

# Higher Ed Spotlight

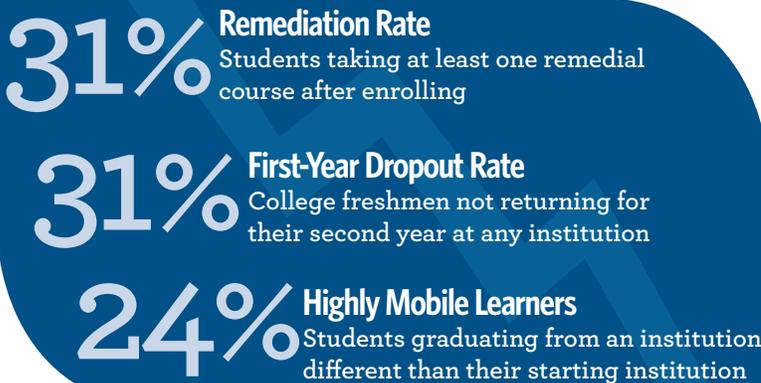
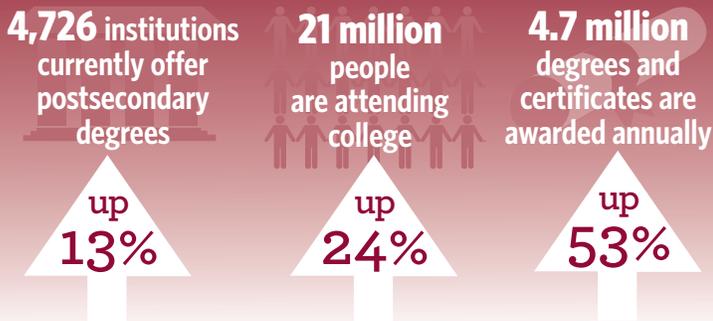
## Basic Facts About U.S. Higher Education Today

In today's society, a postsecondary education is critical to good citizenship, individual opportunity, and national competitiveness. Higher education in the United States comprises thousands of institutions that serve a wide diversity of students and an equally wide variety of academic preparation levels. As the demand for higher education grows, unpacking this diversity has become important to inform public dialogue about how students access higher education and whether or not they are successful.



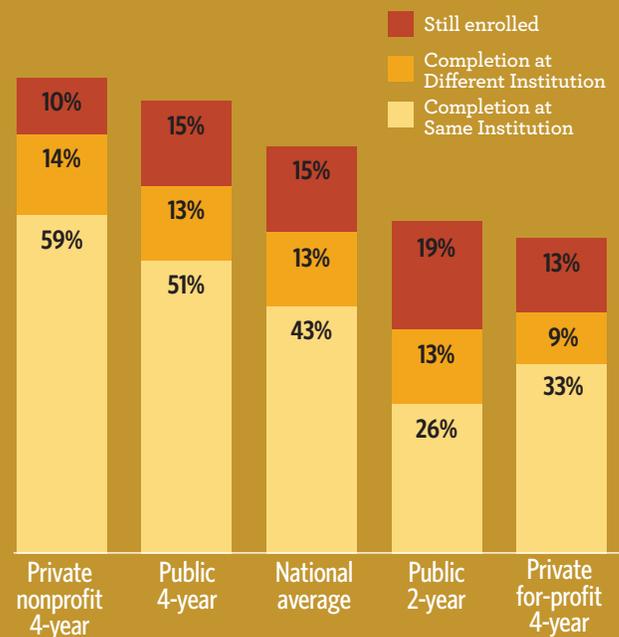
### Institutions, Students, and Degree Production

Increases from 2002 to 2012



### Student Outcomes

Students obtaining an undergraduate degree or certificate, or are still enrolled after 6 years at any institution



### Widespread Payoffs of College Education

Compared with those with a high school credential only, college-educated adults are:



### Profile of College Students

Typical undergraduates are no longer 18-year-olds straight out of high school.



**SOURCES:**

Baum, Sandy, and Jennifer Ma. 2014. *Trends in College Pricing 2014*. New York: The College Board.  
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 National Center for Education Statistics. National Postsecondary Student Aid Study 2011-12.  
 National Center for Education Statistics. 2014. *Digest of Education Statistics*.  
 National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. 2014. *Persistence and Retention-Snapshot Report, Spring 2014*. <http://nscresearch-center.org/wp-content/uploads/SnapshotReport14-PersistenceRetention-.pdf>.  
 Shapiro, Doug, Afet Dunder, Mary Ziskin, Xin Yuan, and Autumn Harrell. 2013. *Completing College: A National View of Student Attainment Rates*. Herndon, VA: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.

\* Post-traditional learners are diverse, and include those who delayed entry to college after high school, obtained an alternative high school credential such as the GED® credential, studied part time at the start, were financially independent, had children, were single parents, or worked full time while enrolled. These characteristics are known to adversely affect college persistence and completion.