

An Overview of the U.S. Higher Education System



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Roadmap

1. An overview of the U.S. HIED System
2. Take-aways for you to review later...
 - List of surprises shared by previous international TAs
 - Additional questions to consider Suggested resources



Intended Learning Outcomes

- **By the end of this session, you will be able to...**
 - Identify various types of higher education institutions and settings in the U.S.
 - Discuss the diversity of students in U.S. HIED
 - Demonstrate awareness of students' rights to privacy according to HIPAA and FERPA
-

A (very brief) history of U.S. HIED

HIED Institutions in the U.S. ...

- Began as places for very specific populations
 - Clergy, eventually teachers, maintaining elite social class
 - Access expanded to meet needs of local communities and to educate more diverse students
 - Used to have philosophy of university serving as parental figure to students (“in loco parentis”)
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What are the types of colleges and universities in the U.S.?



U.S. HIED institutional types and settings

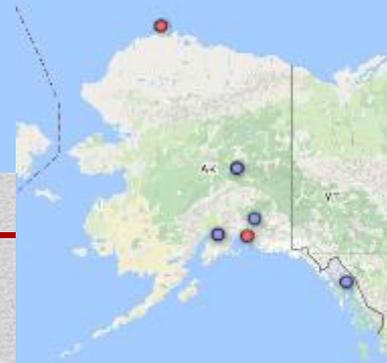
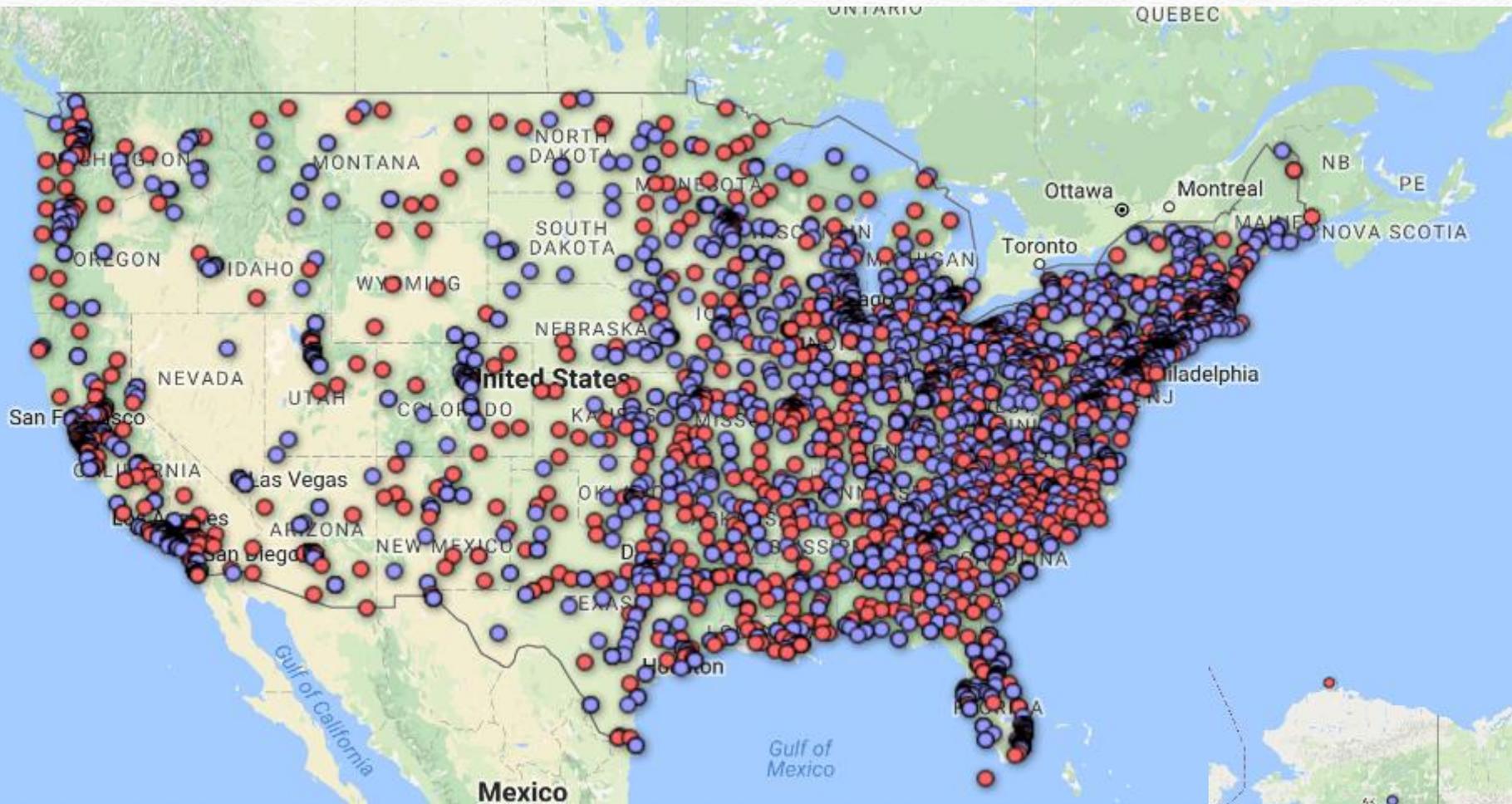
- The U.S. higher education system is very large with many differences in institutional types and settings.
 - Approx. **4,700** postsecondary institutions
 - HIED institutions are different in many ways, including variations in:
 - Size
 - Types and locations
 - Demographics
 - Selectivity
 - Public vs. Private
 - 2 year vs. 4 year, etc
 - Mission
-

