

# Adult Degree Completion Market Realities

*A Blueprint for Growth Analysis*

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# Using Zoom

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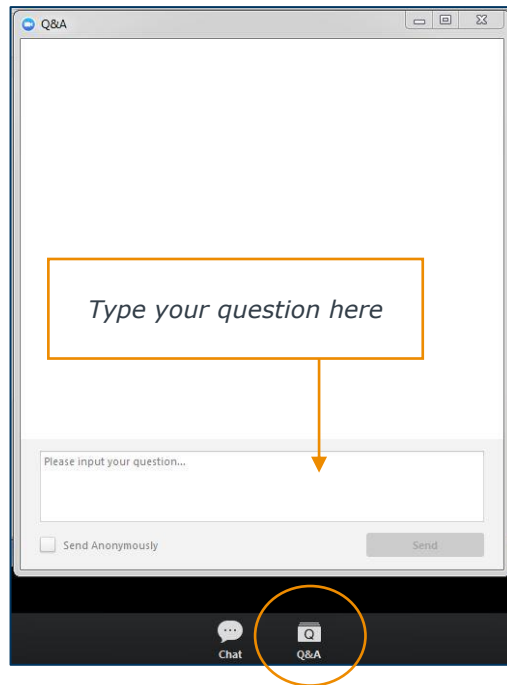
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# Today's Presenters



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➤ Support and graduate more students



➤ Prepare your institution for the future

- 1 **An Opportunity to Serve Degree Completers Amid an Economic Crisis**
- 2 Sizing the Degree Completion Market
- 3 The Path to Enrollment and Graduation

# Why Go Back to College?

## *Degree Completers' Perspectives*

“To be **an example to my kids**, both grandchildren and daughters. There's nobody in the family that has completed school up to now. Why not me? Maybe I'll be the first.”

*Male, PA*

“I'm working right now **but I've been looking for another job**. I had experience but I don't have that college degree which is a requirement. So that was the wake-up call for me.”

*Female, CA*



## AUDIENCE POLL

**Why is it important for your institution to serve  
adult degree completers?**

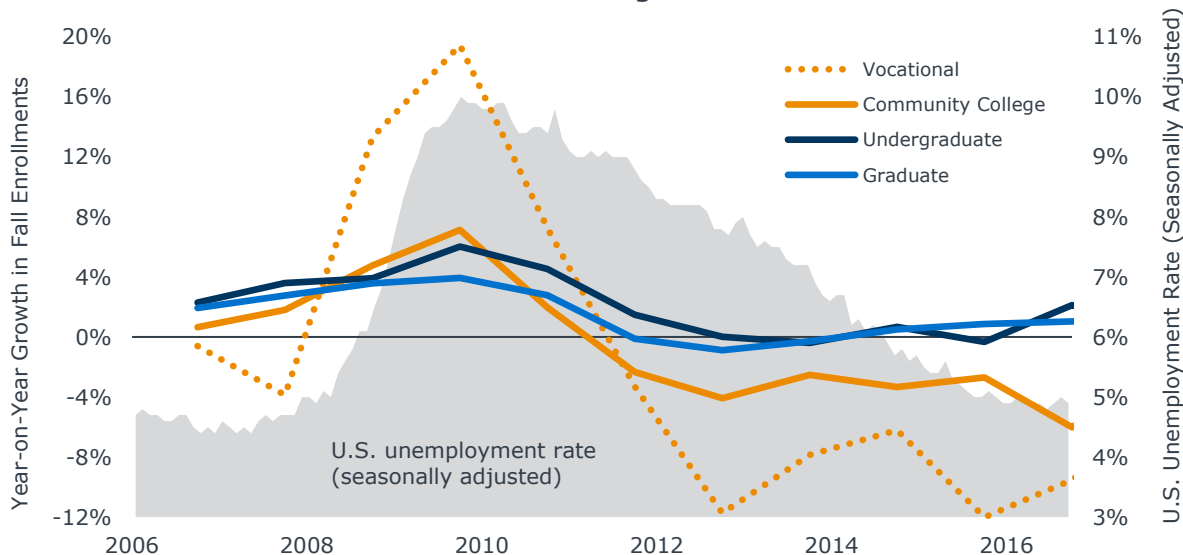
*Type your answer in the Chat box.*



# How Countercyclical is Higher Ed Enrollment?

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## Sub-Baccalaureate Market Grew the Most During the Last Recession



