UNDERSTANDING THE STUDENT PARENT EXPERIENCE:

The Need for Improved Data Collection on Parent Status in Higher Education

Barbara Gault, Tessa Holtzman, and Lindsey Reichlin Cruse

INTRODUCTION

College students who are parents or caregivers of dependent children make up more than one in five U.S. undergraduates. Colleges need basic information about the experiences and outcomes of the student parents they serve, since these students face distinct challenges, including high rates of economic insecurity and significant time and caregiving demands that can affect their educational outcomes (Institute for Women's Policy Research and Ascend at the Aspen Institute 2019).

Despite the large numbers of college students with children and their unique needs, most campuses, state data systems, and national higher education datasets do not count students with children or document their progress toward completion. Data on students' parent status would help campuses, higher education systems, and policymakers assess needs, target supports and services, understand student outcomes, and measure what works to promote student parent enrollment, persistence, and completion. Such information can also be critical to understanding changes in enrollment and graduation rates during times of social and economic upheaval, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

KEYS TO IMPROVING DATA ON STUDENT PARENTS:

- **Add mechanisms for measuring parent status to new and existing data collection systems at the national, state, and institutional levels.**

- **Disaggregate data by parent status, in addition to variables such as gender, race, and ethnicity, when measuring and reporting in student outcomes.**

Collecting basic data on whether students have dependent children, and the ages of those children, can be done in a variety of ways and at varying times throughout a student's college career. Data can be collected through admissions forms, in surveys during course registration, and as a part of standard data collection and reporting required by state and federal higher education systems. Some colleges may also wish to collect more intensive data on caregiving demands and available supports through longer surveys or qualitative research.

This briefing paper discusses why data on student parents are critical to increasing equity in college outcomes, and reviews existing and potential new data sources on undergraduate college students with children. It also provides recommendations for improving data collection efforts around parent status, including examples of how these data can be collected by institutions of higher education.

THE CASE FOR BETTER DATA ON STUDENT PARENTS

The lack of data on students with children creates an unfortunate blind spot in colleges' ability to improve student outcomes.

Students with children are much less likely to complete college than other students, with just 37 percent graduating with a certificate or a degree within six years of enrollment, compared with nearly 60 percent of students without children (Institute for Women's Policy Research and Ascend at the Aspen Institute 2019; Institute for Women's Policy Research 2020).[1] They often face obstacles related to child care, time poverty, and economic insecurity that can disrupt their postsecondary journeys. Given the striking association between parent status and a student's likelihood of success, as well as evidence that key supports can improve student parents' chances of success, the lack of data on students with children creates an unfortunate blind spot in colleges' ability to improve student outcomes (Chase-Lansdale et al. 2019; DeMario 2017; Evans et al. 2017; Goldrick-Rab et al. 2016; Hess et al. 2014).

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[1] Student parents are students who provide most of the care for a child or children They may be biological parents, stepparents, adoptive parents, foster parents, grandparents, or siblings.

> **Students of color—especially Black, American Indian, Alaska Native, and Latina women, and women who identify as 'more than one race'—are more likely to be raising children than White and Asian students, linking student parent success to broader goals of racial/ethnic equity.**

Most student parents are women; and many of them are single mothers balancing parenting, school, and often work, without the support of a spouse or partner (Institute for Women's Policy Research and Ascend at the Aspen Institute 2019). Because women must attain higher levels of education than their male counterparts to earn family-sustaining wages, student mothers' success in higher education is integral to their ability to support their families (Hegewisch et al. 2016).

Students of color—especially Black, Native American, Alaska Native, and Latina women, and women who identify as 'more than one race'—are more likely to be raising children than White and Asian students, making student parent success critical to achieving racial/ethnic equity (Institute for Women's Policy Research and Ascend at the Aspen Institute 2019). Finally, student parents' postsecondary attainment improves the well-being and success of their children and future generations and improves economic outcomes for society more broadly through poverty reduction and increased tax contributions, among other benefits (Attewell and Lavin 2007; Dubow, Boxer, and Huesmann 2009; Reardon 2011; Reichlin Cruse et al. 2019).

