

# Black Student Parents’ Access to Affordable Child Care Support at Community Colleges



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## Introduction

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Access to the Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) program, a federal grant designed to support student parents with child care access and expenses, is critical for Black student parents in 2025. Child care costs strain parents nationwide. These costs are particularly burdensome for student parents, defined as parents pursuing higher education and responsible for providing for a child.<sup>1</sup>

Black college students are more likely to be parents than other racial groups at both community colleges and four-year institutions. Over one in three (36 percent) of Black students enrolled in community colleges in 2020 were parents.<sup>2</sup> Forty percent of Black women in college are raising children.<sup>3</sup> Black single mothers comprise 30 percent of undergraduate students who are single mothers, and nearly 70 percent of Black single-mother students are first-generation college students.<sup>4</sup> Black fathers make up 19 percent of student parents and are less likely to have access to child care assistance than fathers of other races.<sup>5</sup>

Overall, access to on-campus child care has declined over time. Research suggests that students who used campus child care centers had greater retention and completion rates than their peers who did not.<sup>6</sup> From 2004 to 2019, the share of public academic institutions offering child care services fell from 59 percent to 45 percent.<sup>7</sup>

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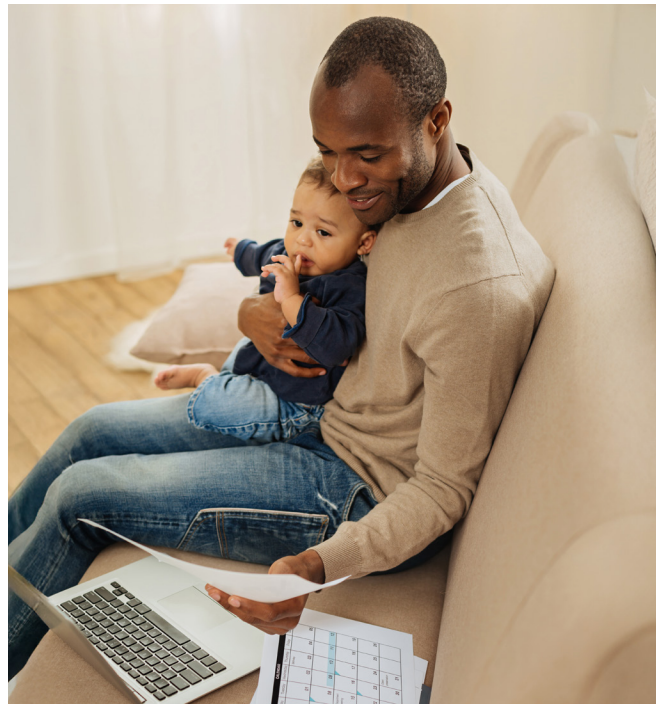
### *Black college students are more likely to be parents than other racial groups at both community colleges and four-year institutions.*

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Higher education institutions that have been awarded at least \$350,000 in Pell Grant funds in the previous fiscal year (or at least \$250,000 when CCAMPIS appropriations are greater than \$20 million) are eligible to complete the highly competitive application process for a CCAMPIS grant on a four-year grant award cycle.

CCAMPIS grants can subsidize child care costs for Pell Grant-eligible students, support campus-based or community-based child care programs, provide before or after-school child care services, or provide student support, such as financial and career counseling.<sup>11</sup> This issue brief examines the CCAMPIS program to understand its impacts on Black student parents and offers legislative proposals for congressional reauthorization and adequate appropriations for this critical child care program.