## But Countercyclical Enrollments Not a Given This Time Around



Unlikely to repeat '09 Pell expansion



Increase in high school dropouts



Workers may try to 'wait out' pandemic

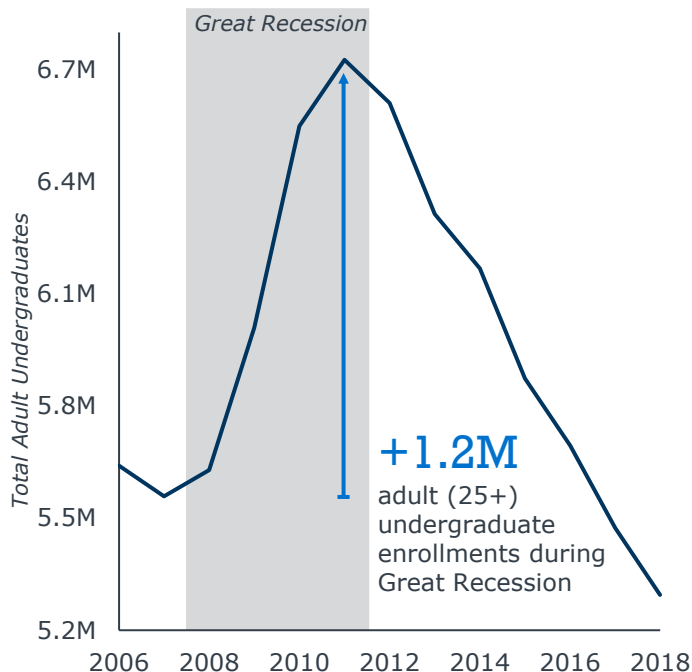
1) Includes all public 2-year institutions.  
2) Includes all less-than-2-year institutions and all private nonprofit and for-profit 2-year institutions.



# A Missed Opportunity in the Great Recession

## The Great Recession Led To A Historic Increase in Adult Undergrad Enrollments

Total adult undergraduate enrollments, 2006-18

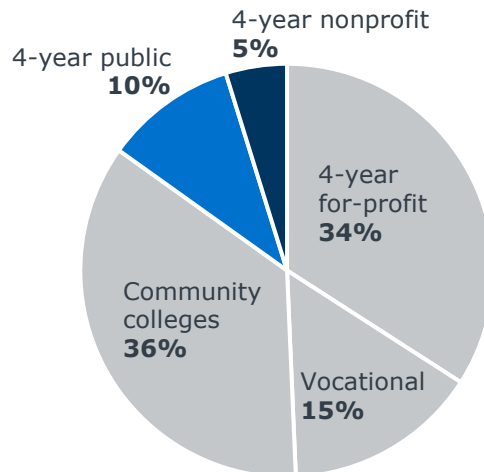


## ...But Most 4-Year Institutions Failed to Benefit

Share of 2007-11 enrollment increase by sector

15%

of increase went to 4-year public and private, non-profit institutions

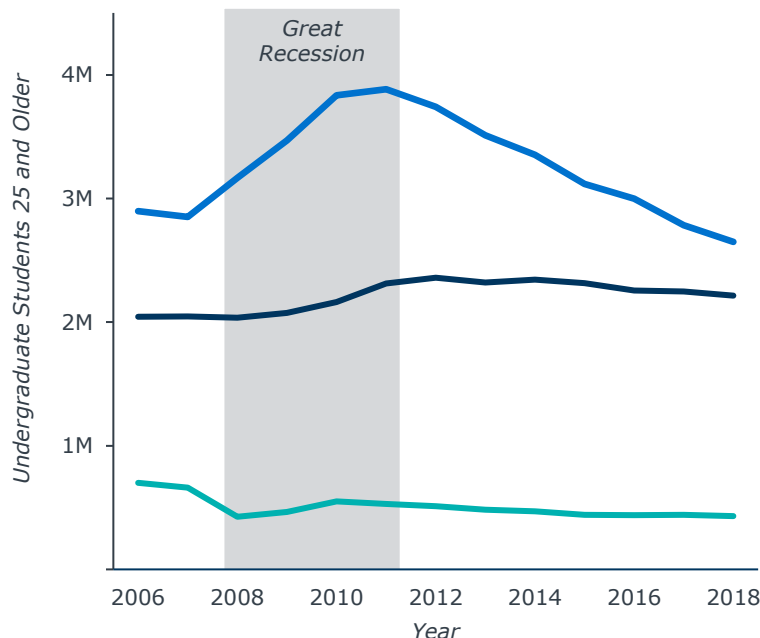


# Degree Completers Drove Countercyclical Growth

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## Adults with Some College, but No Degree Accounted for Nearly All of The Great Recession's Undergraduate Countercyclical Bump

*Reported educational attainment of undergraduate<sup>1</sup> students 25 years old or older*



### Some College, No Degree

- 36% increase from 2007-11
- Includes continuing students and returning stop-outs
- 82% have at least one year of prior college credit

### Degree Holders

- 64% held associate's degrees
- 33% held bachelor's degrees
- 4% held graduate degrees

### First Time Adult Students

- Numbers decreased in 2008 due to survey design changes

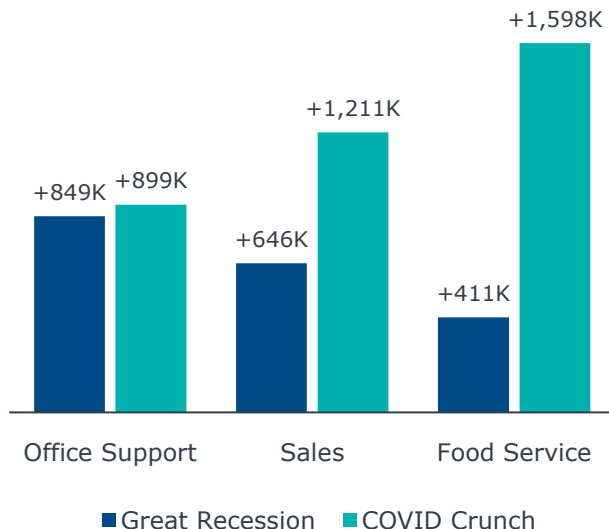
1) Because ACS data does not differentiate undergraduate instruction, these figures include students at 4-year, 2-year, and less than 2-year institutions.

