From Some-College-No-Degree to Success: Postsecondary Pathways for the 40 Million

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Webcast| From Some-College-No-Degree to Success: Postsecondary Pathways for the 40 Million

Host:

Colleen Flaherty,
Inside Higher Ed

Panelists:

Kristi DePaul,
Founder and CEO of Founders

Kelly Leon,
Vice President of Communications and Government Relations at the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)

Matt Bergman,
Partner Faculty at the University of Louisville and Senior Fellow with the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education

Lovell Pugh-Bassett,
President of Camden County College

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About Our Deep Dive Report

Scope:
- Profile the growing population of students who stop out and their reasons for leaving
- Explore the benefits of return and particular challenges comebackers face
- Detail examples of programs, policies and practices that states and institutions across the U.S. are adopting to encourage return and completion
- Look at interventions for easing credit transfer
- Include alternative credentialing programs and apprenticeships as additional pathways to careers, especially in the skilled trades

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Writer:
Kristi DePaul

From Some-College-No-Degree to Success: Postsecondary Pathways for the 40 Million
By Kristi DePaul

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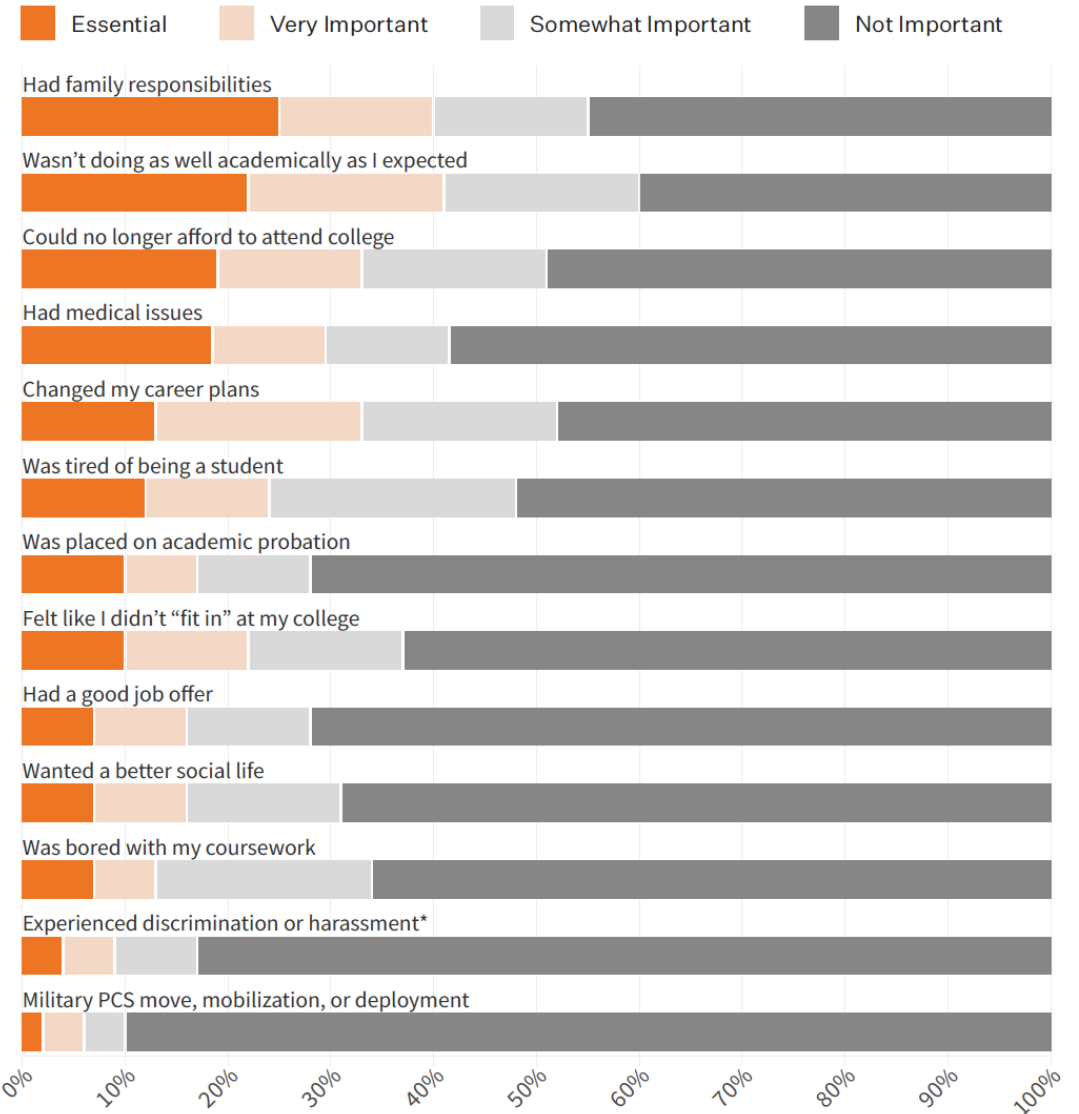
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Profile of This Growing Population

"It's not because they can't hack it, despite that being the prevailing perception for years and years. And while some students have struggles and can't quite make it, the majority are disconnecting from our institutions because of the way that we are set up in policy and practice, in how [college] competes with responsibilities that they have in their lives. And those responsibilities become more of a priority than staying with a program that is either irrelevant, unengaging or possibly inflexible with their other competing demands."

