

Helping Single Mother Students at Triangle-area Community Colleges Overcome Barriers to Meeting Their Education Goals



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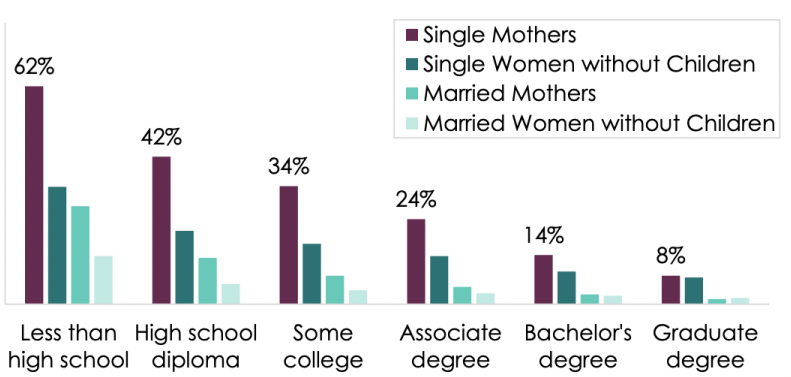


This project provides an in-depth examination of the existing literature on:

- the characteristics of single mother students;
- the unique barriers faced by single mother students at community colleges
- programs that have been implemented to address the challenges faced by single mother students
- recommendations for policies and programs that can be set up in the Research Triangle area of North Carolina

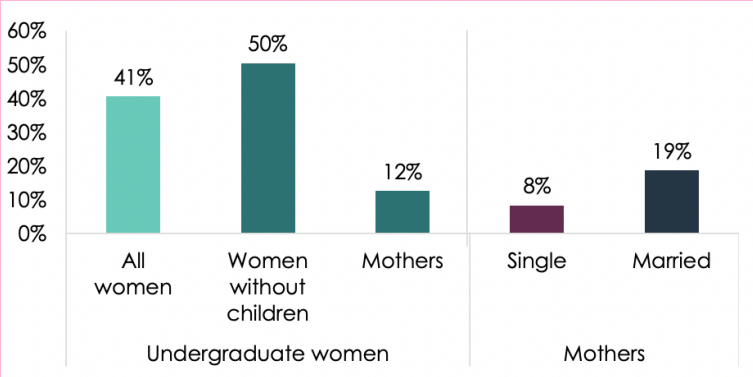
A lot of postsecondary students are single mothers - but a lot of single mother students aren't graduating

Percentage of Women Aged 25 and Older Living in Poverty by Educational Attainment, Marital Status, and Parent Status, 2013-2017



Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research

Percentage of Female College Students Who Earn an Associate or Bachelor's Degree within Six Years of Enrollment, by Marital and Parent Status, 2003-09



Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research

Research Methods

A literature review of both peer-reviewed and gray literature published between 1993 and 2022 was conducted to identify both a) barriers that single mother students are facing and b) proposed solutions combatting those barriers. This search utilized Google Scholar, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), and the Duke University Libraries research database. The primary search terms employed were “single mothers community colleges,” “single mother students,” and “student parents community college.”

Barriers to Single Mothers' College Success



Financial constraints



Time constraints

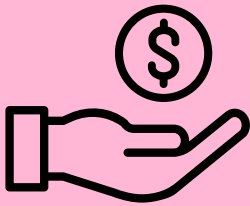


Lacking childcare

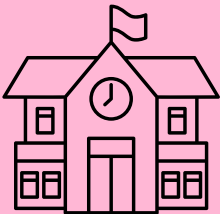


Lacking a sense of community + belonging

Programs Set Up to Support Single Mothers' College Success



Financial support



Campus childcare + subsidies



Community supports + data tracking

Policy Recommendations

Pilot a data collection program

- Determine the best methods for adopting data tracking and reporting systems that identify college student parents and follow their academic performance, such as grades, retention, and graduation.
- To collect these data could be as simple as obtaining a figure of how many students are parenting children
 - Could also get more granular, such as identifying student parents' marital status, statistics that would allow for the identification of a specific single mother student population.

Improve on-campus childcare

- Apply for CCAMPIS grant funding to expand childcare offerings.
- Employing early education majors to staff the childcare center, ameliorating staffing issues.

Establish a guaranteed income pilot

- Provide single mother students with a guaranteed stipend to ease their financial burdens
 - Restrictive stipulations may prevent those most in need from getting aid, so these programs must have low barriers to entry.

Hire single mother navigators

- Hire student support staff at community colleges trained specifically in the nuanced needs of single mother students.
 - Navigators would guide instructors and administrators in institutionalizing support for single mother students through initiatives such as:
 - Creating classroom policies and/or syllabi that acknowledge the specific needs of single mother students
 - Opening child-friendly spaces within public spaces like the library and computer labs for single mothers to complete assignments and group work outside of childcare hours.