# Could a Post-2020 Boom be Even Bigger?

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## Occupations that Drove Great Recession Boost Have Even Higher Unemployment Today

*Increase in unemployed workers by occupation<sup>1</sup>*



## What Enrollment Increase Might We Expect in 2020?

*Estimated<sup>2</sup> enrollment increase, if Great Recession trends repeat*

Office support **+127K**

Sales **+194K**

Food service **+294K**



**Will unemployed workers try to wait out Covid-19?**

**50%**

of laid-off workers<sup>3</sup> expect jobs to come back post-pandemic, or are already back at work

- 1) Great Recession (2011 vs 2007) & COVID Crunch (July 2020 vs 2019).
- 2) 90% prediction interval, linear regression of % change in unemployment and % change in adult undergraduate enrollment. Prediction intervals: office support: ±78K, sales: ±77K, food service: ±191K.
- 3) Or persons whose household includes someone who was laid off as a result of the pandemic. (n=232).

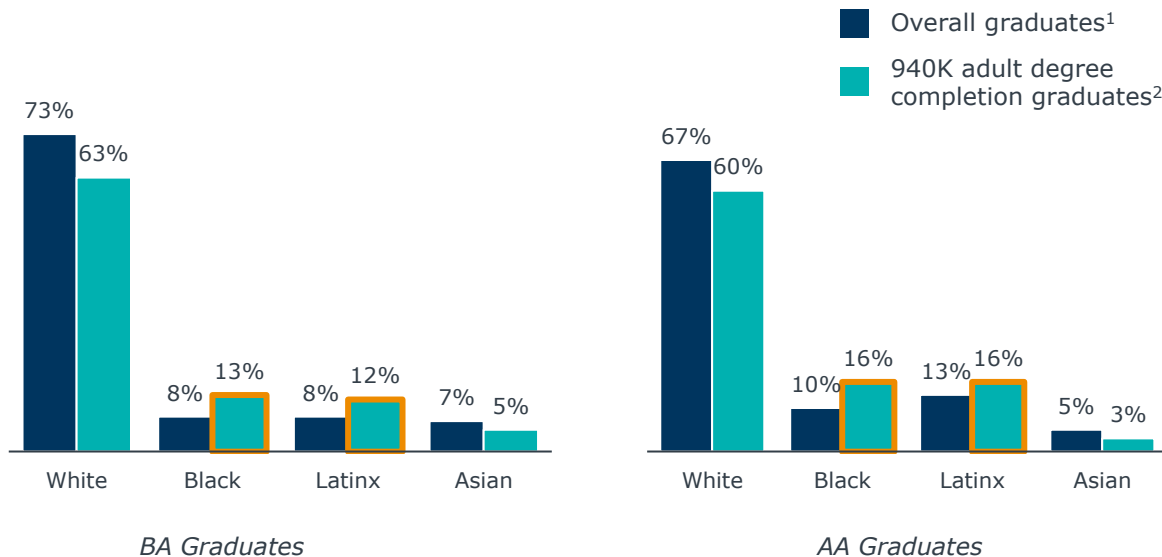
Source: Table 25: Unemployed Persons by Occupation and Sex, US Bureau of Labor Statistics; AP-NORC. "Economic Consequences of the Coronavirus Outbreak." August 25, 2020; EAB interviews and analysis.

# An Opportunity to Advance Racial Equity



## Degree Completion Graduates More Likely than Average to be Black, Latinx

*Race/ethnicity of all degree holders and actual degree completers, 2014-18*



1) National sample.

2) Out of the 29M adults with some credit and no degree identified in 2013.

1

An Opportunity to Serve Degree Completers Amid an Economic Crisis

2

**Sizing the Degree Completion Market**

3

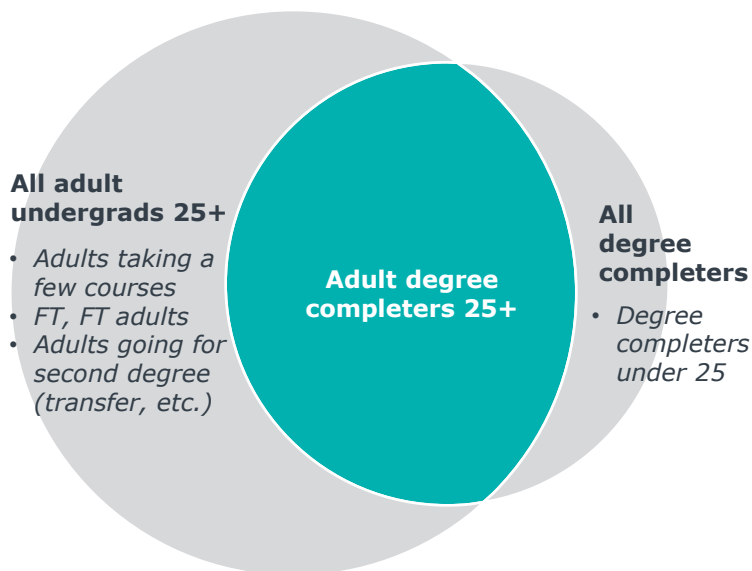
The Path to Graduation

# Understand the Adult Undergrad Landscape



## Two Overlapping Markets

*Our Best Guess at Market Size*



## Available Data Sources and Their Limitations

### IPEDS Fall Enrollment 2017

- One-time headcount of adult undergraduates 25+ by institution
- Last complete data collection on student age was in 2017

