



Students' and families' difficulty affording college remains the most significant barrier in their pursuit of higher education. But affordability varies among different groups of students and institutions. Through this research we show the diversity of today's student population, and apply one definition of affordability to all institutions in the state, for different groups of students.



Seventeen percent of Colorado college students are parents who are balancing rising college costs with the struggle to meet their families' needs. Colorado must provide affordable, high quality childcare so the next generation can meet their family commitments while also earning a degree that is critical for securing a living wage. With 30 percent of Colorado residents living in childcare deserts, it is particularly critical for colleges and universities across the state to step up and increase supports for student parents on the ground.

Number of Student Parents in Colorado



Out of the 300,000 college students in Colorado
50,000 are student parents.

Affordable Institutions in Colorado



Only **52%** of Colorado institutions are “affordable,” with **8%** being affordable for student parents. Under the Rule of 10, student parents should save \$42,440 to pay for college.

Lumina Foundation’s affordability benchmark, known as The Rule of 10, states that students should pay no more for college than 10% of their discretionary income for 10 years, and the earnings from working 10 hours a week while in school. Using the U.S. Census, we applied median incomes of different groups of students to test all of Colorado’s institutions’ net prices (cost of attendance minus grant aid, drawn from IPEDS) on the Rule of 10 to determine if they are affordable. For students who were heads of household, we counted only 10% of discretionary income over 10 years, and didn’t treat student worker earnings as a separate number. For each group we took a weighted average of affordability for students who are heads of household and dependent students.

Median Net Cost
\$18,831

10-Year Change in Education Appropriations
-\$402

State Minimum Wage
\$10.20

Least
Affordable
(net price)

4-year public school <i>Colorado School of Mines</i>	4-year private nonprofit school <i>University of Denver</i>
\$25,097	\$32,940

4-year public school <i>Colorado Mountain College</i>	4-year private nonprofit school <i>Johnson & Wales University-Denver</i>
\$3,297	\$23,765

Most
Affordable
(net price)