



**Today's Students:**  
**A Policy Roadmap for Student Parents in California**

January 2019

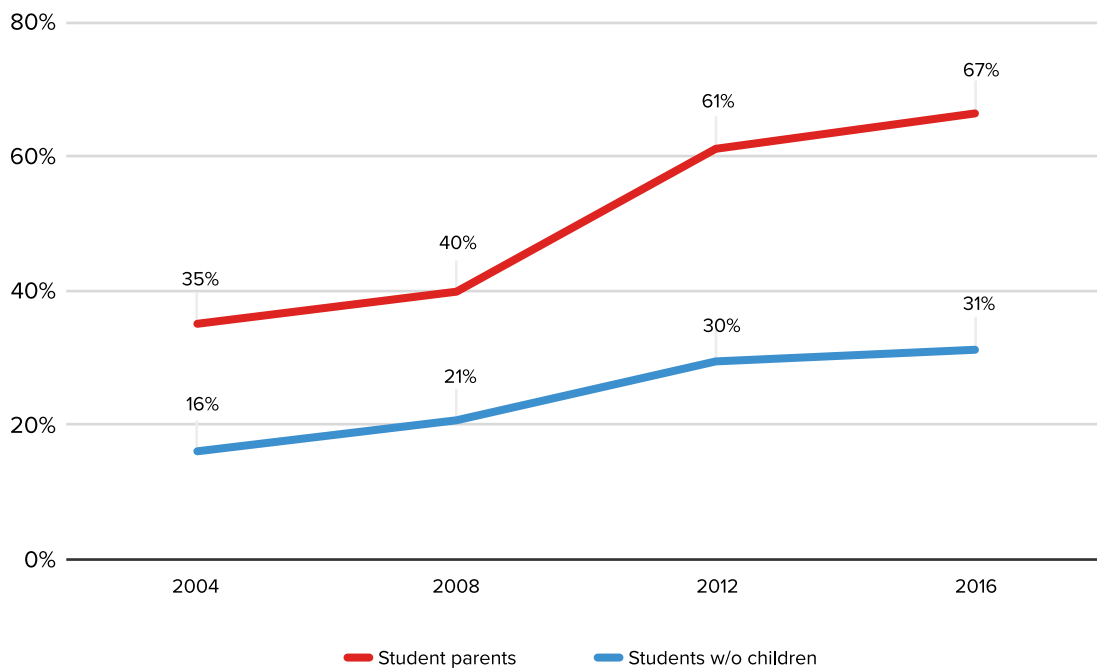
**YOUNG  INVINCIBLES**

Despite the fact that more than one in five of today's college students are parents in America, higher education systems are often not set up to meet the needs of this important population.<sup>1</sup> Making college more accessible, affordable, and easier to complete is critical to the financial security of both generations, their communities, and our national and local economies. Parents attending college also experience unique challenges pursuing their degrees that must be addressed to meet broader higher education goals. For starters, they have less time: student parents can spend about one-third less time on their studies than their childless peers, spending additional hours caregiving and on household chores.<sup>2</sup>

student parents are 3.5 times less likely to graduate than those without children

Student parents also carry increased financial burdens: Nationally, nearly two-thirds of student parents receive no financial contribution from their family to pay for college, compared to less than a third for non-parents (Figure 1). Nationwide, student parents are entering college with no financial support at twice the rate they were in 2004. These factors contribute to lower graduation rates for student parents.<sup>3</sup> In fact, students without children are three-and-a-half times more likely to earn a degree within six years than students with children (Figure 2).