### NSC, *Some College, No Degree*, 2019

- Longitudinal study of degree completers 2014-18
- Includes data on degree completers' demographics, degree choices, and attendance patterns

# What Do We Mean by 'Degree Completers'?



## Two Different Definitions of 'Adult Degree Completer'

*Our focus for today*

### 1 Bachelor's Completers

- Age 25 or older
- Completing bachelor's degree or higher
- Attending 4-year university
- Prior associate's degree or transfer certificate

### 2 Some College, No Degree

- Age 25 or older
- Completing associate's or bachelor's degrees
- Attending 4-year university or 2-year college
- No prior degree or certificate of any kind

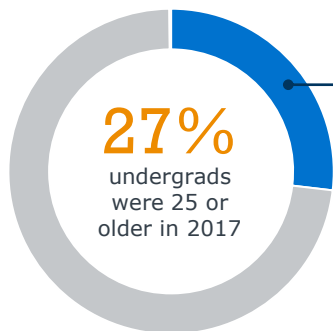


# Sizable Portion of Undergrads are 25 or Older



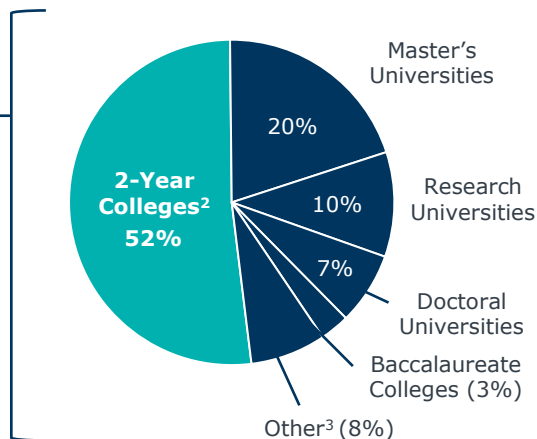
## One in Every Four Undergraduates is an Adult Student Age 25 or Older

Undergraduate students by age  
n=17,244,802 students, IPEDS 2017<sup>1</sup>



## Majority of Adult Undergrads 25 and Over Attend 2-Year Colleges

Adult undergraduates by institution level  
n=4,632,413 students, IPEDS 2017



**4.6M** people ages 25+ in undergrad programs

1) 2017 was the most recent year institutions were required to report students' age category. Less than 1% of students' ages were reported as unknown.

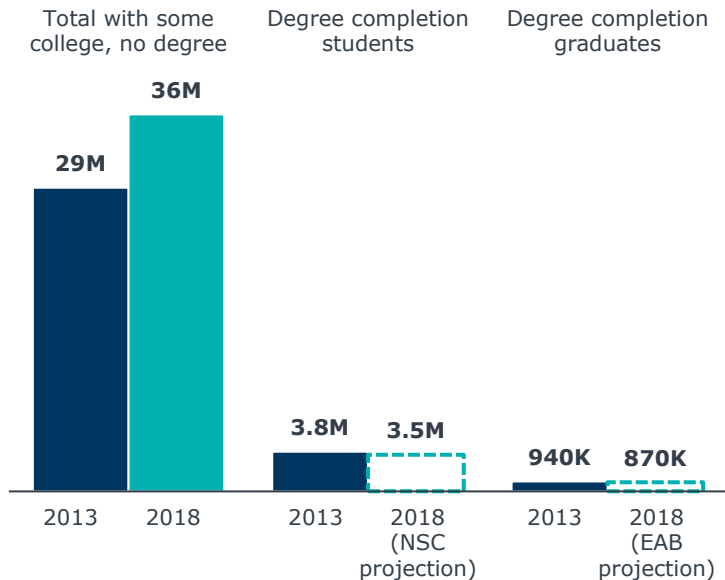
2) Includes institutions classified as Mixed Baccalaureate/Associate (most confer over 90% 2-year degrees) and Special Focus Two-Year institutions.

3) Includes institutions classified as Special Focus Four-Year, Nonaccredited/Nondegree, and Tribal Colleges.