Public community colleges experienced an even more pronounced decrease, from 58 percent to 41 percent over the same period.<sup>8</sup> Only 38 percent of public two-year institutions and 21 percent of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) offer on-campus child care.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, 67 percent of Black fathers attend colleges without on-campus child care.<sup>10</sup>



# Challenges Facing Black Student Parents

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Student parents face challenges when striving to complete college, such as access to child care and economic insecurity.<sup>12</sup> An estimated 37 percent of all student parents complete a degree or certificate within six years, compared to 60 percent of college students who are not parents.<sup>13</sup>

More than two-thirds of student parents<sup>14</sup> live at or near the poverty line, and 52 percent are Pell Grant recipients.<sup>15</sup> Only eight percent of single mothers earn an associate's degree or bachelor's degree within six years, compared with 49 percent of women who are not parents and 28 percent of all student parents.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, 72 percent of Black fathers at public four-year institutions leave college without earning a credential.<sup>17</sup> Access to on-campus child care has declined over time, especially at public community colleges.<sup>18</sup>

Affordability can be a barrier to student parents' access to and completion of higher education.<sup>19</sup> The average out-of-pocket costs of attending a public college for student parents are two to five times higher than for students with no children.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, the net price of a college education is equivalent to nearly 44 percent of a Black father's average income.<sup>21</sup>

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On average, a student parent would need to work 30 hours to 90 hours per week to cover child care and tuition costs at a public college or university in the United States.<sup>22</sup> One study found that no state allows a student parent to afford both tuition and child care at a public college or university, even after grants, scholarships, and earnings from working 10 hours.<sup>23</sup>

In 2020, according to the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), the median income for Black community college student households was \$29,021 compared to \$61,803 for white students.<sup>24</sup> Black student parents borrow an average of \$18,100 compared with an average of \$13,500 among all students.<sup>25</sup> Black student parents also borrow more than white and Latino student parents at \$13,100 and \$10,400, respectively.<sup>26</sup> Seventy-eight percent of Black student parents have no family financial support for college, making financial support vital to help Black student parents afford the total cost of pursuing higher education.<sup>27</sup>

Black student parents often face economic constraints when pursuing postsecondary education. The average monthly cost of child care for Black fathers increased from \$388 to nearly \$686 between the 2011–2012 and 2019–2020 academic years.<sup>28</sup> Black mothers also are experiencing financial challenges and economic insecurity while attending college.<sup>29</sup> Seventy-five percent of Black single mothers pursuing higher education say they would be unable to come up with \$2,000 within the next month.<sup>30</sup> More than 50 percent of all Black mothers experience basic needs insecurity while attending college, and more than 70 percent experience housing insecurity at both community colleges and four-year institutions.<sup>31</sup>

Outside of CCAMPIS grants, student parents have limited access to financial support for child care expenses. The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) is the most extensive federal program dedicated to quality child care services.<sup>32</sup> CCDF subsidizes low-income families' participation in work-related education and training programs by making child care services available through vouchers, direct family benefits, provider contracts, and grants.<sup>33</sup> However, not all states consider higher education participation an eligibility criterion for receiving child care subsidies.<sup>34</sup>



The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program is intended “to foster economic security and stability for families with children with low incomes.”<sup>35</sup> States can use TANF funds for child care assistance to support families.<sup>36</sup> States may also transfer up to 30 percent of their federal TANF block grant funds to CCDF.<sup>37</sup> In fiscal year 2021, however, only 16.2 percent of TANF funds were used for child care through direct assistance or transferred to CCDF.<sup>38</sup> On average, child care costs are between \$7,000 and \$8,800 per year, while low-income student parents receive about \$4,600 per year in subsidies and must fill the gap.<sup>39</sup>

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Federal data on student parents only reflects a subset of students and is infrequently reported.<sup>40</sup> Colleges collect student parent information through student surveys, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and the National Center for Education Statistics’ NPSAS data collection. Institutions of higher education can use these data to understand the needs of a student body, but these data are incomplete.