U.S. HIED institutional types and settings

- There are so many interesting details, we could not possibly cover them all here today! So, we'll focus on the following:
- HIED institutional...
 - Size
 - Types and locations
 - Demographics



U.S. HIED institutions – Locations



U.S. HIED institutions – Locations



U.S. HIED institutions - Size

Undergraduate Student Body

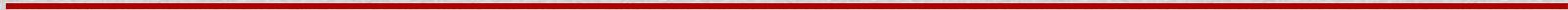
- Small (< 2,000)
- Medium (2,000–15,000)
- Large (> 15,000)

Institutional Size

- Community Colleges
- Two year colleges
- Four year colleges
- Comprehensive universities
- Liberal arts colleges
- Technical schools

Degrees Awarded

- Certificate
 - Associate's
 - Bachelor's
 - Advanced
-
- **Note:** U.S. Department of Education has a federal role, but state and institutional control too



“College” vs. “University” in the U.S.

Generally people in the U.S. use the word “college” to refer to any type of higher education.

Examples:

A student at the University of Arkansas says...

“I love being a college student!”

“I’m going to college.”

“I am working on a college degree.”

Colleges

- Generally...
 - May be smaller than a university
 - May not offer graduate degrees

University

- Generally...
 - May be larger
 - Offer undergraduate and graduate degrees
-

An exception...

Some “colleges” relate to specific areas of study and are part of a university campus.

Examples:

College of Education at
the University of
Arkansas

U.S. HIED institutions - Types

Selectivity

- Range of admissions standards from highly selective (such as Ivy Leagues) to open access (community colleges)

Institutional Types

- Liberal Arts
 - Women's institutions
 - Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU)
 - Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI)
 - Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISI)
 - Tribal colleges and universities (TCU)
 - Religiously affiliated
-

Example

University of Arkansas

Administration Bldg 425, Fayetteville, Arkansas 72701

Distance from ZIP:	0.0 miles from 72701
General information:	(479) 575-2000
Website:	www.uark.edu
Type:	4-year, Public
Awards offered:	Less than one year certificate Bachelor's degree Postbaccalaureate certificate Master's degree Post-master's certificate Doctor's degree - research/scholarship Doctor's degree - professional practice
Campus setting:	City: Small
Campus housing:	Yes
Student population:	26,754 (22,159 undergraduate)
Student-to-faculty ratio:	19 to 1



Who are our students?

University students in the U.S....

- ...will have a wide range of backgrounds and abilities
- ...will often have inadequate preparation for the rigors of university level academic work
- ...will not always know what they want to study and what career they wish to have after college
- ...will often have jobs to help pay for university and living expenses

“Traditional” and “Non-Traditional” Students

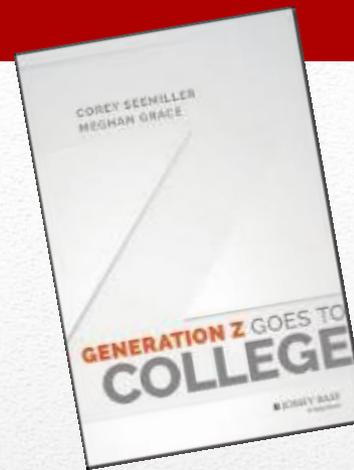
College Students Today

Generation Z college students: Who are they?