# Understanding the Degree Completion Market

Among 35 Million Americans with Some College Credit, Few Likely to Return

## Most Americans with Some College Credit Never Return to Higher Ed



## Most Who Return are Recent Stopouts Near Completion

2x

more likely to re-enroll if they had **2+ terms of credit** from previous institution(s), vs. less credit

2x

more likely to re-enroll if last enrollment was **4-6 years prior**, vs. 7 or more years

+5%

more likely to enroll for **each previous institution** attended

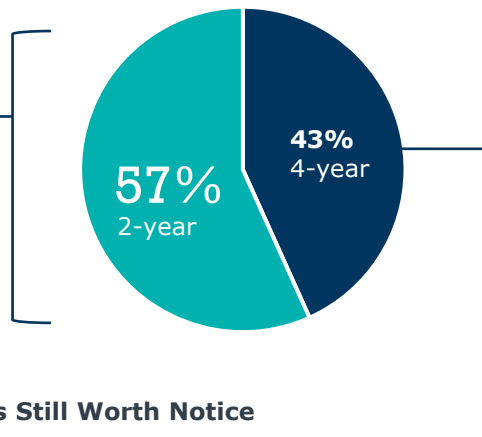
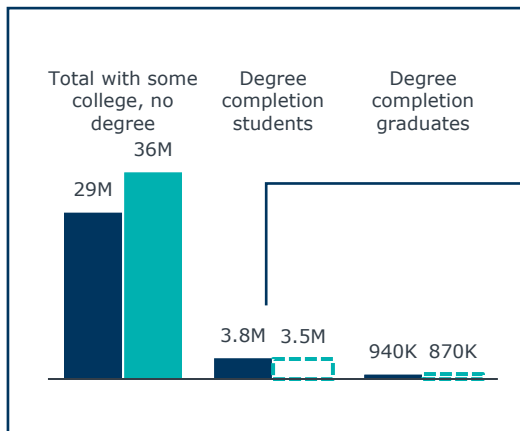
Source: Ryu, Mikyung. "Some College, No Degree". National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. 2019; National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. "Some College, No Degree: A 2019 Snapshot for the Nation and 50 States" report and appendix. 2019; EAB interviews and analysis.

# Majority of Degree Completers are 2-Year



## More than Half of Degree Completers Who Go Back to School Go to Community Colleges

Institution choices of 3.8M degree completion students, 2014-18



## ...But 4-Year Enrollment and Completion Numbers Still Worth Notice

**1.6M** degree completion **students** at 4-year universities between 2014-19

**530K** degree completion **graduates** from 4-year universities between 2014-19



# Completers Switch Institutions, Not Segments

## Completers Mostly 2-Year Stopouts Who Return to Finish at 2-Years

*Institutions attended by 3.4M degree completion students before and after re-enrollment*

*Where Last Enrolled*

*Where Re-enrolled*

*Public 2-year*



*Public 2-year*



*Public 4-year*



*Public 4-year*



*Private non-profit 4-year*



*Private non-profit 4-year*



*Primarily online<sup>1</sup>*



*Primarily online<sup>1</sup>*



*Private for-profit 4-year*



*Private for-profit 4-year*



**62%**

re-enrolled at a  
different institution  
from where they  
last enrolled

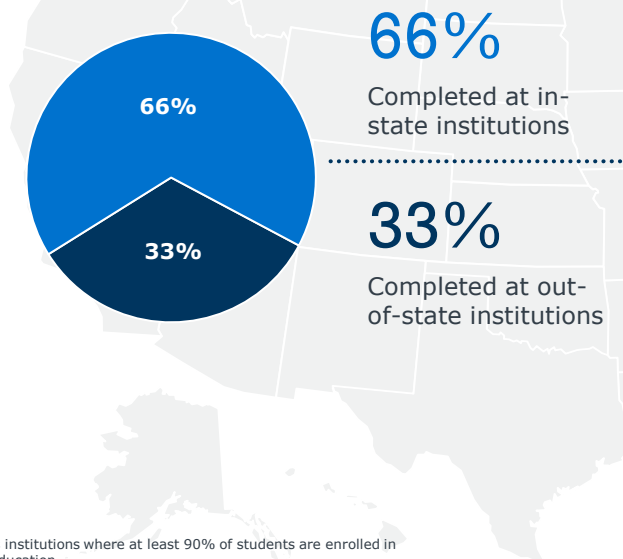
1) NSC considered institutions 'primarily online' when more than 90% of their students enrolled exclusively in distance education.

# Is Degree Completion a National Market?

Primarily a Regional Market, But More Online than Traditional Undergrad

## Most Completers Stay In State (Likely at Community Colleges)

940k degree completion  
graduates, by in-state status



## Undergrads 25 and Older Show Preference for Online

14x

more likely than traditional  
undergrads to attend **primarily  
online** institutions

8x

more likely to attend **majority  
online<sup>2</sup>** institutions

- 1) Defined as institutions where at least 90% of students are enrolled in distance education.
- 2) Defined as institutions where at least 50% of students are enrolled in distance education.

