



Pathways to Results News June 2015

New Release: Single Parents in the Community College



A Portrait of Single Student Parents: Financial and Academic Barriers to a Postsecondary Degree

Raising children while working and pursuing a postsecondary degree presents challenges for any family; however, single student parents often encounter additional obstacles as they strive to complete their degrees in a timely manner. Single student parents find themselves having to fit into the mold of a traditional college student, typically a student without dependents, because financial, academic, and social supports are designed for traditional students (Cerven, 2013; Graham & Bassett, 2011; Santiago, 2013). If higher education institutions better understood the challenges faced by single student parents, they could develop policies and programs to help this population achieve more equitable outcomes in terms of persistence and completion (Fenster, 2004; Goldrick-Rab, 2009; Mason, 2002; Yakaboski, 2010). This OCCRL brief provides a financial and academic portrait of single student parents, in addition, policies that may hinder access and persistence are explored to highlight opportunities for institutional improvement.

Obtaining a postsecondary credential can provide economic security and social mobility for single parent families while unleashing a potential wealth of human capital to meet the nation's workforce needs (White House, 2011). By completing a postsecondary credential, women in particular increase their access to higher paying jobs and healthcare for their families (Lee, 2007) and in some instances this increase in income is immediate (Pase & Hartman, 2004). Access to higher education opportunities increases social mobility for women of all backgrounds and ages (Ehren, 2005; Center for Women Policy Studies, 2005; Zhou & Paulsen, 2004). Community colleges have come to the forefront in the higher education agenda given their historical open access mission (Cerven, 2013; White House, 2011) and relative affordability, creating opportunities for diverse students, including single parents. Bragg and Durham (2012) state, "If not for community colleges, the overall higher education system would serve fewer racial and ethnic minorities and fewer low-income, immigrant, and first-generation students" (p. 108). Another perspective that "fills in" the shorter student life attending community colleges is a student of college students who are raising children.

Student Parents in Higher Education

Approximately 20 percent of all postsecondary students or 4.8 million students who attend postsecondary institutions in 2011-2012 were parents (Daly, Reichle, Reynolds, & Frithsen, 2014). Almost half (2.2 million) of the total number of student parents enrolled in college in 2011-2012 attended a community college (Daly et al., 2014) (see Figure 1).



OCCRL is pleased to announce the release of Volume 11 of its Insights on Equity and Outcomes series. [*A Portrait of Single Student Parents: Financial and Academic Barriers to a Postsecondary Degree*](#), funded by the Illinois Community College Board and written by Carmen Gioiosa and Heather McCambly, provides an overview of research into single student parents' presence and experiences on community college campuses, along with key recommendations for supporting their success.

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unleashing a potential wealth of human capital to meet the nation's workforce needs (White House, 2011). Raising children while working and pursuing a postsecondary degree presents challenges for any family; however, single student parents often encounter additional obstacles as they strive to complete their degrees in a timely manner. Single student parents find themselves having to fit into the mold of a traditional college student, typically a student without dependents, because financial, academic, and social supports are designed for traditional students (Cerven, 2013; Graham & Bassett, 2011; Santiago, 2013). If higher education institutions better understood the challenges faced by single student parents, they could develop policies and programs to help this population achieve more equitable outcomes in terms of persistence and completion (Fenster, 2004; Goldrick-Rab, 2009; Mason, 2002; Yakaboski, 2010).

[Read more.](#)

Materials Now Available from Pathways Workshop in Chicago: Using Data to Close Equity Gaps and Open Windows for Opportunity

On June 4, 2015 community college educators, faculty, institutional researchers, and student affairs staff gathered to learn about how to use targeted and mixed-methods data collection to support both *access* and *success* for underserved students in terms of degree completion and workforce outcomes.



Although most of us know, on a larger scale, that our underserved students—whether they are low-income, rural, single-parents, or students of color—are not achieving this success at the same rates, it's not easy to turn this knowledge into meaningful solutions on campus.

Missed the workshop and want to learn more? New resources presented in their draft form were shared at the workshop and will be made available on the [PTR Resources page](#) next month and in the July PTR Newsletter.

The following resources are available for immediate download:

- [Workshop PowerPoint Slides](#)
- [Process & Practice Assessment Worksheet](#)
- [PTR Equity & Outcomes and Process Assessment Modules](#)
- (Coming Soon) Updated Process Assessment Module with New Focus Group Tool and High-Impact Practices Tools

PTR in the News

NCORE 28th Annual National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in American Higher Education

May 29th, 2015, Washington, DC

[Bringing Equitable Solutions to Life on Campus: A Pathway to Results from Illinois](#)



In this session, [Heather McCambly](#) and [Edmund Graham](#) shared information on how campuses can use Pathways to Results (PTR), an evidence-based model for leading equity-oriented change process, to implement and sustain solutions to equity issues. This session was intended for administrators, student affairs, or faculty leaders interested in bridging the gap on campus between their equity goals and emerging practices shared at NCORE and in other professional communities.

[View the presentation slides.](#)

[Bridging Perspectives on Inclusiveness:](#)

[Foregrounding LGBTQ Student Success in Campus-Wide Initiatives](#)

On June 12, 2015, Rebecca Dolinsky and Heather McCambly presented on how campus practitioners can introduce and even foreground LGBTQ student success and discussions of sexuality and gender in campus-wide initiatives at the California Institute of Integral Studies Expanding the Circle Conference. *The interactive component of this workshop (see the session worksheets) relied on an adaption of the PTR process.*

[View the presentation slides.](#)

[View the session worksheets.](#)