- Digital natives

- Internet
- Social Media
- Video instruction



- Encourage independent, self-paced learning, but not at the expense of facilitated learning. While Generation Z members are the true digital natives, they place huge emphasis and value on face-to-face interaction
- Self-identify as being loyal, compassionate, thoughtful, open-minded, responsible, and determined
- Greatest concerns: Education, employment, and racial equality
- Disengaged from and skeptical of politics

Gen Z

- Realistic and pragmatic – Job is not guaranteed. Want to know what they are learning will translate into helping them beyond the classroom
 - Less optimistic than millennials
- Great recession = unsettled and insecure
- Career minded from point of insecure economy
- Have "thoughtful worldview" and want to engage in service that has a tangible and lasting impact on systematic and structural problems. Want to advocate and work on behalf of something they believe in.
- Capitalize on their passion and engagement because many see higher education as a steppingstone for their careers

Gen Z

- Prefer intrapersonal learning. They like journals, reflection, and quiet solo projects.
- Like “pre-learning” and flipped learning - having something to learn before they come to class
- They do not like group work. They like to be able to focus and go at their own pace and direction, and choose their own interests
- Less likely to take risks
- Have done a lot of self learning online, so need critical thinking skills about evaluating sources of information
- Diverse social identities

Gen Z

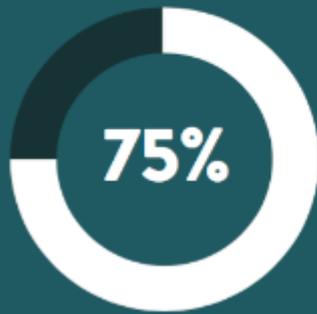
Circumstances of College Students Today:

- Balancing Multiple Responsibilities
- Older and More Racially Diverse
- Financially Support Themselves... And Often Struggle to Make Ends Meet
- Less Likely to Graduate

Diversity & College Student Subcultures

- First generation college students
 - Students from low income backgrounds
 - Students with disabilities
 - Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) communities
 - Older adult learners
 - Military veterans
 - Race and Ethnicity
 - Religion
-

BALANCING MULTIPLE RESPONSIBILITIES



THREE-QUARTERS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

COMMUTE TO CLASS WHILE JUGGLING PARENTING,
WORKING AND BOTH.



STUDENTS WORK ON AVERAGE

**19 HOURS
PER WEEK**

ABOUT

40 PERCENT

OF COMMUNITY-COLLEGE STUDENTS
WORK 20 OR MORE HOURS
PER WEEK.

40 PERCENT
ATTEND SCHOOL ONLY
PART-TIME.



OLDER AND MORE RACIALLY DIVERSE



38 PERCENT
OF ALL TODAY'S UNDERGRADUATES
ARE OLDER THAN 25.

THE VISION THAT MOST OF US HAVE OF COLLEGE STUDENTS – 18- TO 21-YEAR-OLDS WHO ATTEND SCHOOL FULL-TIME – ONLY MAKE UP ABOUT A THIRD OF THE COLLEGE POPULATION.



ENROLLMENT AMONG
HISPANIC STUDENTS

TRIPLED
SINCE THE MID-1990'S,



**AND BLACK STUDENT
ENROLLMENT GREW BY
72 PERCENT.**

AND THOSE TRENDS ARE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE THROUGH 2021, WITH BLACK ENROLLMENT PROJECTED TO GROW BY **25 PERCENT**, HISPANIC STUDENTS PROJECTED TO INCREASE BY **42 PERCENT**, AND ONLY A **4 PERCENT** INCREASE IN WHITE STUDENTS FORECASTED.