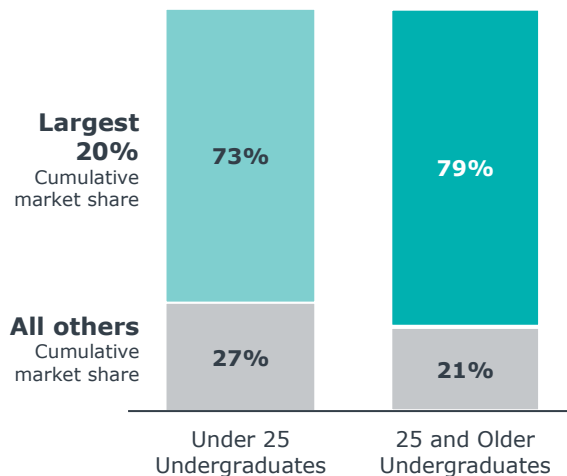
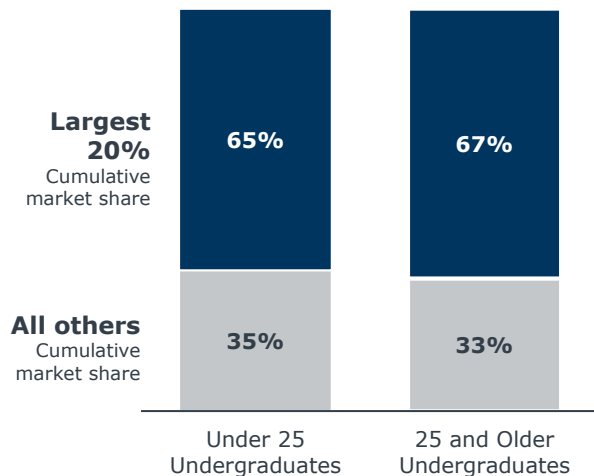
## 4-Years Face More Concentrated 25+ Market



### 2-Year Traditional and Degree Completion Markets Both Relatively Equitable

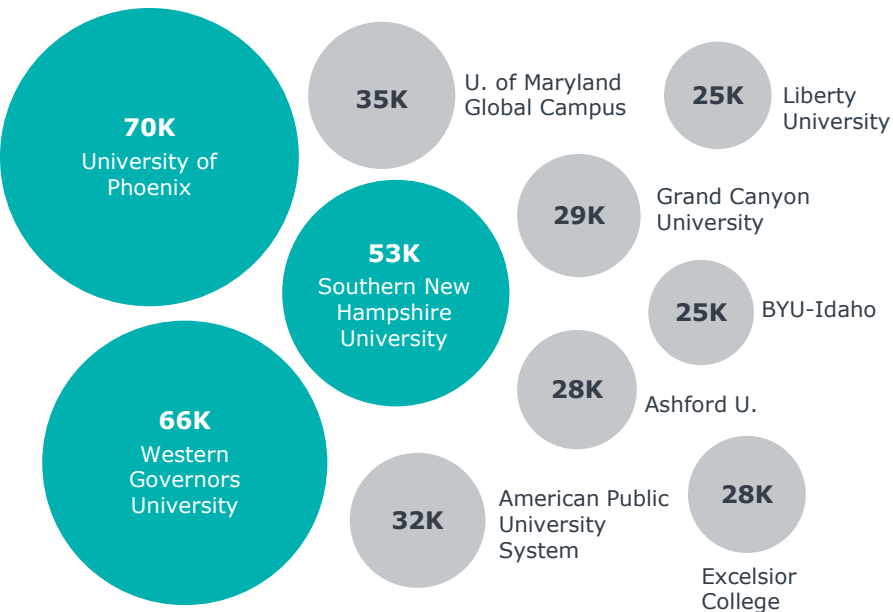
### 4-Year Degree Completion Market Much More Concentrated at the Top

*Percentage of total undergraduate enrollments at the largest 20% of institutions, 2017*



# Three Big Competitors Dominate the Market

Top 10 largest 4-year institutions by adult (25+) undergraduate enrollments (2017)<sup>1</sup>



## Giants Dwarf Rest of the 4-Year Adult Market

254

Median number of undergraduates 25 and over at 4-year institutions

## Achieving Scale by Targeting Adult Students

0

out of the three 'giants' is in top ten institutions in under-25 enrollments

Nearly **1 in 10** 4-year undergraduates age 25 and older attends Phoenix, SNHU, or WGU

<sup>1</sup>) Diameter of circle represents relative size of institution.

# Strategies to Get More Students in the Door

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## What Can Adult-Serving Institutions Teach Us About Maximizing Enrollments?

### Meet Students Where they Work



Place **onsite transfer counselors** at partner employers



**Sponsor degree completion** for students working at partner employers



**Map credit from employer training** to for-credit degree programs

### Simplify Transfer of Prior Credit



Use **online portals** to centralize all credit transfer resources



**Discount for-credit courses** for students in noncredit programs

### Remove Barriers to Credit Transfer



WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

**Pay off bursar holds** blocking transcript sharing from prior institutions (typically \$300 or less)



1

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**The Path to Graduation**

# How Degree Completers Choose a Program

## *Program Characteristics Most Important to Degree Completers*

n=1,010 U.S. degree completion prospects<sup>1</sup> ages 25-54

### Flexible and Customized



Degree completers seek flexible, customizable degree programs designed with their schedule and lifestyle in mind.

**61%**

Seek a customized plan or roadmap to help them complete their degree

### Online



Two-thirds of respondents intend to enroll in a program that allows them to complete some or all courses online.

**91%**

Will likely take courses that are offered online

### Enrolls Students Like Them



Degree completers want evidence that programs and institutions cater to students like them.