Data reflecting the experiences of student parents are essential to designing policy and practice that can improve their college enrollment, persistence, and completion, and to promoting progress toward more equitable higher education outcomes. Awareness of the number of students with children can help colleges determine whether they need stronger partnerships with community-based child care providers, for example, or need to develop enhanced student supports targeted toward students with caregiving responsibilities. Evaluating completion outcomes among student parents, along with measures of students' racial/ethnic backgrounds, can also help identify the role that parenthood may play in driving racial/ethnic differences in college attainment. Few data sources, however, collect information on college students' parent status or caregiving demands.

EXISTING AND POTENTIAL NEW SOURCES OF DATA ON STUDENT PARENTS

Most postsecondary data collection and/or reporting efforts — including most public and private national, state and institutional data collection efforts — lack data on students with children, This section reviews existing data sources and systems that measure parent status and identifies sources that do not currently collect data on student parents but could add questions to reflect their experiences. Examples of how some existing surveys and data collection tools collect information on and define students' parent status are provided in the appendix. In many cases, adding or improving data on student parents would require relatively little effort and expense, and could build on successful individual examples described below.

FEDERAL DATA SOURCES

Several federal data systems collect data from higher education institutions to report at the federal level in the aggregate.[2] Though these datasets collect data on a variety of student characteristics, most do not collect data on students' parent status.

The Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data System

The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), the largest federal data source describing the U.S. postsecondary education system, lacks data on students' parent status. Administered by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) at the U.S. Department of Education, IPEDS releases annual aggregate data reported by every institution that receives federal financial aid, which includes over 7,500 colleges and universities (National Center for Education Statistics n.d.).

While some IPEDS data are disaggregated by key characteristics such as race and ethnicity, gender, age, and military or veteran status, no data are collected on parent status. Adding data on parent status to regularly collected and released IPEDS data would allow postsecondary education systems and institutions to measure and understand progress in serving student parents.

Nationally Representative NCES Data on Parent Status

In addition to IPEDS, NCES publishes data from nationally representative sample surveys, including the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS), and the Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study (B&B). These surveys collect data on whether a student has a dependent child, the age of the youngest child, and monthly expenditures on child care (see the appendix for survey question language).

Data from the NPSAS can be used to calculate the share of students who are parents (22 percent of all undergraduates as of 2015-16), and to explore the characteristics of student

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[2] In addition to federally funded postsecondary data systems, there are several federal data systems that can be used to identify and report on student parents at the national level that are not focused on postsecondary education. IWPR has used the American Time Use Survey, for example, to measure the time demands single mothers in college face (Reichlin Cruse et al. 2018).

parents compared with other students at the national level. BPS data allow analysis of student parent completion rates (18 percent of parents graduate with a bachelor's or associate degree within six years as of 2017; Institute for Women's Policy Research 2020). The B&B provides data on student parents who graduated from four-year institutions, at the time of graduation and one, four, and ten years after.

These NCES datasets allow for data on students with children to be disaggregated by key characteristics, including race/ethnicity, gender, age, and poverty status, among many other variables. While these data are essential to understanding the student parent population nationally, they are not representative at the state level, are collected from only a subset of students at Title IV institutions, and are collected and reported at infrequent intervals (every four years for the NPSAS and every six years for the BPS).

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid Provides Partial Information on Parent Status

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) collects information on whether a student has dependent children. Question 51 of the 2019-2020 FAFSA asks respondents if they have or will have children who will receive more than half of their support from the respondent between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020.

A college's institutional research or financial aid office can analyze and share aggregate FAFSA data to estimate the number of students with children in order to provide important insight into the needs of a student body. Colleges rarely utilize their FAFSA data, however, to quantify and understand the needs of students with children. Some may not have been aware that the data could be used in this way, and some express concern that sharing even aggregate data might infringe on student privacy and conflict with laws such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). At a minimum, colleges could refer to the data for their own internal planning and strategic purposes, as they often do to understand the overall financial needs of their student bodies.

FAFSA data are limited, however, in that they only reflect students who qualify for federal financial aid and complete the application (research finds that one in seven students eligible for aid through the FAFSA do not complete it; Kofoed 2015). The FAFSA form also does not ask for information on ages of children. Despite these limitations, FAFSA data can provide at least a minimum estimate of the number of parents on campuses, which may often be higher than administrators expect.

STATE DATA SOURCES

State postsecondary data systems, which vary widely across the country, can make important contributions to programs and policies by collecting and reporting data on student parent status. Few state postsecondary systems currently collect and report data on student parents; those who do are described below.

