



Supporting undergraduate admissions: Insights & trends

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Agenda

- Who we are
- Recent analysis
- Innovative approaches
- Q&A

Who we are

MISSION

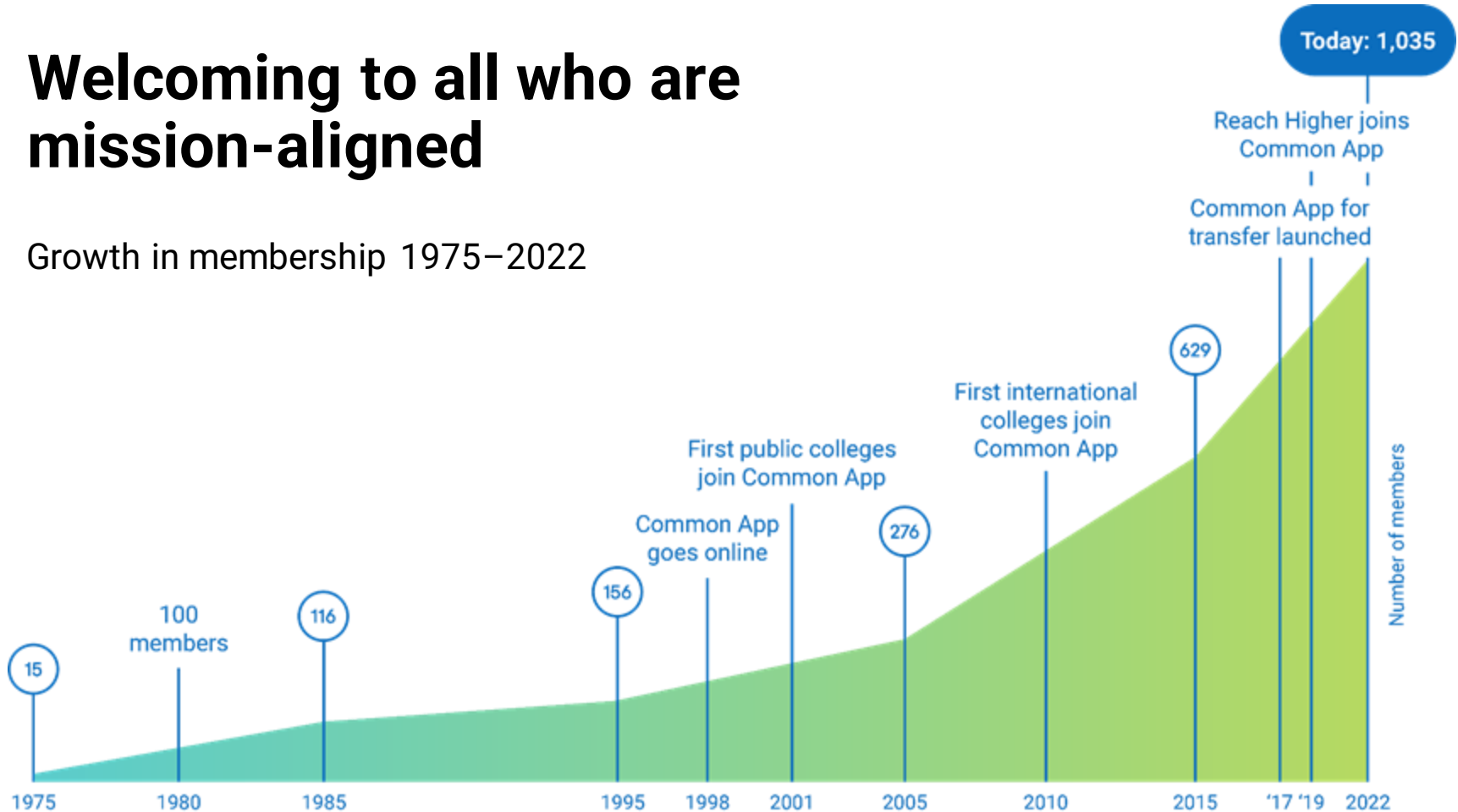
Common App is a nonprofit membership organization committed to the pursuit of access, equity, and integrity in the college admission process.

