

Seventy Percent of College Students Work While Enrolled, New Georgetown University Research Finds

Twenty-five percent of college students are both full-time students and full-time employees; 19 percent have children

(Washington, D.C., October 28, 2015) – About 14 million college students are working, according to a new report from the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce (Georgetown Center). For the past 25 years, more than 70 percent of college students have been taking time from their studies to earn a paycheck. *Learning While Earning: The New Normal* examines these students who combine work with ongoing learning.

“Today, almost every college student works, but you can’t work your way through college anymore,” said Anthony P. Carnevale, director of the Georgetown Center and the report’s lead author. “Even if you work, you have to take out loans and take on debt.”

A student working full-time at the federal minimum wage would earn \$15,080 annually, which would not cover tuition and living expenses at most colleges.

Working and learning can result in better education and stronger career prospects for students, especially when they work in jobs related to what they study. However, working too much can reduce completion rates for low-income and first-generation college students.

In addition, the report finds:

- One-third of working learners are 30 or older. These mature working learners are enrolled primarily to upgrade their credentials and, compared to young people, are more concentrated in career fields like healthcare and business.
- More people are working full-time while in college. About 40 percent of undergraduates and 76 percent of graduate students work at least 30 hours a week; 25 percent of all working learners are simultaneously employed full-time and enrolled in college full-time; and 19 percent of all working learners have children.

“We need much stronger connections between learning and work,” said Nicole Smith, chief economist at the Georgetown Center and a co-author of the report. “When students pick a major or field of study, they need to be told up front what kind of career it likely leads to and how much money they are likely to make, especially if they have to pay back student loans.”

The Georgetown Center researchers identified several policy changes that would potentially help more of the nation's 14 million working learners to succeed, including:

- Funding postsecondary education based, in part, on performance measured by labor market outcomes;
- Investing in competency-based education programs that teach skills with labor market value; and
- Bolstering employer tuition-assistance programs to offset growing debt.

The full report for *Learning While Earning: The New Normal* is available online at cew.georgetown.edu/workinglearners.

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