—Matt Bergman,
partner faculty at the University of Louisville and senior fellow with the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education

Reasons for Stop-Out

Percentage distribution of reasons students had stopped taking classes for more than one term

Legend: Essential | Very Important | Somewhat Important | Not Important

- Had family responsibilities
- Wasn't doing as well academically as I expected
- Could no longer afford to attend college
- Had medical issues
- Changed my career plans
- Was tired of being a student
- Was placed on academic probation
- Felt like I didn't "fit in" at my college
- Had a good job offer
- Wanted a better social life
- Was bored with my coursework
- Experienced discrimination or harassment*
- Military PCS move, mobilization, or deployment

(X-axis: 0% to 100%)

Source: American Council on Education/Higher Education Research Institute •

The Benefits—and Challenges—of Returning to College

72%:

U.S. jobs that will require postsecondary education and/or training by 2031

Source: "After Everything: Projections of Jobs, Education, and Training Requirements through 2031," Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce

Some common challenges for comebackers:

- Caregiving responsibilities
- Work
- Previously accrued student loan/institutional debt
- Learning mobility issues (e.g., challenges to getting credit for prior learning, stranded credits)
- Academic progress concerns
- Lack of belonging

"College or state system leaders considering how to navigate the financial challenges for students who stop out need to consider the impact of various living expenses like utilities, health care, child care and food, among many others."

—Justin C. Ortagus, associate professor of higher education administration and policy at the University of Florida
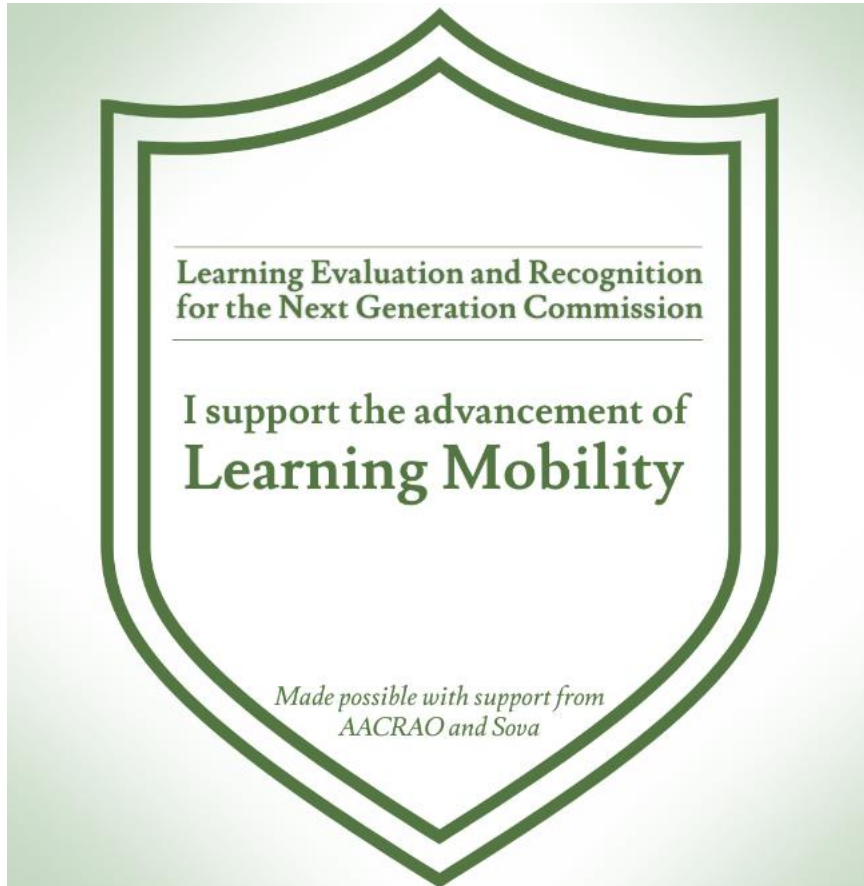
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Facilitating Success

Case studies in supporting return:

- Regional completion initiative: *Ohio College Comeback Pact*
- State-level human capital investment: *Wyoming's Tomorrow Scholarship*
- Returnee effort: *'Canes Complete*
- HBCU Initiative: *Joint Center for HBCU Non-Traditional Completion at Delaware State*
- Targeting stop-outs who struggled: *CSU Second Start Program*

Credit Mobility and Encouraging Return

Source: American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO)

"At some universities, if a student stops out, nobody ever reaches out to them again. Yet messaging that empathizes with students and enumerates the types of available support can boost their sense of belonging to an institution and make them feel like someone cares about their journey. Something as simple as a text message with links and other resources can sway stop outs, persuading them to give an institution another try."

—Courtney Brown,
vice president of strategy at Lumina Foundation

Alternative Pathways

Approximately a Quarter of Those Without a Degree Say They Have Considered a Postsecondary Pathway in the Past Two Years

Which of the following, if any, have you considered pursuing in the past two years? Select all that apply.

Postsecondary pathway	%
Industry certification	27
Certificate	27
Associate degree	28
Bachelor's degree	22
Other	2
None of the above	27

Lumina Foundation-Gallup 2024 State of Higher Education Study

656,505:

Badges, course completion certificates, licenses, certifications and apprenticeships available in the U.S. (nonacademic providers)

Source: Credential Engine

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Further Considerations

Recommendations:

- Offer tailored financial support
- Improve data-informed wraparound supports
- Revamp credit restrictions
- Codify transfer requirements and create clearer pathways
- Conduct personalized outreach
- Minimize transcript-related bureaucracy
- Provide financial assistance for a long-term ROI

"Because of the demographic enrollment cliff, there are a lot of institutions that think the solution is, 'We're going to serve working adults now.' … But the vast majority of Purdue Global's students are working. So the reason the online modality has become so powerful is that it's a way for them to gain the flexibility they need to keep working. But at the same time, you know that a lot of them are taking one class at a time and chipping away at this."

—Frank Dooley,
chancellor of Purdue Global

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Audience Q & A

Thank you!

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