Each year, more than one million students – a third of whom are first-generation – apply to college through Common App.



Welcoming to all who are mission-aligned

Growth in membership 1975–2022



Common App membership

2022–2023

1,035 Member institutions

285 Public members

514 Charge no application fee

50 U.S. states, DC, and Puerto Rico

59 International members

18 Countries outside the U.S.

First-year and transfer students

2021–2022

7.6M First-year
applications
submitted

1.2M Unique first-year
applicants

2.9M First-year
accounts
created

254K Transfer
applications
submitted

113K Unique transfer
applicants

414K Transfer
accounts
created

First-year student profile

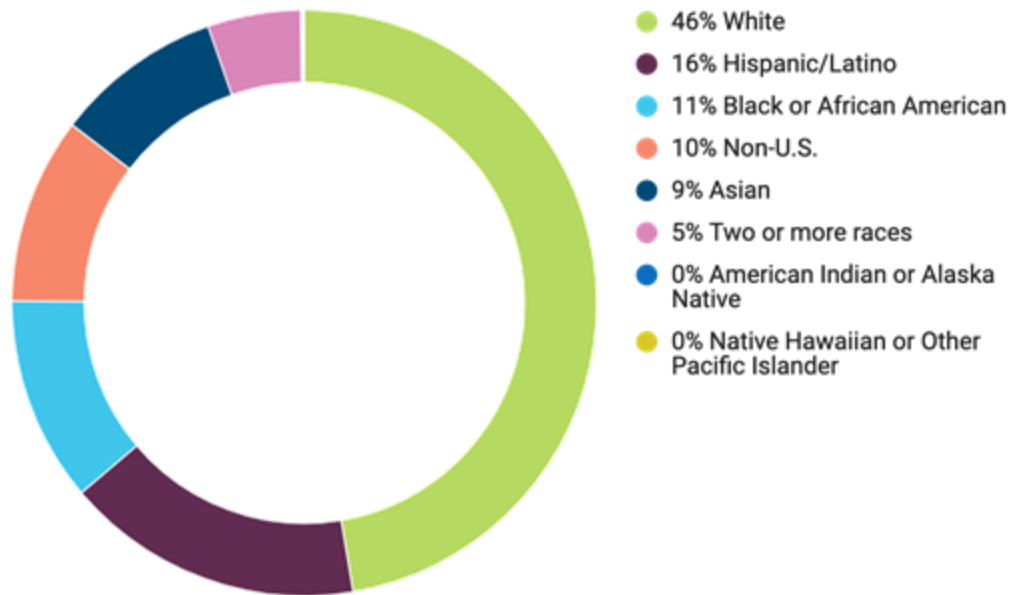
2021–2022

34%

First-generation students

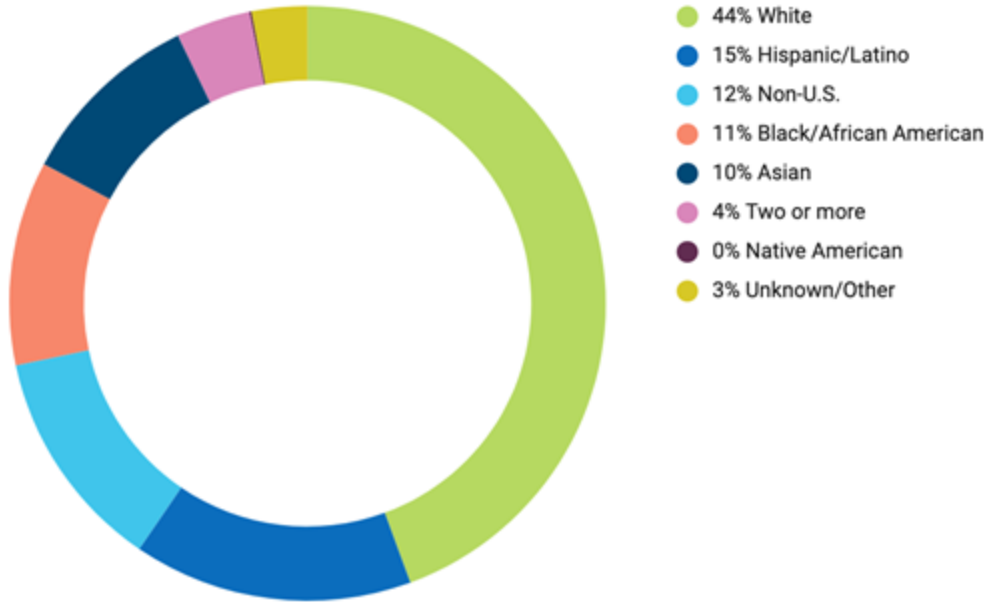
25%

Received a Common App fee waiver



Transfer student profile

2021–2022



35%

First-generation students

29%

Received a Common App fee waiver

Recent analysis

Data research and analytics

As an organization serving millions of students and counselors each year, Common App is uniquely positioned to share data and provide insight into the undergraduate college admissions process.

- Research briefs
- State reports
- Deadline updates

commonapp.org/about/reports-and-insights



Common App deadline update

2021–2022

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Introduction

