

# ECAR Study of Community College Students and Information Technology, 2019

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MAY 2019

### Key Findings

- **Community college students are juggling more responsibilities than their four-year peers.** They are older, more often employed, and twice as likely to be married or in a domestic partnership. The majority of community college students are financially independent, and they are more likely to have dependents of their own. More women than men at community colleges reported living on their own and having dependents.
- **Nearly all community college students own smartphones and laptop computers, and more own desktop computers than students at other institutions.** A very small percentage of community college students have access to AR/VR headsets and 3D printers; of those who do have access, more own them versus depending on their campus to provide them. Despite this limited access, more community college students than four-year students rated AR/VR headsets and 3D printers as very or extremely important to their academic success. The majority of these students were health science majors.
- **Although community college students find online student success tools useful, fewer are aware of degree planning and mapping tools than four-year (non-community college) students.** More than a third reported they either don't have access to or aren't aware of the tools. Significantly more minority than white students at community colleges rated early-alert systems and tools that suggest how to improve course performance as very/extremely useful.
- **Community college students who are women, those who work, students who are married or in a domestic partnership, and those with dependents are all more likely to prefer learning environments that are mostly or completely online.** This preference is likely due to the demands of balancing work schedules, family responsibilities, and academics. Around half of community college students prefer blended learning environments, but they are also twice as likely as four-year students to prefer courses that are completely online.

- **Two-year and AA colleges are doing a significantly better job than other institutions of meeting the needs of students with disabilities who require technology for their academics.** More than half of community college students with disabilities who need accessible or adaptive technology reported their college's awareness and support of their needs as good or excellent.