> **Washington State's Board of Community and Technical Colleges collects data on family status, including whether a student is a married parent, a single parent, or is not a parent, on registration forms.**

Washington State Data on Parent Status

Washington State's Board of Community and Technical Colleges collects data on family status, including whether a student is a married parent, a single parent, or not a parent, on registration forms (see the appendix for question wording; Gault, Reichlin Cruse, and Schumacher 2019).

Using data collected from the Washington State Board of Community and Technical Colleges, the Institute for Women's Policy Research found that in 2014-15, 23 percent of Washington's community and technical college students were raising children (Reichlin Cruse, Eckerson, and Gault 2017). Advocates and policymakers used the data to make the case that Washington State should remove its unusually strict work requirements and degree limitations for Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funding.

The Technical College System of Georgia Data on Parent Status

The Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) includes a voluntary question about single parent status on its entrance surveys, in addition to referring to FAFSA data to help identify other students with dependent caregiving responsibilities who may not be captured by the survey (see the appendix for the entrance survey question).[3] TCSG uses these data to

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[3] Personal communication with Derek Dabrowiak, Executive Director, Student Affairs, Technical College System of Georgia, on July 1, 2019.

help colleges staff reach out to student parents to share information on supportive services. Single-parent status is also recorded as part of the student record, and aggregate data on educational outcomes for single parents are reviewed yearly as part of the college's Perkins grant benchmarks and scorecard preparation. Through this process, student parent outcomes are reported alongside outcomes and benchmarks for other student groups.[4]

Monroe Community College in Rochester, NY, collects information on students' parent status through a required survey that students complete once each semester during course registration.

INSTITUTIONAL DATA COLLECTION

Some institutions collect data on student parents. Monroe Community College (MCC) in Rochester, NY, for example, collects information on students' parent status through a required survey that students complete once each semester during course registration (see the appendix for the survey questions). Using these data, MCC has been able to evaluate the effects of supports for student parents. Combining data on parent status with data recorded by the on-campus child care center on students' use of the center, as well as college outcomes and National Student Clearinghouse data, MCC found that using campus child care significantly improves student parents' postsecondary outcomes (DeMario 2017; Reichlin Cruse et al. 2018).

Oregon State University (OSU), starting in fall of the 2019-2020 academic year, asks incoming students if they are the parent of a dependent child and how many dependent children they have under the age of 12. OSU's Family Resources Center uses this data for proactive outreach to connect incoming student parents with on-campus resources and supports.[5]

STUDENT PARENT SURVEYS AND FOCUS GROUPS

Understanding the perspectives of student parents in institutional change efforts is essential to their effectiveness. Focus groups, interviews, and surveys exploring the experiences of student parents, in addition to administrative data, can build understanding of the specific supports and resources students need. Several colleges have conducted surveys and focus groups to take into account the student voice as a part of campus improvement efforts.

Survey research to understand the experiences of single mother students has been utilized by the community colleges participating Education Design Lab's Single Moms Success Design Challenge. These colleges, including Delgado Community College (New Orleans, LA), Ivy Tech Community College (Indiana), Monroe Community College (Rochester, NY), and Central

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[4] Personal communication with Derek Dabrowiak, Executive Director, Student Affairs, Technical College System of Georgia, on July 1, 2019.
[5] Personal communication with Kristi King, Student Family Coordinator, Family Resource Center, Oregon State University, on June 25, 2019.
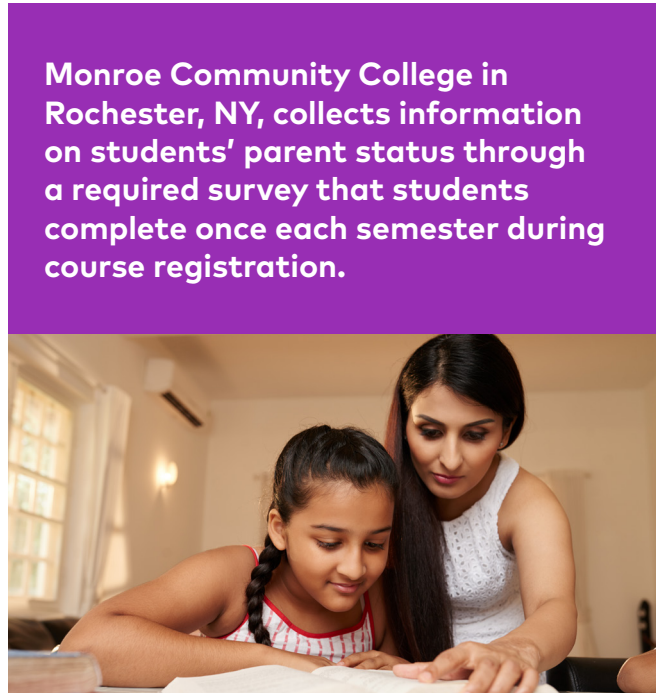
> **Including the stories and perspectives of student parents in institutional change efforts is essential. Qualitative data collection on the experiences of student parents, in addition to quantitative data, is necessary to creating a full understanding of the supports and resources these students need.**

