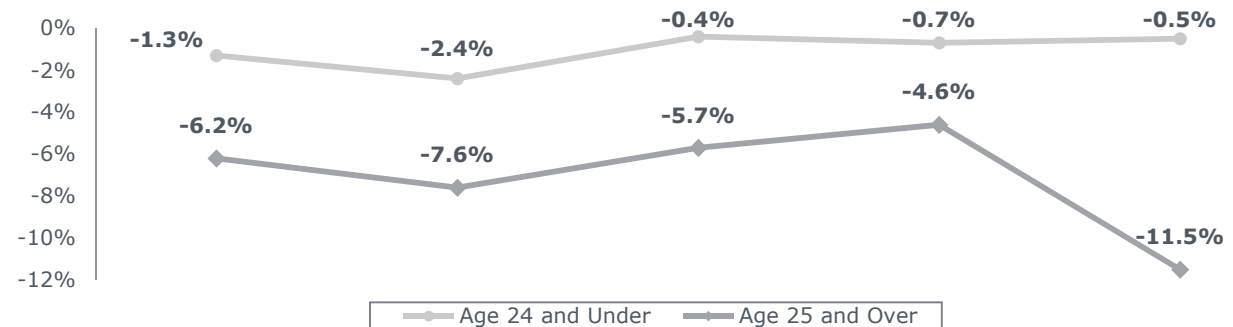
Many institutions already feel the double hit to enrollment. **To combat its effects and better serve students of the future, colleges must ensure services are agile, student-centric, and forward-looking.**

Community college students of tomorrow will be increasingly diverse. They will also maintain part-time enrollment, and they will need accessible support in order to successfully achieve their goals. Targeting resources to part-time students has never been more important to ensuring our colleges' sustainability.

Fewer Adult Learners and High School Graduates Threaten Sustainability

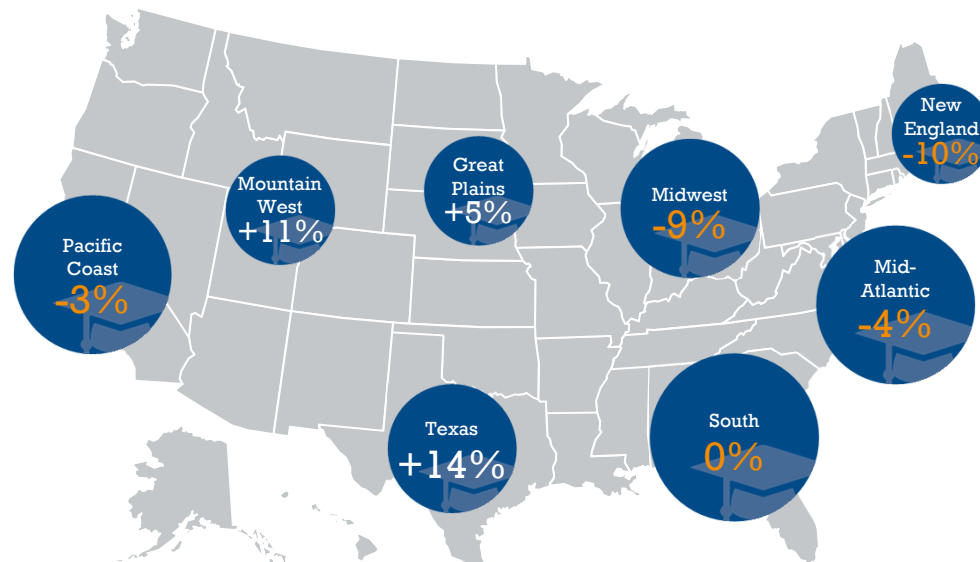
Enrollment Change Comparison of Adult and Traditional Students

Two-Year Public Colleges, 2013-2017



Change in High School Graduates, 2013-2023

Size of Circle Represents Total Number of Graduates



Sources: "Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates, 2016," Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, wiche.edu/knocking; "Current Term Enrollment Report—Fall 2015," National Student Clearinghouse, Dec. 2015 nscresearchcenter.org/currenttermenrollmentestimate-fall2015; "Current Term Enrollment Report—Fall 2017," National Student Clearinghouse, Dec. 2017, nscresearchcenter.org/current-term-enrollment-estimates-fall-2017; EAB interviews and analysis.

Our Work with Community Colleges

About the **Community College Executive Forum**

The **Community College Executive Forum** is a research membership designed to help the President and her cabinet develop and implement strategy related to the most pressing issues facing the sector. **The Forum focuses on growing enrollments, improving graduates' employment and transfer outcomes, promoting student persistence, and managing the business side of the college.** CCEF serves the entire presidential cabinet and permits access to the entire EAB research canon.

- **Resource Library:** Any staff member can create an EAB.com account, which provides immediate and unlimited access to implementation toolkits, research studies, and webconferences.
- **Customized and Actionable Support:** Members have direct access to our dedicated team of experts for phone calls, private web-consultations, and ongoing support.
- **National Meetings:** These sessions provide college executives with an opportunity to hear our latest research, learn from EAB experts, and network with fellow members.
- **On-site Presentations:** Once each year, college executives can request that an EAB expert come to their campus and present a best practice study.

200+

Community Colleges Represented in the CCEF Membership

50+

Publications, Toolkits, and Expert Presentations

1500+

Interviews with Staff, Administrators, and Students

About **Navigate**

EAB's **student success management system**, Navigate, is a comprehensive technology that links community college leaders, advisors, staff, and students in a **coordinated care network designed to give students clearer pathways and curated guidance from application to graduation.**

Direct-to-Student Platform

- **Guided Onboarding** provides custom enrollment steps individualized to each incoming student's needs.
- **Smart Academic Planning** matches students to best-fit careers and relevant courses.
- **360° Advisor Dashboard** empowers frontline staff to meaningfully reach their student cohort.
- **Actionable Administrator View** gives leaders relevant data to serve students and report outcomes.

Dedicating Consulting and Change Management

- **Implementation Support:** Custom build teams
- **Strategy Formation:** Onsite Enrollment Pain Point Audit and Key Opportunities Report to improve student success
- **Ongoing Consulting:** Data Insights for Continuous Improvement

80+

Colleges Represented in the Navigate Membership

25

States Represented Across Navigate

700K

Navigate Users



▶ **Start with best practices research**

- > Research Forums for presidents, provosts, chief business officers, and key academic and administrative leaders
- > At the core of all we do
- > Peer-tested best practices research
- > Answers to the most pressing issues

▶ **Then hardwire those insights into your organization using our technology & services**

Enrollment Management

Our **Enrollment Services** division provides data-driven undergraduate and graduate solutions that target qualified prospective students; build relationships throughout the search, application, and yield process; and optimize financial aid resources.

Student Success

Members of the **Student Success Collaborative** use research, consulting, and an enterprise-wide student success management system to help students persist, graduate, and succeed.

Growth and Academic Operations

Our **Academic Performance Solutions** group partners with university academic and business leaders to help make smart resource trade-offs, improve academic efficiency, and grow academic program revenues.

1.2B⁺

Student interactions annually

1M⁺

Individuals on our student success management system

1,200⁺

Institutions we are proud to serve

1

Goal: Make education smarter



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