Common App is committed to expanding access and opportunity for all students, particularly those historically underrepresented in higher education. By analyzing up-to-date application activity from our expansive data warehouses, we can uncover and amplify trends as they emerge. The importance of communicating these trends to our community has never been greater, as students and families grapple with the persistent impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This report represents the 3rd release in the 2021–22 deadline update series at Common App – the largest, most comprehensive source of higher education application data available in the U.S. You can find our last update for [trends through mid-December](#) and [trends through mid-November](#). We will continue to release these reports monthly through March 2022, to coincide with major application deadlines across our membership and to keep the public apprised of ongoing trends in the state of higher education applications.

Note: Each update in this series highlights year-over-year application activity for first-year applicants through a specific date (in this case, January 17). Since fall 2020 trends were anomalous due to the global pandemic, we provide an additional year of data for comparison in all displays. These analyses are thus restricted to the 853 members that have been continuously active since 2019–20 (referred to hereafter as “returning members”).

Common App transfer data

2021–2022

113K

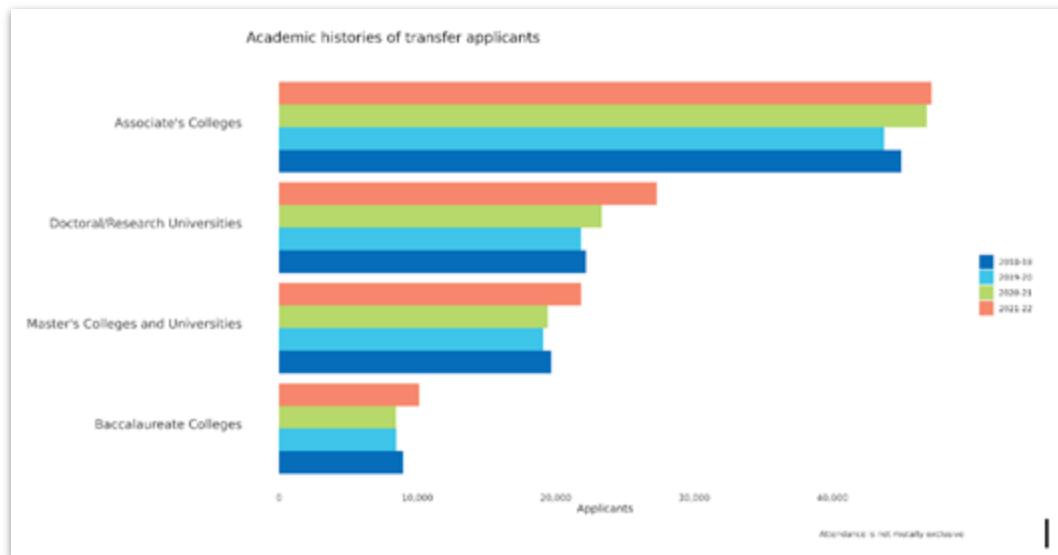
Transfer applicants
(+6.5% y-o-y)

254K

Transfer applications
(+12% y-o-y)

41%

Previously attended a 2yr college*



* Includes Carnegie classifications for Associate's; Special Focus Two-Year; and Baccalaureate/Associate's; Associate's Dominant colleges

Why focus on transfer?