New Mexico Community College (Albuquerque, NM), are working with Education Design Lab to design and scale strategies to improve success rates for single mothers. The Lab's four-stage process emphasizes qualitative research along with survey data to understand the experiences of single mothers (Education Design Lab 2019). All four colleges fielded and analyzed data from a tailored campus-wide single mother survey, findings from which are informing their design of an intervention to support this student population and ultimately improve their outcomes by 2024.

The Family Friendly Campus Toolkit, produced by the Program Evaluation and Research Group (PERG) at Endicott College, provides guidance to institutions on how to collect data about and from student parents and how these data can be used to improve the availability of services to help them succeed, as well as tools for data collection.[6] The Toolkit recommends that institutions work with the campus institutional research, financial aid, and student affairs offices to collect and analyze data on student parents. It also includes a sample student survey instrument and focus group guidance to facilitate original data collection (see the appendix for survey questions pertaining to parent status). The toolkit has been implemented by several institutions, including the University of California, Los Angeles, Kent State University, and Mount Wachusett Community College (Endicott College n.d.). Over the next three years, from 2020 through 2022, the National College Transition Network is partnering with Achieving the Dream and PERG to assist eight additional community colleges in identifying the needs of their single mother students and develop a plan to support them, using the Family Friendly Campus Toolkit.

The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) also has a survey instrument, which has informed and been utilized by a number of institutions and researchers around the country, such as Sonoma State University and a researcher at George Mason University. IWPR's survey instrument was also fielded by IWPR researchers at community colleges in Mississippi to better understand the experiences, needs, and motivations of women community college students, including mothers; findings from this survey were published in a 2014 report, *Securing a Better Future: A Portrait of Female Students in Mississippi's Community Colleges* (Hess et al. 2014).

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[6] The Family Friendly Campus Toolkit can be accessed at: https://www.endicott.edu/family-friendly-campus-toolkit.

> **The Family Friendly Campus Toolkit... provides guidance to institutions on how to collect data about and from student parents and how these data can be used to improve the availability of services to help them succeed.**

INDEPENDENT NONPROFIT SURVEYS AND DATA COLLECTION

A few private non-profit institutions and research organizations collect data on students in higher education, with some including data on students with children, and others still missing data on students with children. Major independent data efforts that are collecting data on parent status include the Community College and National Surveys of Student Engagement, and the #RealCollege Survey.

Data on Caregiving Responsibilities from Surveys of Student Engagement

The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), administered through the Center for Community College Student Engagement at the Program in Higher Education Leadership at the University of Texas at Austin, provides an assessment of institutional practices and student behaviors that are correlated with student learning and retention. The survey is only administered at CCSSE member institutions (the 2019 CCSSE cohort included 616 community colleges from 48 states). CCSSE reports data at the national level; disaggregated data at the institution-level are available for institutions who pay to participate.

The CCSSE asks respondents several questions about dependent care, including whether students are providing care for a dependent living with them (such as parents, children, a spouse, etc.); if they have a child living with and depending on them for care; how likely dependent care is to cause them to withdraw from school; and how many hours per week they spend caring for dependents (see the appendix for exact wording of survey questions; Community College Survey of Student Engagement n.d.).

While these questions provide important information on students with care responsibilities, they could be strengthened to clarify which students are parents. The questions do not ask students to specify what type of dependent care the student provides (e.g., care for a spouse, parent, grandparent, or child), for example, which is important since support needed by a student caring for an elderly grandparent are probably very different than those needed by a student caring for a young child. While respondents do report whether they have a child living

with them, the wording of this question allows for broad interpretation. Students who answer yes may be caring for a child of their own or may be assisting with care of a child that is not their own (e.g., a student who lives with their parents and sibling and helps provide care for the sibling).