FAFSA, for example, is limited to students who qualify for financial aid and complete the form, while NPSAS is not representative at the state level.<sup>41</sup> CCAMPIS grantees do collect data on student demographics and degree outcomes and submit an annual performance report to the U.S. Department of Education, but these data are not publicly available.<sup>42</sup>

### ***Accessing the CCAMPIS Program***

The CCAMPIS program is authorized through the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965. The program was established in 1999 “to support the participation of low-income parents in postsecondary education through the provision of campus-based child care services.”<sup>43</sup> Higher education institutions are grant-eligible if the total amount of all Federal Pell Grant funds awarded to students in the preceding fiscal year equals or exceeds \$350,000 (or at least \$250,000 when CCAMPIS appropriations are greater than \$20 million).<sup>44</sup> Institutions must complete a competitive application process for four-year CCAMPIS grants. The application includes student demographics, child care capacity, and a description of the child care program’s activities.<sup>45</sup>

CCAMPIS grants can fund professional staff development, curriculum development, equipment, classroom supplies, and minor renovations while also directly supporting student parents through subsidies and campus-based child care programs.<sup>46</sup> Some colleges use CCAMPIS funding to create staff positions to help parents find child care and navigate the public welfare system. Some CCAMPIS programs also offer support services to student parents, including peer support, financial counseling, and college navigation services.<sup>47</sup> Though academic studies and firsthand accounts of CCAMPIS programs’ impact and value exist, no public data exists on CCAMPIS participants’ demographics or outcomes. Thus, it is difficult to understand how the program benefits Black student parents.

CCAMPIS grant recipients are legally required to collect data on the population served, but these data are not required by law to be made available to the public.<sup>48</sup> However, the nonpartisan congressional U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) obtained program-level performance data and released a report in 2019 on supporting student parents that provided insight into the CCAMPIS student population. The GAO found that nearly half of CCAMPIS participants were white, 25 percent were Hispanic or Latino, and 15 percent were Black or African American.<sup>49</sup>

Given that 30 percent of undergraduate student parents are Black, the percentage of Black CCAMPIS participants is not representative of the Black student parent population.<sup>50</sup>

The underrepresentation of Black student parents among CCAMPIS participants and the lack of publicly available data necessitate an analysis of program access for Black student parents. To determine potential causes of the underrepresentation of Black student parents in the CCAMPIS program, the following analysis examines whether the program reaches community colleges with substantial Black student enrollment.

## Methodology

The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies used the U.S. Department of Education’s Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and data on CCAMPIS awards from the academic year 2017–2018 through the academic year 2021–2022 to identify CCAMPIS grantees’ community college designation, their Black student enrollment percentage, Pell Grant student enrollment percentage, and HBCU and Predominantly Black Institution (PBI) status.

The Joint Center then analyzed the distribution of CCAMPIS funding to determine the share of program appropriations to community colleges, particularly those with substantial (at least 40 percent) Black student enrollment. Researchers selected the 40 percent threshold to quantify community colleges with substantial Black student enrollment because it is a criterion in the U.S. Department of Education’s PBI classification.

Black student enrollment is not a proxy for Black student parent enrollment. However, no publicly available student-level data on the race of student parents exists. This institution-level analysis provides insight into CCAMPIS funding trends and whether the program serves community colleges with high Black student enrollment and, subsequently, is reaching Black student parents.

### CCAMPIS Funding Allocation

**1 The CCAMPIS program awarded 45 percent of its total grants to community colleges.**

Between academic years 2017 and 2022, the CCAMPIS program awarded nearly half (45 percent) of total grants to community colleges (527 of 1,162). Community colleges are overrepresented among CCAMPIS grantees, as community colleges represent 28 percent of higher education institutions.<sup>51</sup> Yet 58 percent of community college students have low-income backgrounds, underscoring the need for additional funding for student support.<sup>52</sup> (See Figure 1.)

**Figure 1: Percentage of Community College CCAMPIS grantees.**

Academic Year	Total Number of CCAMPIS Awards	Total Number of Community College CCAMPIS grantees	Percent of Community College CCAMPIS grantees
2017–2018	86	44	51%
2018–2019	196	99	51%
2019–2020	266	99	37%
2020–2021	287	132	46%
2021–2022	327	153	47%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,162</b>	<b>527</b>	<b>45%</b>

Source: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies analysis of CCAMPIS funding allocation data, U.S. Department of Education.

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### Community college CCAMPIS recipients with substantial Black student enrollment (at least 40 percent) comprised 5 percent to 7 percent of grant awards annually.