FINANCIALLY SUPPORT THEMSELVES... AND OFTEN STRUGGLE TO MAKE ENDS MEET



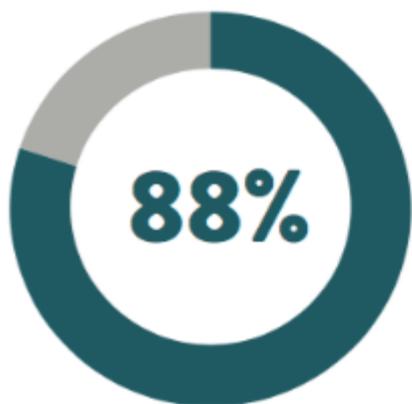
ALMOST HALF OF
TODAY'S STUDENTS

ARE ON THEIR OWN FINANCIALLY. HALF OF THOSE STUDENTS (25%) HAVE FINANCIAL DEPENDENTS OF THEIR OWN.



4.8 MILLION

POSTSECONDARY STUDENTS ARE PARENTS, AND OF THOSE, **61 PERCENT** HAVE NO MONEY TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE COST OF COLLEGE.



88 PERCENT

OF SINGLE STUDENT-PARENTS HAVE INCOMES **BELOW 200 PERCENT** OF THE POVERTY LINE.

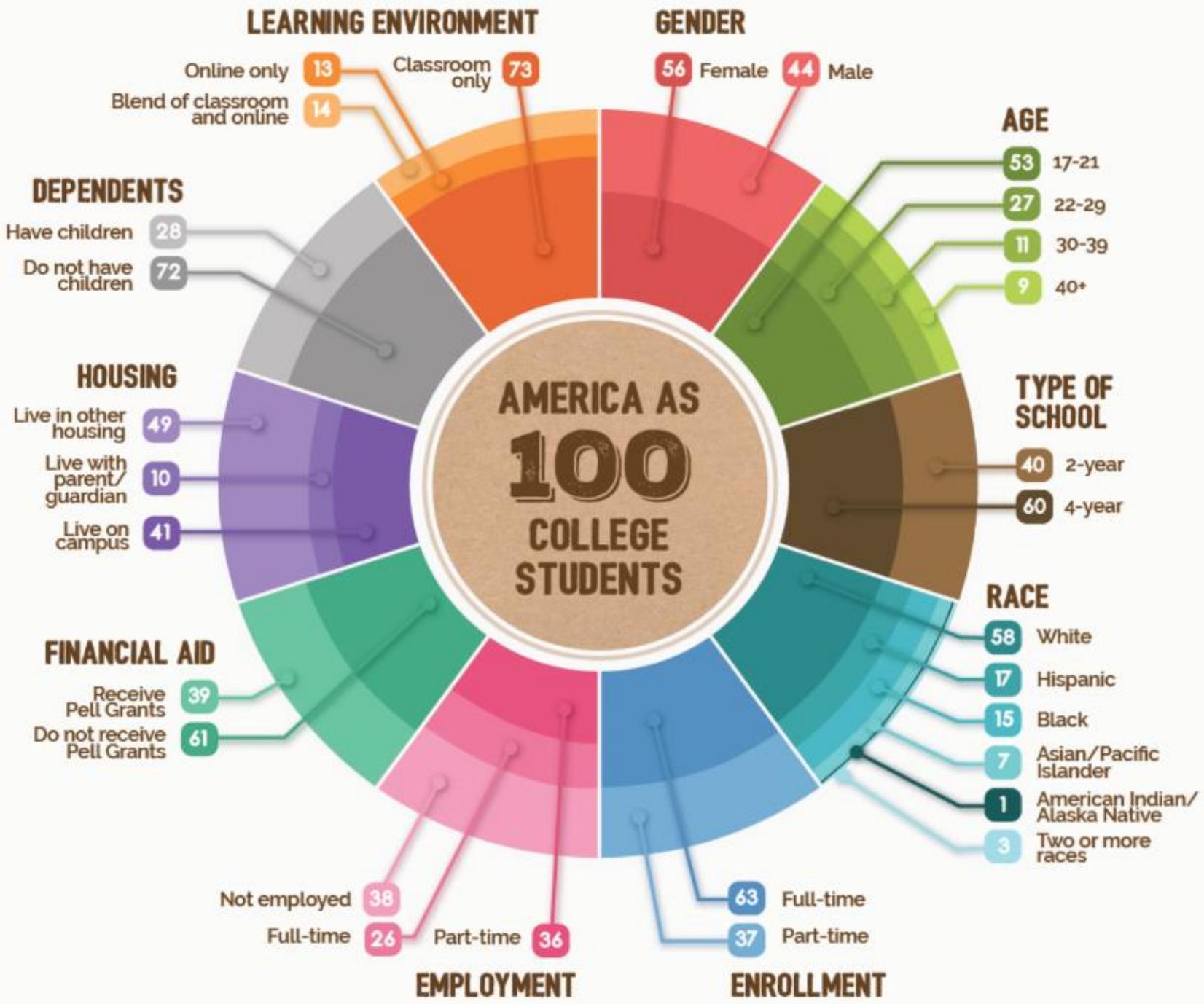
LESS LIKELY TO GRADUATE



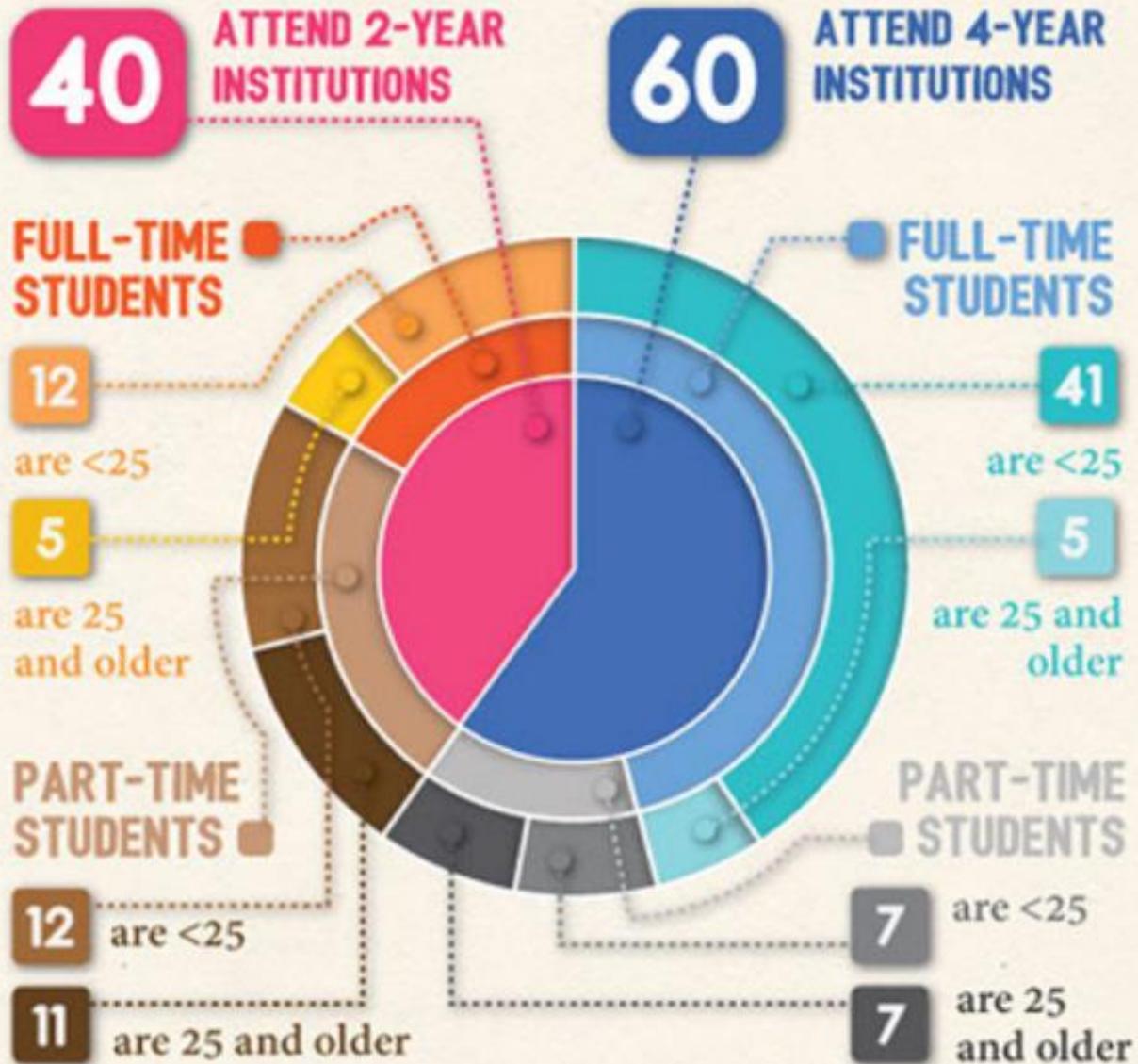
STUDENTS WITH ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL,
WORK AND FAMILY OBLIGATIONS ARE
TWICE AS LIKELY
TO DROP OUT OF SCHOOL
IN THEIR FIRST YEAR AS STUDENTS
FRESH OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL –
38 PERCENT COMPARED TO 16 PERCENT.