The addition of a question on the CCSSE that asks respondents whether or not they have a dependent who relies on them for the majority of their care, disaggregated by type of dependent (e.g. dependents under the age of 18, elderly dependents, etc.), would provide institutions with information on the number of parents and other student caregivers on campus, their dependent care obligations, and how the campus could better support them. For example, while almost half (49 percent) of 2019 CSSE respondents said that dependent care was somewhat likely, likely, or very likely to cause them to drop out, institutions would be better equipped to address this problem if they had additional information on the type of dependent care a student provides (Institute for Women's Policy Research 2019).

The sister survey of the CCSSE, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) administered at four-year institutions, asks students how many hours they spend in a typical week providing care for dependents (parents, children, etc.). The addition of a question about the type of dependent care a student provides, in addition to the questions that are currently on the CCSSE, would help institutions understand and support their student parent population.

#RealCollege Survey Data on Student Parents

The Hope Center for Community, College, and Justice administers the #RealCollege Survey, the largest annual survey focused on basic needs security among college students nationwide. The #RealCollege survey includes data on students' parent status (more detail on the survey's collection of data on parent status can be found in the appendix). Like the CCSSE, the #RealCollege Survey is conducted at the institutional level and reported publicly in aggregate at the national level. More than 200 institutions (171 community colleges and 56 four-year institutions) and nearly 167,000 students participated in the survey administered in the fall of 2019 (Baker-Smith et al. 2020).

The survey measures student parents' housing and food insecurity disaggregated by several demographic variables including age, race/ethnicity, citizenship status, gender identity and sexual orientation, and parent status. Additional data on students' need for and cost of child care, their mental health needs and experiences, and their need for transportation, were also collected for the first time in the 2019 survey (Baker-Smith et al. 2020; Goldrick-Rab, Welton, and Coca 2020).

Though the #RealCollege Survey is not administered at all institutions, it provides important and unique insight into the needs of student parents, filling gaps in available federal data. The 2019 survey found, for example, that students with children are more likely to experience food and housing insecurity than students without children (53 percent of student parents report food insecurity and 68 percent report housing insecurity as of the fall of 2019; Baker-Smith et al. 2020). The survey also found that about half of parenting students who use child care are paying more than $100 dollars a week for it and that about three in four of these parents find that amount unaffordable (Goldrick-Rab, Welton, and Coca 2020).

INTEGRATING STUDENT PARENT INFORMATION INTO POSTSECONDARY DATA INITIATIVES

A number of working groups and organizations are engaged in initiatives to improve postsecondary data collection and tracking. As these efforts progress and evolve, they must consider how data collection can be improved to provide better insight into the population of students who are parents.

Including student-parent outcomes as a part of college equity metrics is essential to closing gaps in college access and completion and would further progress toward a range of equity goals, given how likely student parents are to overlap with traditionally marginalized student groups.

Several higher education organizations and associations, such as the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP), Achieving the Dream, and the National Student Clearinghouse, have developed recommendations to improve higher education data collection. Funded primarily by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Lumina Foundation, IHEP reviews data improvement efforts and provides a curated compilation of recommended performance, efficiency, and equity measures. IHEP recommends that data systems disaggregate postsecondary student performance data by key demographic variables to quantify and track the differential experiences of underserved populations in higher education that may be "invisible" in currently available data (Janice and Voight 2016).

To measure and track equity, IHEP recommends that performance and efficiency measures be broken down according to students' levels of academic preparation, economic status, first-generation status, program of study, race and ethnicity, gender, and age (Janice and Voight 2016). Including data on student parent outcomes as a part of college equity metrics is essential to closing gaps in college access and completion, and would further progress toward a range of equity goals, given that parenting is especially common among students with low incomes and those who identify as Black, Latinx, and Native American, who have traditionally lacked access to postsecondary education.

LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS TO COLLECT DATA ON STUDENTS

National and state policymakers can also advocate for better data to advance more accessible postsecondary education through legislative efforts. Several recent proposals have advocated for improved postsecondary data collection, with some including required data collection on student parents.