Community colleges with substantial Black student populations were underrepresented among CCAMPIS recipients. Nationally, 13 percent of community colleges have at least 40 percent Black enrollment. The percentage of community college CCAMPIS recipients with Black enrollment above 40 percent fluctuated minimally between five percent to seven percent during the 2017–2022 period, well below the 13 percent representation rate. In the academic year 2017–2018, two of the 44 community college recipients met the 40 percent threshold; in 2020–2021, eight of the 132 community college recipients met the 40 percent threshold, the highest total number over the five years. (See Figure 2.)

**Figure 2: Percentage of Community College CCAMPIS grantees with at least 40 percent Black student enrollment.**

Academic Year	Total Number of Community College CCAMPIS grantees	Total Number of Community College CCAMPIS grantees with at least 40 percent Black student enrollment	Percent of Community College CCAMPIS grantees with at least 40 percent Black student enrollment	Percent of CCAMPIS Funding to Community College grantees with at least 40 percent Black student enrollment
2017–2018	44	2	5%	4%
2018–2019	99	5	5%	6%
2019–2020	99	7	7%	8%
2020–2021	132	8	6%	6%
2021–2022	153	7	5%	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>527</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>6%</b>

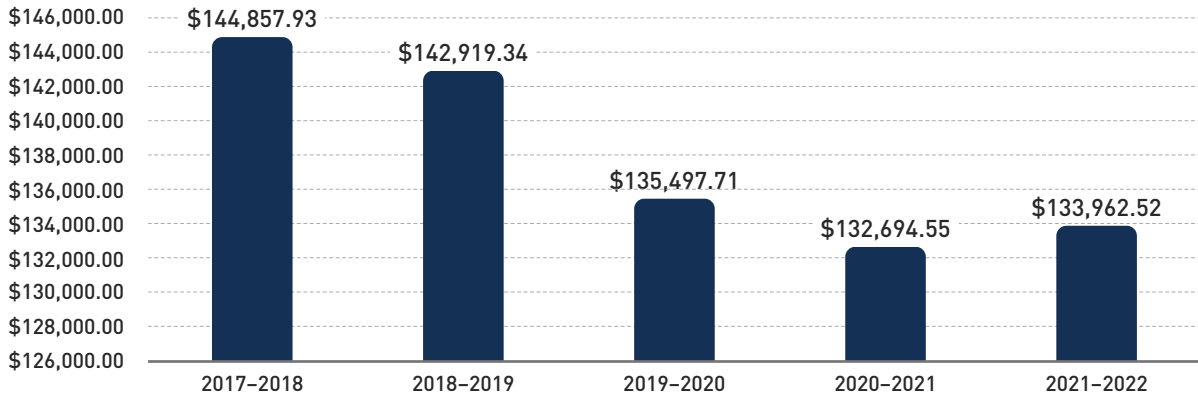
Source: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies analysis of CCAMPIS funding allocation data, U.S. Department of Education.

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### The CCAMPIS program’s average funding to community colleges was about \$138,000.

The CCAMPIS program’s average funding from 2017–2022 peaked at \$144,858 in 2017–2018. The lowest average funding was \$132,694 in the academic year 2020–2021. CCAMPIS appropriations have grown recently, with about \$15 million in the academic year 2017–2018, the first year of our analysis, and \$51.4 million in the academic year 2021–2022, the last year of our analysis.<sup>53</sup> Community colleges receive \$8,800 less in education revenue per student than four-year institutions and rely on grants and scholarships to provide additional revenue.<sup>54</sup> Increases in appropriations have not translated into larger grants to CCAMPIS recipients, but as the CCAMPIS program expanded, the number of community colleges with substantial Black student enrollment increased. (See Figure 3.)