NO MORE THAN
A QUARTER OF
PART-TIME STUDENTS
MAKE IT TO GRADUATION, EVEN WHEN
GIVEN TWICE AS LONG TO COMPLETE.



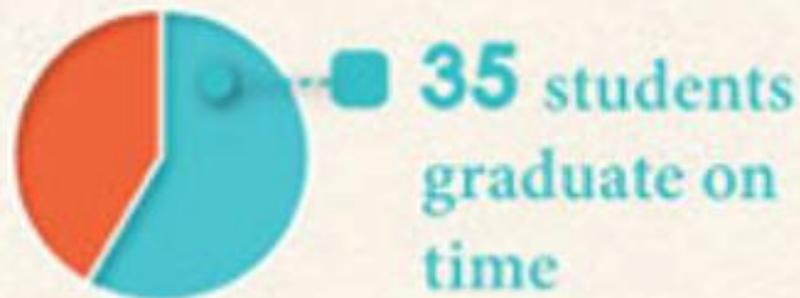
UNDERGRADUATE ENROLLMENT



AT 2-YEAR INSTITUTIONS



AT 4-YEAR INSTITUTIONS



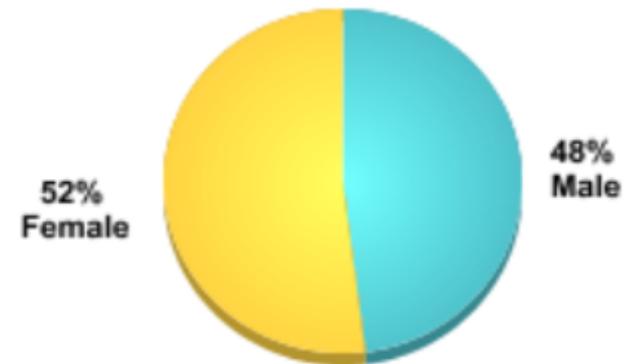
Example



UNDERGRADUATE ATTENDANCE STATUS



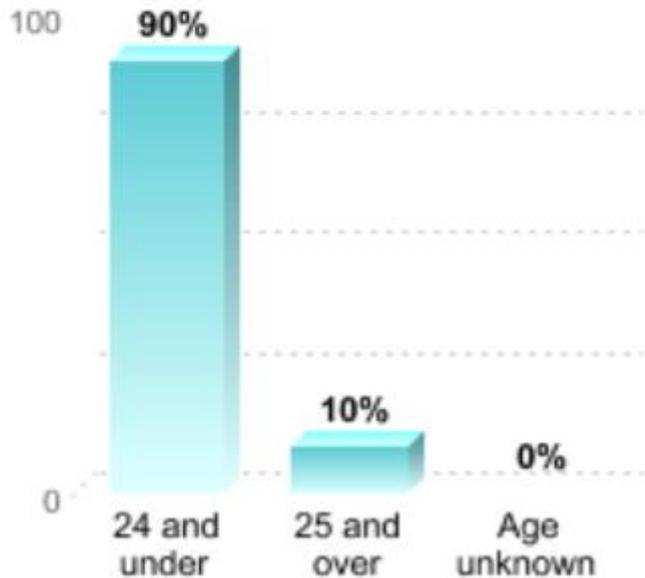
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT GENDER