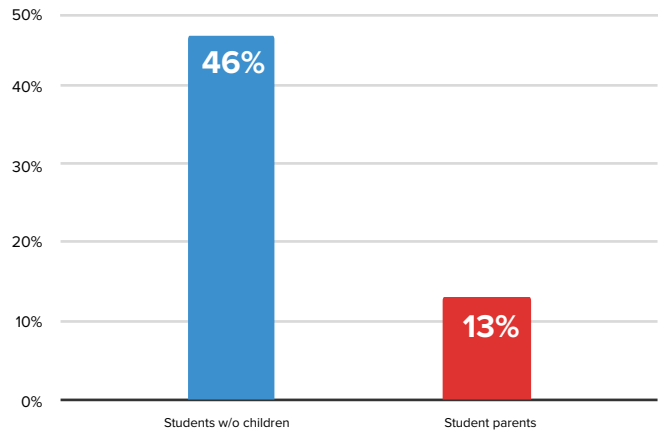
**Figure 1: Percent of students w/ \$0 Expected Family Contribution**



Source: NPSAS:16

This roadmap presents policies for California policymakers to consider to make college more affordable for today's students. At least 22 percent of California college students are parents and are balancing rising college prices with meeting their families' financial needs.<sup>4</sup> Under the Lumina Foundation's Rule of 10, an affordability benchmark which states students should pay no more for college than ten percent of their discretionary income for 10 years, and the earnings from working 10 hours a week while in school, only 18 percent of California's four-year institutions are affordable for student parents.<sup>5</sup>

**Figure 2: Percent of students who earned a degree 6 years after starting college**



Source: NPSAS:16

## Establish an Attainment Goal and Collect Data About the Student Parent Experiences

While the increased focus on postsecondary attainment is encouraging, states need objective methods to determine whether they are meeting the needs of their residents. To accomplish this, it is important to adopt a statewide attainment goal, implement strategies to reach that goal, and measure progress. To successfully reach attainment goals, it is necessary to recognize how many college students are parents and identify the unique challenges they face pursuing postsecondary education. State agencies, systems, and institutions need to track the enrollment, progress, and completion of their student parent populations. Education systems and institutions should add basic flags of parenthood status, allowing for disaggregation of all other variables collected between parents and non-parents. The Family Friendly Campus Toolkit developed by Endicott College Program Evaluation & Research Group also provides a helpful framework for how states and institutions can evaluate the needs of student parents.<sup>6</sup>

at least 380,000 (14%) of California college students are parents

California has not established a statewide attainment goal. Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis has a unique opportunity to bring together the three segments of California postsecondary education to establish a statewide attainment goal, and incorporate strategies to serve California's 380,000 parents pursuing undergraduate degrees. Governor Newsom's proposed \$10 million to develop a longitudinal data system will also shed light on the pathways and progress of California students.

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## Make Clear, Predictable Financial Commitments

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While stakeholders point fingers over who is to blame for the rising costs of college, no one can argue that the rising prices delay students' path to success, and carry significant consequences for America's widening socio-economic and racial equity gaps. Making clear, predictable financial commitments, whether branded as "Promise" programs or increasing the numbers of institutions deemed affordable, equips policymakers with clear affordability goals and provides students and families with the assurance that they can afford a postsecondary education.

States should guarantee affordability for students along the following principles:

- Prioritize low-income students.
- Measure completion rates and incentivize improvement.
- Incorporate support for costs beyond tuition, including housing, food, transportation, and child care.

With only 18 percent of California's colleges affordable for student parents, the state should make improving affordability a priority.<sup>7</sup> In order to address the principles above, the Cal Grant would need to be reformed to take into account the high cost of living in the state—expanding eligibility to more community college students, and reforming the benefit calculation to reflect a students' expected family contribution, rather than less relevant metrics like GPA and age. The California Student Aid Commission, Ed Trust - West, The Century Foundation, The Institute of College Access & Success, and the Chancellor's Office for California Community Colleges have all made similar recommendations. Legislative leaders reportedly plan on introducing similar legislation in the 2018-2019 session.<sup>8</sup>

the Cal Grant needs to be reformed to take into account the high cost of living in the state and reflect more relevant factors in its benefits calculation

Furthermore, Governor Newsom's proposed budget includes \$121.6 million in Cal Grant funding available exclusively to student parents. This is a very encouraging proposal that reflects the unique challenges facing student parents and the strategic importance of tailoring support for them.