**67%**

Seek a program designed "for someone in my situation"

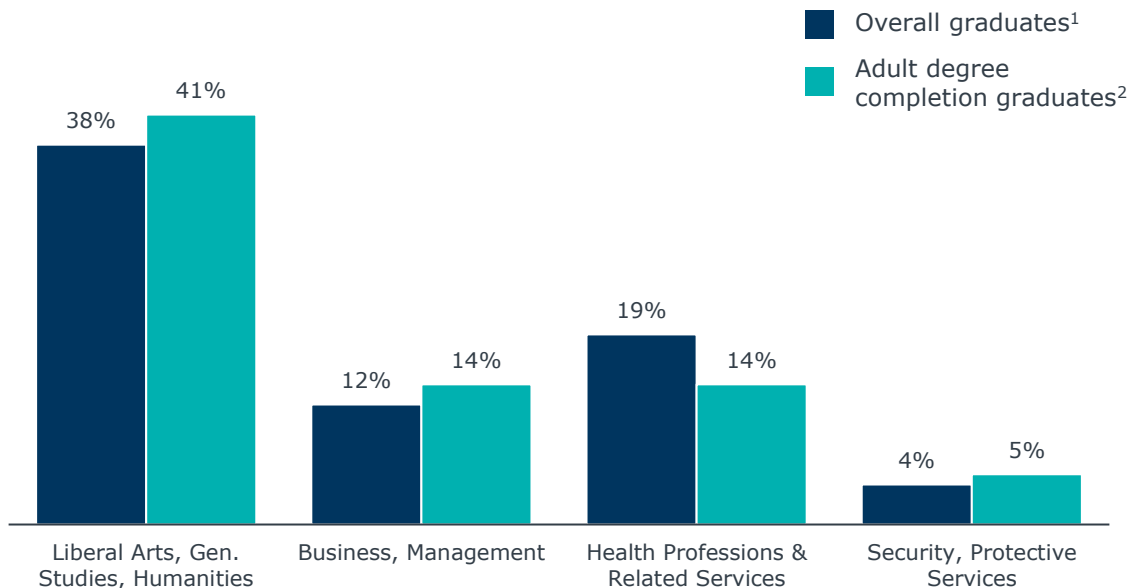
1) Survey of American adults without a prior bachelor's degree but interest in pursuing one; may include adults with associate's degrees and/or certificates.

# Not Choosing Career-Oriented Degrees



## AA Completers Even More Likely to Get Transfer Degrees Than FT Students

*Degrees earned by Americans overall and AA degree completion graduates, 2014-18*



1) National sample.

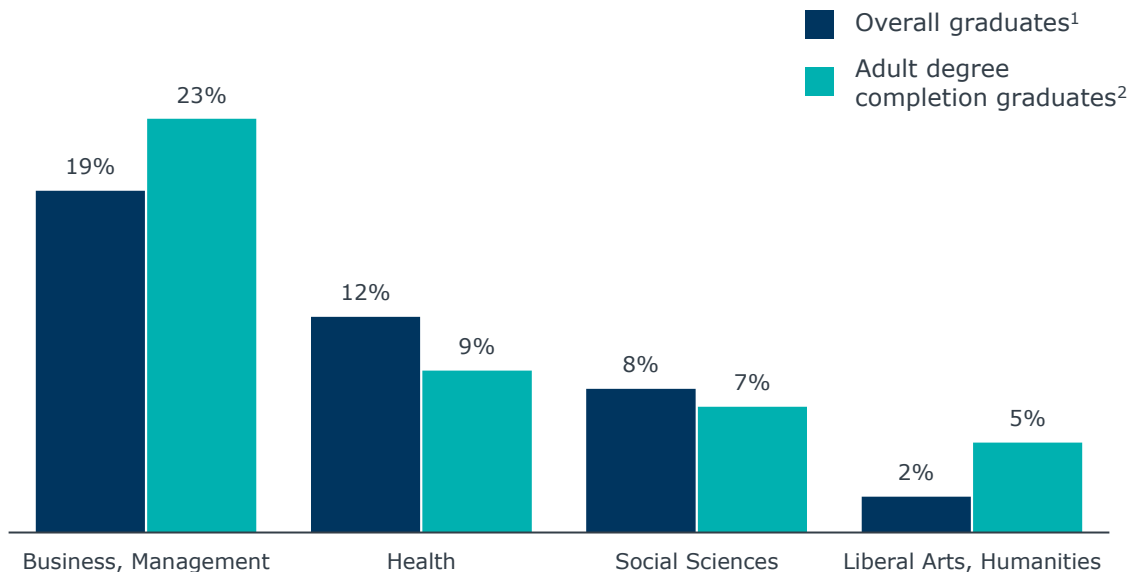
2) Subset of 940K re-enrollees who successfully completed degrees.