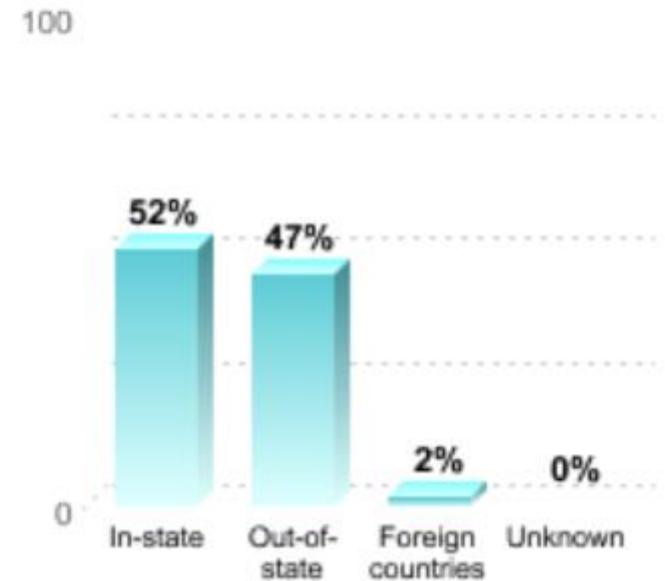
Example



UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT AGE



UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT RESIDENCE



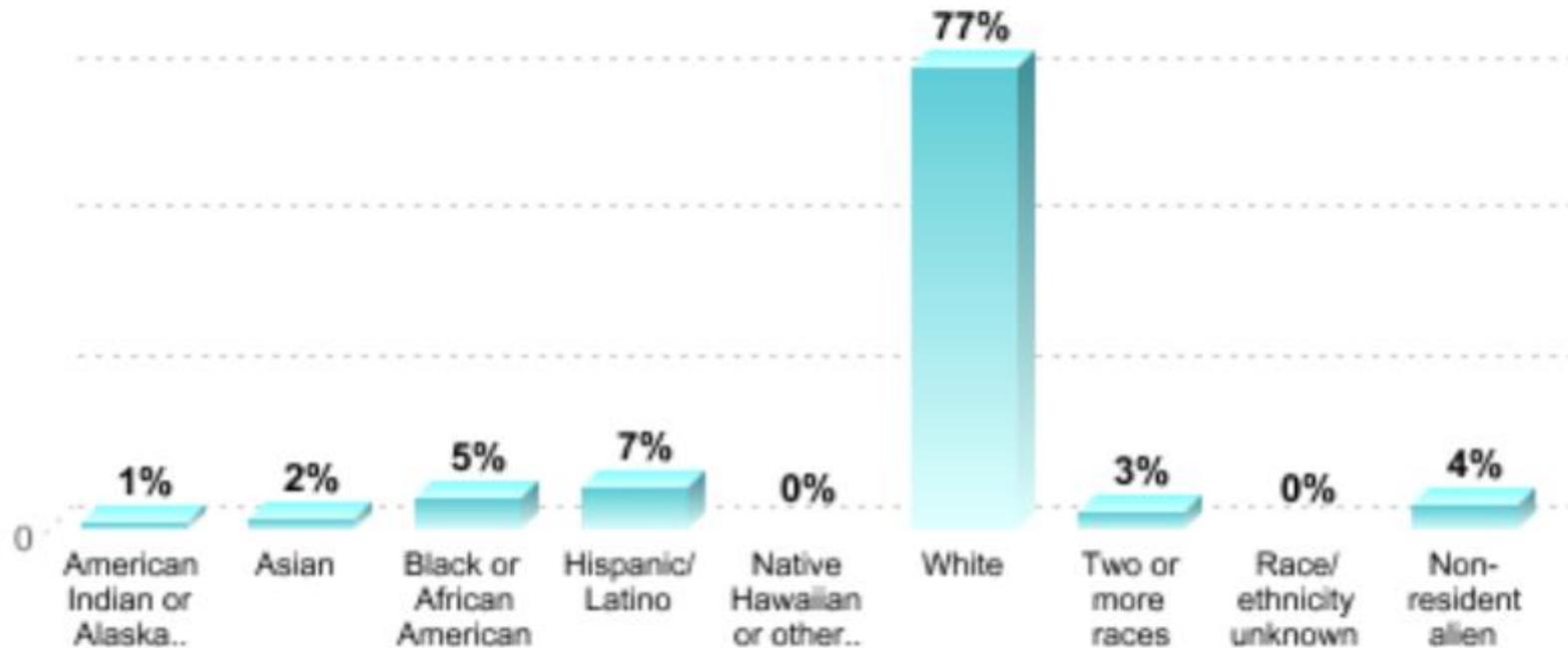
Example



UNIVERSITY OF
ARKANSAS

UNDERGRADUATE RACE/ETHNICITY

100



College Student Cultures

The life of the university community

- School spirit
- Athletics
- Student organizations based on academic, social, personal interest
- “Student Affairs” or “Student Services” for support
- Many resources to support them on campus such as academic advisors, student health and wellness centers, involvement organizations for interests
 - Good to know for referrals