## Include Student Parents in State Child Care Programs

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The federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), which provides funds to states to help low-income parents pay for child care, allows states flexibility in determining program eligibility, including whether students pursuing education programs are eligible.<sup>9</sup> Considering the benefit of each level of postsecondary attainment (lower unemployment and higher wages for each additional level), state child care programs can help student parents by allowing all programs, including baccalaureate and above, to count towards eligibility.<sup>10</sup>

In 2018, Congress doubled CCDBG funding.<sup>11</sup> While states could choose to invest the additional funds in improving quality or investing in providers (grants for start-up costs, increasing payment rates, or increased training for special populations like infants), states could also focus on providing and promoting benefits for more college students.

Furthermore, Congress also infused the Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) program with additional funding, more than doubling federal dollars available to institutions to start and support child care centers on campus. States should encourage their institutions to apply for CCAMPIS support. Even institutions that already have childcare centers should pursue this funding, as an Institute for Women's Policy Research study found long waiting lists at 95 percent of the institutions they studied.<sup>12</sup>

only 20% of all  
California college campuses  
have child care centers

While 69 percent of California public institutions have child care centers on campus, only 20 percent of all California institutions do, restricting student parents' ability to balance school and family. California's state child care assistance program, CalWORKS, currently limits eligibility to students pursuing vocational education.<sup>13</sup> California Department of Social Services should expand eligibility to students pursuing all accredited forms of education. California could also include student parents in their state plan and use some of the \$252,727,000 in additional CCDBG funds the state stands to gain for college students, as well as encourage its institutions to apply for additional CCAMPIS funds.

## Improve access & awareness of SNAP

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While a federally funded program, states and localities have a lot of flexibility in how they administer the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), including determining eligibility and how to promote align promotion programs. While student parents do not need to meet the work requirements that regular students must meet, many low-income student parents are not receiving benefits for which they are probably eligible. Young Invincibles' analysis of U.S. Census data finds that out of the country's 746,000 student parents living in households below 133 percent of the federal poverty level, roughly 316,000 of them, or 42 percent, do not receive SNAP benefits for which they are probably eligible.

County administrators should follow the lead of states like Illinois, that have designated career and technical education programs under the Perkins Act as SNAP-eligible programs under the Education & Training (E&T) program, thus exempting participants from additional work requirements.<sup>14</sup> In the same legislation, stakeholders are charged with establishing a protocol to identify and verify students' eligibility for SNAP benefits.<sup>15</sup> State and county SNAP administrators can also learn from California, which expanded the restaurant meals program that provides hot meal benefits to homeless disabled, and elderly students, to college campuses.

Young Invincibles estimates there are approximately 43,000 low-income student parents in California who may be eligible for CalFresh but do not receive benefits. County administrators of CalFresh should designate all students participating in a CTE program as SNAP eligible under the E&T program. The three segments of higher education in California, as well as campus administrators, should adopt a policy to advise all students eligible for Federal Work Study that they are eligible for SNAP without an additional work requirement. Such communications could contribute to the designation as a hunger-free campus.

## Adopt Evidence-Driven Completion Programs

Student parents experience higher education at the intersection of many socio-economic challenges, while balancing work, home, and school. Unfortunately, these challenges contribute to lower than average graduation rates. State programs can address multiple barriers simultaneously, providing academic and career advising, funding child care and transportation support, and professional development.

Programs like Arkansas' Career Pathways Initiative (CPI) have helped low-income student parents graduate community college at twice the state average.<sup>16</sup> The City University of New York's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) mandates a on-time course scheduling and ongoing support from advisors and tutors. It also provides a mix of support on tuition costs and non-tuition costs including MetroCards and textbooks. ASAP has proven highly effective, increasing overall enrollment rates and almost doubling on-time completion.<sup>17</sup>

States should adopt and support programs with these elements:

- Wrap-around case management that provides academic advising, but also connects student-parents to other resources.
- Support for tuition and non-tuition expenses like transportation and child care.
- Tracking of results and success.
- Professional development and soft-skills.