# BA Completers Looking to Finish Fast



## Flocking to Business Programs to Maximize Credit Transfer

*Degrees earned by Americans overall and BA degree completion graduates, 2014-18*



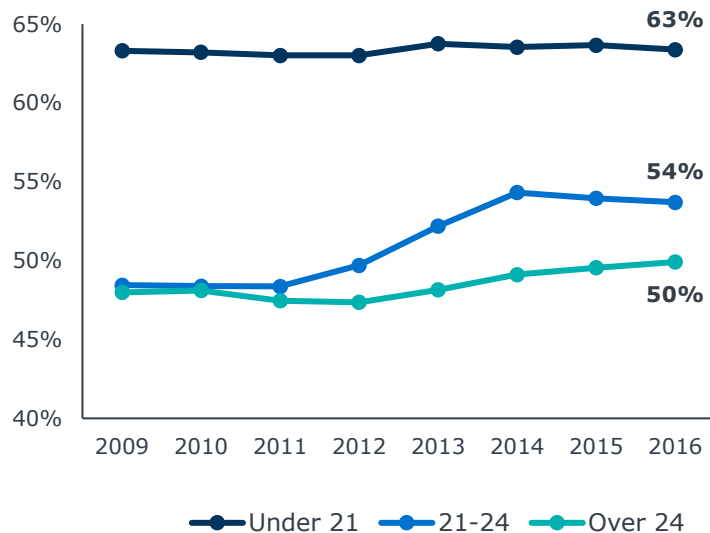
1) National sample.

2) Subset of 940K re-enrollees who successfully completed degrees.

# Getting Adult Students Enrolled Just the Start

## Undergrads 25 and Older Have Lowest Success Rate of All Age Groups

*First-Year Retention<sup>1</sup> Rates by Student Age Group and Starting Cohort, All Institutional Levels<sup>2</sup>*



### What's Behind Low Rates of Student Success?



Social isolation from traditional-aged peers



More likely to be balancing other priorities like work, family



Insufficiently flexible programs

1) Defined as continued enrollment (or degree completion) within the **same** higher education institution in the fall semesters of a student's first and second year.  
2) i.e., 2-year and 4-year combined.

# Student Success May Be One Phone Call Away



## Pueblo Community College Combats the Social Isolation Barrier with Ongoing, Low-Touch Services



Proactive outreach to students with financial aid holds



Informal semimonthly advising check-ins with program director



Faculty early alerts on class attendance and performance



Reflection exercises connect degree completion with long-term goals

Since the program's launch in 2016...

**1** Full-time college staff director oversees the program

**184** Students have reenrolled

**97%** Of reenrolled students satisfactorily passed their first semester courses

**116** Reenrolled students have completed their degrees

**\$343K** Amount of net revenue earned in 2017-18 alone after loan repayments

# Meeting the Need for Flexibility

## Accelerated Courses Let Students Balance College with Work and Life



- ✓ Half of course taught online
- ✓ Students spend same amount of time per week in-seat as traditional courses
- ✓ Format offered in several disciplines
- ✓ Faculty, students participate in online and in-person discussions
- ✓ High level of academic performance maintained

	5-Week	11-Week
Mean course grade	3.10	2.97
Mean gain in content knowledge <sup>1</sup>	39%	39%
Students receiving "a lot" of feedback <sup>2</sup>	47%	41%
Students applying "a great deal" of effort <sup>2</sup>	32%	19%

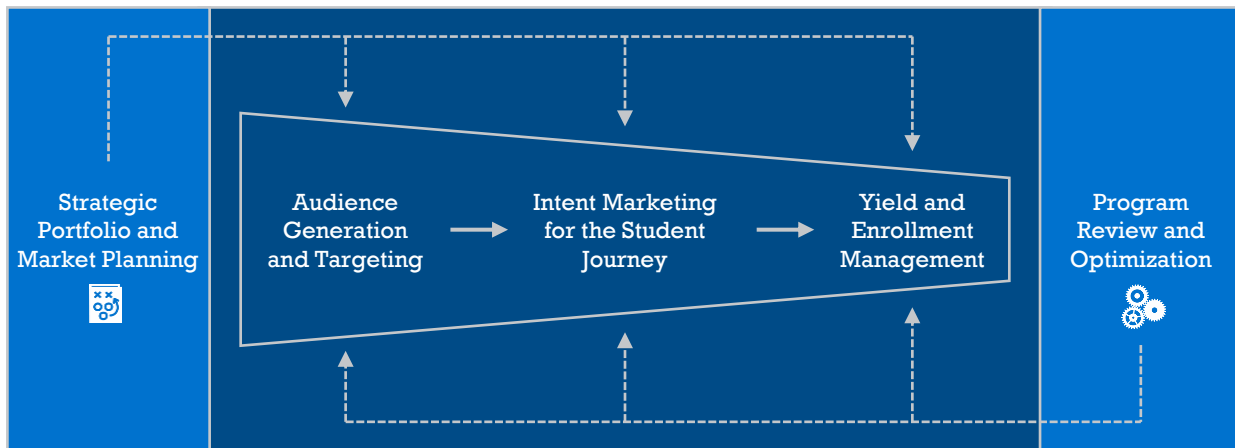
1) As measured by pre- and post-test scores.

2) As measured by survey responses of student course perceptions.

# EAB's Adult Learner Recruitment

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Our **strategic enrollment solution** combines intent marketing and strategic services to fuel adult learner growth.



DATA & CONSUMER ANALYTICS AT SCALE

1.5B+

Student interactions analyzed annually

100+

Data and analytics experts on staff

500+

Field marketing tests performed annually

7000+

Custom market demand briefs completed since 2012



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