Students' Rights to Privacy

Previously “in loco parentis”

Laws

- **HIPPA**
 - Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 is legislation that keeps medical information private
 - **FERPA**
 - Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act protects privacy of student education records
 - Students have the right to inspect and review their education records
-

Students' Rights to Privacy

HIPPA and FERPA... What can you do?

- Secure files (electronic and hard copy)
 - Locked cabinets, strong passwords on computers
 - Use paper shredders for old documents
 - Never release student information without their consent
 - This includes media such as reporters, family members
 - Ask your department for training/resources
-

Additional Resources

Books on HIED in the U.S.

- College Students in the United States by Renn and Reason
- A History of American Higher Education by Thelin
- American Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century by Bastedo, Altbach, Bumport (4th ed)

Good sources for current events in U.S. HIED

- Chronicle of Higher Education
- Inside Higher Education

U.S. HIED professional associations with resources online

- ACPA: College Student Educators International
 - NASPA: Student Affairs Administrators in HIED
 - ASHE: Association for the Study of HIED
 - AERA: American Educational Research Association
-

Books

- Generation Z Goes to College by Corey Seemiller and Meghan Grace
- Teaching At Its Best: A Research-Based Resource for College Instructors by Linda Nilson
- The Undergraduate Experience: Focusing Institutions on What Matters Most by Felton, Gardner, Schroeder, Lambert, and Barefoot
- How Learning Works: 7 Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching by Ambrose, Bridtes, DiPietro, Lovett, and Norman
- Teaching for Learning: 101 Intentionally Designed Educational Activities to Put Students on the Path to Success by Major, Harris, and Zakrajsek

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning resources

- [Faculty Focus](#)
- [Michigan State U FOD](#)
- [Northwestern U SEARLE](#)
- [University of Michigan CRLT](#)
- [The Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education](#)

Additional Resources

Final tidbits...

- Some common surprises for international TAs
- Other questions to consider
- Resources



Thank you!

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Some common surprises for International TAs...

- You may be the first person from outside the U.S. the student has ever met
 - Most students are excited to learn about other cultures and to make connections, although it may be new to them
 - Degree of (in)formality in student interactions
 - Greetings and use of names
 - Let students know what you prefer
 - Student dress/attire often very casual
 - Communication (type and frequency)
 - Expect you to be available, approachable, and caring – but you set boundaries
-

Some common surprises for International TAs...

- **Student expectations of faculty (including TAs)**
 - Amount and type of student participation in class
 - Students raising hands or speaking up with questions
 - Expect interactive, engaged learning and not just lecture and note taking
 - Eating and drinking in class is common
 - Use of technology in class (cell phones, laptops, tablets)
 - If a student feels they have been treated unfairly, it is common for them to complain or challenge the teacher
 - Students often ask for explanations of their grades and will try to “negotiate”
 - **Balancing the personal and professional**
-



Other questions to consider...

(Discuss together,
and ask your students!)

Other Questions to Consider...

- At what age do students begin considering attending college?
 - How do students choose which college to attend?
 - What are the admissions standards and requirements to attend university?
 - Entrance exams, GPA, etc.
 - What percentage of secondary school students continues to university?
 - How difficult is it to get into university?
 - Mass education or elite? Public or private good?
 - Who pays for college?
 - Who sets the curriculum and how much freedom do students have in choosing their major area of study?
 - When and how do students decide on their major specialization?
-

Other Questions to Consider...

- What is university student culture like?
 - How do students typically spend their time outside of the classroom
 - Time spent studying? Socializing? Working? With family obligations?
 - Where do students live while in university?
 - How long is the typical undergraduate degree program?
 - Graduate degree program length?
 - What is the relationship like between university students and faculty members?
 - Formal or informal? Frequent contact?
 - What is the classroom climate like?
 - Formal or informal? Common types of learning activities and teaching styles?
 - How is student learning assessed?
-