Over the past decade, 113,000 adults with some college but no degree have reconnected with higher education at Tennessee community colleges. Most of these students reconnected at community colleges after attending elsewhere, and many had made substantial progress toward a credential before stopping out. However, after reconnecting, fewer than half persisted to the next year. Students’ first term of enrollment upon reconnecting proves to be a critical point in returning adults’ postsecondary paths. During their first term back to school, reconnecting adults pass their courses at very high rates. From 2015 to 2019, reconnectors earned passing grades in nearly 80% of their course enrollments. However, course success rates were lower in key gateway course areas like Math, English, and Natural Sciences.

Course success had a significant impact on reconnector’s persistence and graduation. Reconnectors who failed or withdrew from gateway Math or English courses in their reconnecting term were far less likely to persist and graduate than other students. These results underscore the importance of community colleges’ ongoing work to provide learning support and implement evidence-based practices in gateway courses. Additionally, many reconnectors succeed in their courses but still do not persist, which suggests the need for further research on non-academic barriers to persistence for returning adults.

Prior research in this project identified four different types of reconnecting students. Course success differ across these groups:

### The Returners
- Returners are students who earned fewer than 30 credit hours prior to stopping out and are returning to the same college they last attended.
- In their first reconnecting term, 66% of Returners were enrolled part-time. They attempted an average of 8.6 credits in their reconnecting term.
- Returners were more likely to attempt gateway English compared to all reconnectors and they have a high likelihood of passing.
- Returners who enrolled in a gateway Math course had a 57% chance of passing.

### The Newcomers
- Newcomers are students who earned fewer than 30 credit hours prior to stopping out and are reconnecting at a new college.
- In their first reconnecting term, 64% of Newcomers were enrolled part-time. They attempted an average of 8.9 credits in their reconnecting term.
- Newcomers were more likely to pass gateway English courses compared to all other reconnectors.
- Newcomers are less likely to attempt math but have a high likelihood of passing compared to other reconnectors.

### The Comebackers
- Comebackers are students who earned more than 30 credit hours prior to stopping out and are returning to the college they last attended.
- In their first reconnecting term, 79% of Comebackers were enrolled part-time. They attempted an average of 7.5 credits in their reconnecting term.
- Comebackers were least likely take gateway Math or English, likely because they already completed these courses. But those who did were less likely to pass than other students.
- Comebackers who enrolled in a gateway Math course had a 47% chance of passing.

### The Fresh Starters
- Fresh Starters are students who earned more than 30 credit hours prior to stopping out and are reconnecting at a new college.
- In their first reconnecting term, 72% of Fresh Starters were enrolled part-time. They attempted an average of 8.4 credit hours in their reconnecting term.
- Fresh Starters were more likely to attempt gateway Math in their reconnecting term compared to other reconnectors.
- Fresh Starters were more likely to pass Math and English than Comebackers.