

College Corner

Americans Flunk Quiz On Today's College Students

(NAPSA)—What's a typical college student?

Young, single, living on campus, carefree...right?

Wrong.

Students who go to college immediately after high school, live on campus and have tuition and expenses paid by their families are being replaced by working learners who juggle career, school and family.

According to a national survey by the University of Phoenix Research Institute, Americans hold outdated perceptions of "typical" college students. A vast number of students are working learners with unique educational priorities. Nearly three-quarters of them possess at least one non-traditional characteristic, such as being financially self-supporting, raising children or being older than 23.

Biased perceptions, of course, lead to inaccurate knowledge and misinformed decisions by employers, lawmakers and the students themselves. Adult learners, for example, may fear returning to school, concerned they will not "fit in"; employers may waste resources by recruiting less mature candidates with little or no work experience; and policymakers may miss opportunities to support legislation that helps today's college students.

Researchers at the University of Phoenix Research Institute polled the general public, including college students and faculty members, to identify perceptions about 21st-century undergraduates. The findings, released in the report "Americans Flunk Quiz About Today's College Students," are significant.

Dr. Tracey Wilen-Daugenti, vice president and managing director of the University of Phoenix Research Institute, says, "Americans still think of college students as 'kids' and the majority of our nation's educational



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policies and practices reflect those misperceptions.

"Higher education institutions, businesses and policymakers must recognize that attending college is less frequently a pre-career luxury and increasingly a midcareer necessity."

Educators and employers can maximize older students' chances of completing a degree by understanding the unique challenges these students face. Higher education institutions, for example, can develop curriculum and support services to serve adult learners' needs. Organizations can align job recruitment and workforce development strategies to target the adult student population.

"Young college students do not represent the full spectrum of today's college goers," says Wilen-Daugenti.

"If stakeholders continue to focus exclusively on younger-generation collegians, we risk compromising the nation's ability to prepare citizens with the degrees they need to obtain and sustain employment and ensure national competitiveness."

For a copy of the full report, visit the University of Phoenix Research Institute at www.phoenix.edu/institute.