Federal Policy

At the federal level, the College Equity Act (S.B. 943), introduced in 2019 by Senator Brian Schatz (Hawaii) and Representative Donna Shalala (Florida), would provide funding for colleges to conduct "equity audits," or internal reviews of policies, practices, and resources, to help identify causes of gaps in outcomes by gender, race and ethnicity, income, disability, and student parent status. To conduct these audits, institutions would need to collect data on each of the equity metrics, including parent status. If passed, this bill would also provide institutions with funds to make improvements based on the results of the equity audit.

The College Transparency Act (S.B. 800 and H.R.1766), introduced in 2019 by a bipartisan group of legislators in the U.S. House and Senate, would create a federal privacy-protected and secure postsecondary data system that would be disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and income status. This bill does not include language on including parent status.

State Policy

California Governor Gavin Newsom signed Senate Bill 75 (the 2019-20 Education Omnibus Budget Trailer Bill) into law in June 2019. This bill includes the appropriation of $10 million dollars in one-time funding to develop the "Cradle-to-Career Data System," a statewide preschool-through-college longitudinal data system. The design and creation of the data system will be led by a working group of representatives from education, workforce, health, and other relevant agencies. The bill stipulates that by the fall of 2020, community colleges and California State University (CSU) will be required to use a common, statewide student identifier. The University of California (UC) system is requested to use the student identifier.

The purpose of the data system is to help California analyze and address disparities in opportunities to improve outcomes for all students. The legislation required the working group to report, by July 1, 2020, how the data system will allow data to be disaggregated by race, ethnicity, region, gender, military status, parents' education, and age, though the workgroup may opt to include additional metrics, such as parent status (California S.B. 75).

Oregon's S.B. 794, "Relating to student demographic data at post-secondary institutions of education," was introduced in 2019. This bill would require the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) to design a question to be placed on the admissions forms of all public higher education institutions allowing students to self-identify as a parent or legal guardian for demographic purposes. Though this legislation has yet to pass, Oregon State University (OSU) opted to include questions on parent status on its admission forms regardless of the success of S.B. 794.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING DATA ON STUDENT PARENTS

Better data would allow institutions to help student parents navigate the complexity of their lives and support their educational ambitions. Data should capture whether a student has primary responsibility for a dependent child or children, and the ages of their children. The following recommendations provide guidance for ensuring that postsecondary data capture the unique needs and experiences of students with children.

- **National data collection systems should collect and report data on student parent status.** Specifically, the Department of Education should require all Title IV institutions to collect data on parent status and report this data annually to IPEDS. Other data collection initiatives, such as the National Student Clearinghouse, which collect data on enrollment, persistence, and completion, could also include parent status as one of its metrics.

- **State data collection systems, including those that document and measure student equity and success, should collect data on students with dependent children and report those data internally and externally.**

- **Institutions should collect, analyze, and report data on the number of student parents and single parents that they serve, apply the information to provide tailored services to these students, and use it to assess student parents' postsecondary pathways and success.** Institutions can do this by adding questions to regular data collection methods, analyzing de-identified aggregate FAFSA data on students with dependents, and conducting original research through surveys and focus groups.

- **New national and state higher education data collection initiatives should include data on student-parent access and outcomes as important equity metrics.**

- **Student success initiatives, such as "free" college programs, early alert systems, and accelerated programs, should collect and disaggregate data by parent status.**[7] These data would help target services to those with profound economic and time demands, and help educators to understand the unique effects that interventions have on student parents who are juggling caregiving and school.

Understanding students with children and their outcomes is essential to closing college enrollment and completion gaps through improved policy and practice. Even simple changes to existing data collection and reporting would help make parents visible on campus and acknowledge the crucial role that caregiving plays in their access to college opportunity and success. As colleges make structural changes to adapt to economic and public health disruptions, understanding the student parent experience is especially important to ensuring that new strategies keep college accessible to students who are raising children.

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[7] For example, the Accelerated Study in Associate Program (ASAP) Ohio initiative evaluation report, by MDRC, discussed student demographics that included parent status (McKenzie 2018; Miller et al. 2020).

APPENDIX. EXAMPLES OF STUDENT PARENT DATA COLLECTION

The following questions are examples of how existing surveys and data collection tools collect information on students' parent status. These examples can serve as reference for those interested in adding survey questions about parent status to their current data collection efforts.

NATIONAL POSTSECONDARY STUDENT AID STUDY (NPSAS)
The NPSAS, run by the National Center for Education Statistics, is the main data source used to describe student parents nationally.