**Figure 3: Average Funding to CCAMPIS Community College Grantees.**

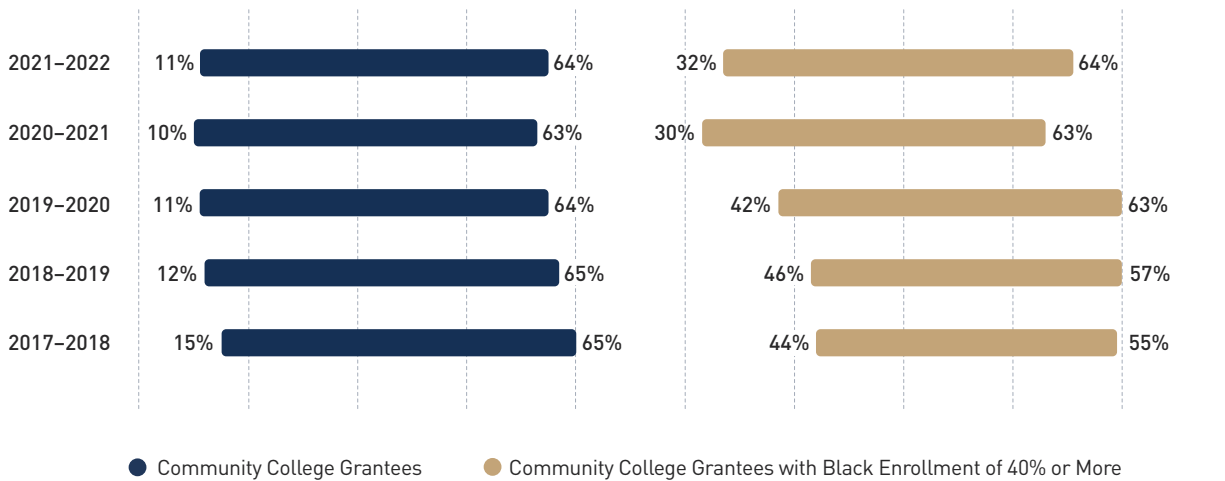


Source: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies analysis of CCAMPIS funding allocation data, U.S. Department of Education.

**4 Community college CCAMPIS recipients with at least 40 percent Black student enrollment had more Pell Grant recipients than institutions with lower Black student enrollment.**

Pell Grants provide support for more than six million students from low-income backgrounds.<sup>55</sup> Pell Grants cannot cover student parents’ financial needs associated with pursuing higher education, let alone the cost of child care.<sup>56</sup> Community college CCAMPIS recipients with at least 40 percent Black student enrollment had at least 30 percent Pell Grant recipients. In comparison, CCAMPIS grantees below the 40 percent Black student threshold had Pell Grant enrollment as low as 10 percent. (See Figure 4.)

**Figure 4: Range of Pell Grant Enrollment of CCAMPIS Community College Grantees.**



Source: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies analysis of CCAMPIS funding allocation data, U.S. Department of Education.

# Policy Recommendations: Supporting Black Student Parents

## 1 Increase CCAMPIS program appropriations

The congressional CCAMPIS appropriations in the academic year 2017–18 totaled \$15 million. The program’s funding sharply increased to \$50 million in the academic year 2018–19, and the appropriations for the academic year 2021–22 rose to \$65 million.<sup>57</sup> Appropriations were \$75 million in the academic year 2023–24.<sup>58</sup> This growth is meaningful but should be increased. CCAMPIS expansion proposals have called for \$250 million in annual appropriations for the program to adequately meet student-parent needs.<sup>59</sup>

According to the 2019 GAO report, which analyzed 2009 and 2016 federal data, most CCAMPIS recipients received partial subsidies using a sliding fee scale for the 2016–2017 academic year, but the subsidy was insufficient to cover all child care expenses. After receiving about \$385 in monthly subsidies, more than 75 percent of student parents still had out-of-pocket child care expenses of about \$160 per month.<sup>60</sup>

The Senate Appropriations Committee recommended \$80 million for the academic year 2025–26.<sup>61</sup> An increase in CCAMPIS appropriations should raise grantee funding, fully cover out-of-pocket child care expenses for student-parent participants, and reach more program participants.