California's Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education (CARE) Program assists low-income student parents attending California Community Colleges with grants and services for child care, transportation, and books, as well as counseling and advising.<sup>18</sup> In the 2016-2017 school year, CARE was funded at \$15.9 million and served 5,854 students. However, there are nearly 14,000 single parents receiving public welfare assistance who are enrolled in college in California, suggesting thousands of eligible students do not receive benefits.<sup>19</sup> To ensure quality, the California Community College Chancellor's Office CCCCCO should consider evaluating the success of these programs, specifically whether they increase the likelihood of earning a degree or credential. If successful, the program could seek additional funding so that it can serve more eligible student parents. Work Study that they are eligible for SNAP without an additional work requirement. Such communications could contribute to the designation as a hunger-free campus.





## End Notes

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1. National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:16)
2. Konrad Mugglestone, Finding Time: Millennial Parents, Poverty, & Rising Costs, (Young Invincibles, Washington DC: 2015) 4. <https://younginvincibles.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Finding-Time-Apr29.2015-Final.pdf>.
3. Clare Wladis, Opinion: Many student-parents drop out because they don't have enough time for their schoolwork, research shows, (The Hechinger Report: 2018), <https://hechingerreport.org/opinion-many-student-parents-drop-out-because-they-dont-have-enough-time-for-their-schoolwork-research-shows/>.
4. This estimate, using the American Community Survey definition, potentially undercounts student parents by excluding both graduate students and students pursuing certificates, parents with with children living separately more than half the year, and potentially excluding part-time students.
5. Some community colleges which offer four-year degrees were included in this analysis.
6. Endicott College Program Evaluation & Research Group, "The Family Friendly Campus Toolkit", accessed December 19, 2018, <https://www.endicott.edu/family-friendly-campus-toolkit>.
7. Young Invincibles, Today's Student in California, <https://younginvincibles.org/todays-students-in-california/>.
8. Mikhail Zinshteyn, "California community colleges seek larger Cal Grants to cover students' living costs", EdSource, October 8, 2018, <https://edsources.org/2018/california-community-colleges-seek-larger-cal-grants-to-cover-students-living-costs/603231>.
9. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Child Care, Office of Administration of Children & Families, "OCC Factsheet", <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/fact-sheet-occ>
10. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment Projections", March 27, 2018, <https://www.bls.gov/emp/chart-unemployment-earnings-education.htm>.
11. CLASP, Child Care in the FY 2018 Omnibus Spending Bill, March 2018, <https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/publications/2018/03/Child%20Care%20in%20the%20FY%202018%20Omnibus.pdf>.
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13. The application for Welfare-to-Work, under which CalWORKS operates, does not allow applicants to select associate's degree or bachelor degree programs as an approved activity: <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/cdssweb/entres/forms/English/WTW2.pdf>.
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16. Metis Associates, College Count\$, A Research Analysis of the Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative, January 2018, [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/55784275e4b0b9063308b099/t/5a6f35a0ec212d3a1504c8dd/1517237667883/25023\\_DG\\_CollegeCounts\\_Report\\_Final\\_0126.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/55784275e4b0b9063308b099/t/5a6f35a0ec212d3a1504c8dd/1517237667883/25023_DG_CollegeCounts_Report_Final_0126.pdf).
17. Susan Scrivener et. al., Doubling Graduation Rates: Three-Year Effects of CUNY's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) for Developmental Education Students, (New York, NY: MRDC, 2015), ix, [http://www.mrdc.org/sites/default/files/doubling\\_graduation\\_rates\\_fr.pdf](http://www.mrdc.org/sites/default/files/doubling_graduation_rates_fr.pdf)
18. CARE Fact sheet, California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, <http://extranet.cccco.edu/Portals/1/SSSP/AboutSSSP/Programs/Fact%20Sheet%20CARE%205-14.pdf>
19. YI estimates of 2016 American Community Survey; eligibility for CARE defined as enrolled in college, living in California, receiving public welfare assistance, and living in households with dependent children and no spouse present.