- Do you have any children who received more than half of their support from you between July 1, 2015 and June 30, 2016? [Y/N]

- How many children received more than half of their support from you between July 1, 2015 and June 30, 2016? [open ended]

- How old is your youngest dependent child? [select age]

- How many of your dependent children were in childcare that you paid for during the 2015-2016 school year? [open ended]

- Was your child in childcare that you paid for during the 2015-2016 school year? [Y/N]

- In the 2015-2016 school year, how much (on average) did you pay each month for childcare? Indicate only the amount for which you were responsible each month. [open ended]

FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID (FAFSA)
While utilized to determine how much financial aid a student receives, colleges can use anonymous aggregate FAFSA data to estimate the number of students with dependents that are served by the campus.

- Question 51 from the 2019-2020 FAFSA form:
  Do you now have or will you have children who will receive more than half of their support from you between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020? [Y/N]

WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGES
Washington State's community and technical college system is one of the only state systems that collects data on students' parent status.

- Family status is collected on the student registration form. Students are asked to check whether the following descriptors apply to them: "single parent," "couple with children," "without children or dependents," and "other." They do not ask about age of children or anything else related to parent status.

THE TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM OF GEORGIA
Georgia's Technical College System includes a voluntary question about single parent status on their entrance surveys.

- [Check if yes] **Single Parent**: Are you a person who has primary or joint custody of a dependent minor child? Are you divorced, widowed, legally separated, never married, or a person who is single and pregnant?

MONROE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Monroe Community College administers a survey of students, which includes questions on students' parent status and ages of their children, at course registration each semester.

- Which one of the following statements applies to you?
  [A] I have children who are age 5 and younger and/or I'm expecting a baby
  [B] I have children who are age 6-18
  [C] I have children who are in both of the above age groups
  [D] I don't have any children in the above age groups
  [E] Prefer not to answer

THE FAMILY FRIENDLY CAMPUS TOOLKIT
The Family Friendly Campus Toolkit provides institutions with sample survey questions that can be used to collect data on their student parent population. Below are several questions excerpted from their survey template.

- Are you pregnant, a parent (with at least part time custody) or guardian (officially or unofficially) of a dependent child? [Y/N]

- How many dependent children do you have?
  [A] 1
  [B] 2
  [C] 3
  [D] 4
  [E] 5+

- What are the ages of your dependent children? (check all that apply)
  [A] Pregnant or expecting
  [B] 0-23 months
  [C] 2-5 years
  [D] 6-10 years
  [E] 10-18 years
  [F] Over 18 but still dependent

- Do you consider yourself a single parent? [Y/N]

COMMUNITY COLLEGE SURVEY OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT (CCSSE)
The CCSSE provides an assessment of institutional practices and student behaviors that are correlated with student learning and retention, including dependent care.

- About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing the following?[8]
  Providing care for dependents living with you (parents, children, spouse, etc.)
  [A] None
  [B] 1-5
  [C] 6-10
  [D] 11-20
  [E] 21-30
  [F] More than 30

- How likely is it that the following issue would cause you to withdraw from class or from this college?
  Caring for dependents
  [A] Very likely
  [B] Likely
  [C] Somewhat likely
  [D] Not likely

- Do you have children who live with you and depend on you for their care? [Y/N]

THE HOPE CENTER FOR COMMUNITY, COLLEGE, AND JUSTICE #REALCOLLEGE SURVEY
The Hope Center for Community, College, and Justice administers the #RealCollege Survey, the largest annual survey focused on basic needs security among college students nationwide, which includes data on parenting students' needs. The below questions are not an exhaustive list of all the questions the #RealCollege survey asked parents.

- Are you the parent or guardian to any biological, adopted, step, or foster children who live in your household? [Y/N]

- Do you need, use, or plan to use childcare this year? [Y/N]

- "I can afford to pay for childcare."

  - Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Undecided
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree

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[8] This question is also included in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE).

- If on-campus childcare were offered and affordable, which form of childcare would you prioritize?

    - Afterschool
    - Half-day
    - Full-day
    - Sick care
    - Child care for children with special needs
    - None of the above

- How many days in the last semester were you absent from work or class due to childcare arrangements?

    - 0 days
    - 1-2 days
    - 3-5 days
    - 5 or more days

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