## 2 Collect federal data on students’ parenting status

Black student parents are often a hidden population due to the lack of federal data collection on students’ parenting status. The IPEDS survey collects individual characteristic student data, such as race and ethnicity, but not parent status.<sup>62</sup> The NPSAS data is gathered from a nationally representative sample of students at Title IV secondary education institutions that provide student aid, but that data are only collected once every four years.<sup>63</sup>

Aggregate FAFSA data can help institutions estimate their student-parent population, but the recently updated FAFSA form does not distinguish between child dependents and other dependents.<sup>64</sup> Further, disaggregating these data may violate student privacy and conflict with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).<sup>65</sup>

Congress should consequently pass a version of the Understanding Student Parent Outcomes Act of 2023 to improve data collection for student parents in higher education. The bill would expand IPEDS data collection to include variables such as the number of students identifying as parents, their enrollment status, and median income.

If passed, the law would require a study on the best practices to improve outcomes for student parents at higher education institutions, including enrollment trends for the availability of campus-based child care services, including CCAMPIS grants. The bill also would require that findings be disaggregated by race and ethnicity, reported to Congress, and made publicly available.<sup>66</sup>





**3 Produce publicly available, racially disaggregated CCAMPIS performance reports**

CCAMPIS grants report data on the population served, campus and community resources used to help low-income students access child care services, progress on child care facility accreditation, and grant impact on the quality, availability, and affordability of campus-based child care services.<sup>67</sup> The U.S. Department of Education quantifies CCAMPIS’s success by measuring postsecondary persistence and degree completion rates.<sup>68</sup>

The CCAMPIS program should disaggregate participant enrollment and outcomes by race and ethnicity to the extent feasible to protect student privacy. This would allow the U.S. Department of Education and college leadership to determine whether the program reaches and supports Black student parents, who represent a substantial proportion of parents in higher education. Publicly available reports will enhance the transparency of the CCAMPIS program and its participants.

**4 Conduct an equity analysis of CCAMPIS awardees**

The U.S. Department of Education should build upon this study and conduct an equity analysis of past CCAMPIS awardees. The analysis could well uncover potential inequities and ensure that the share of the number of CCAMPIS community college grantees with substantial Black student enrollment is proportionate to their representation in the larger community college population.

The CCAMPIS grant process strongly relies on student-parent data, which is difficult to collect, as mentioned earlier in this issue brief. The proposed equity analysis could review the application process and scoring procedures, outreach and notification processes, funding distribution, and enrollment demographics and outcomes of CCAMPIS awardee institutions.

**5 Remove limitations to federal child care and basic needs supports**

The CCDF program allows states to design income and eligibility requirements for families to receive child care assistance. Restrictive eligibility and variations in state rules limit benefits for families. While 12.8 million children were eligible for CCDF in Fiscal Year 2018 for example, state rules limited those who qualified to 8.4 million. Of that number, only 1.9 million received child care subsidies.<sup>69</sup>

States may allow higher education participation as an eligibility criterion, but many states have restrictions on how long education and job training can count for eligibility. States also have work requirements for support programs including CCDF, TANF, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). To decrease barriers and support student parents, states should allow education and training to count for working hours and extend or remove time limits on how long parents can pursue an education or job training program.

## Conclusion

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The CCAMPIS program can potentially reach more Black student parents by increasing the grants offered to community colleges serving Black students. The Higher Education Act, the legislation authorizing CCAMPIS, has not been reauthorized since 2008, but CCAMPIS appropriations have continued without reauthorization.<sup>71</sup> The CCAMPIS Reauthorization Act introduced in 2024 would amend CCAMPIS under HEA and appropriate \$500 million to the program annually.<sup>72</sup>

The policy recommendations in this brief would help enhance the CCAMPIS program for Black student parents when Congress reauthorizes the HEA. Increasing CCAMPIS appropriations, improving student parent data collection, publicly sharing CCAMPIS performance reports, conducting an equity analysis of the CCAMPIS program, and providing Black student parents with more subsidy flexibility can offer more significant support to achieve their academic goals and gain access to family-sustaining wages.



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