The expectations gap

39%

of undergraduates attend
community college



80%

Indicate a desire to transfer
to attain a bachelor's degree



25%

Actually transfer



17%

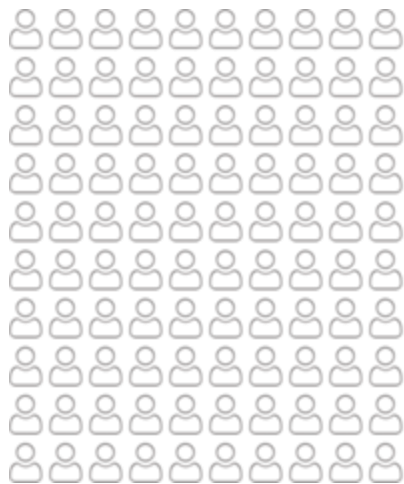
Accomplish their goal of
earning a bachelor's degree



Currently, only a fraction of community college students make it through to earn a bachelor's degree.

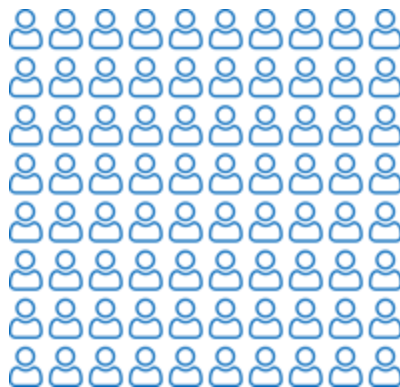
For every **100**

community college students



80 in 100

intend to earn a bachelor's degree

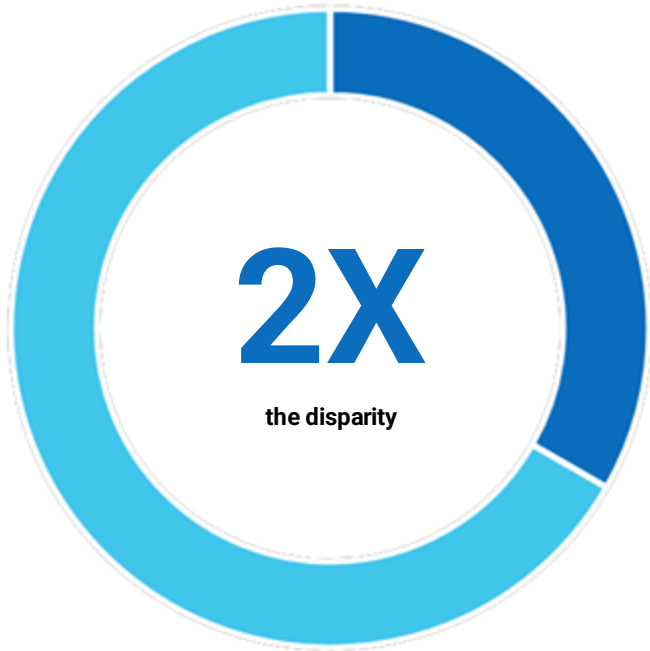


14 in 100

earn a bachelor's degree in 6 years



Transfer inequity



- **White** students are twice as likely to transfer as **Black and Latinx** students
- **Low-income students** are 2.4x more likely to start at a community college compared to students from the highest income quartile
- **Higher-income** students are twice as likely to transfer as **lower-income** students
- **Hispanic students** are 1.6x more likely and **Black students** are 1.3x more likely to start at a community college compared to white students

Common Transfer Guarantee (CTG) pilot program

Our goal was to promote visibility for guaranteed admission policies for students who meet certain criteria.

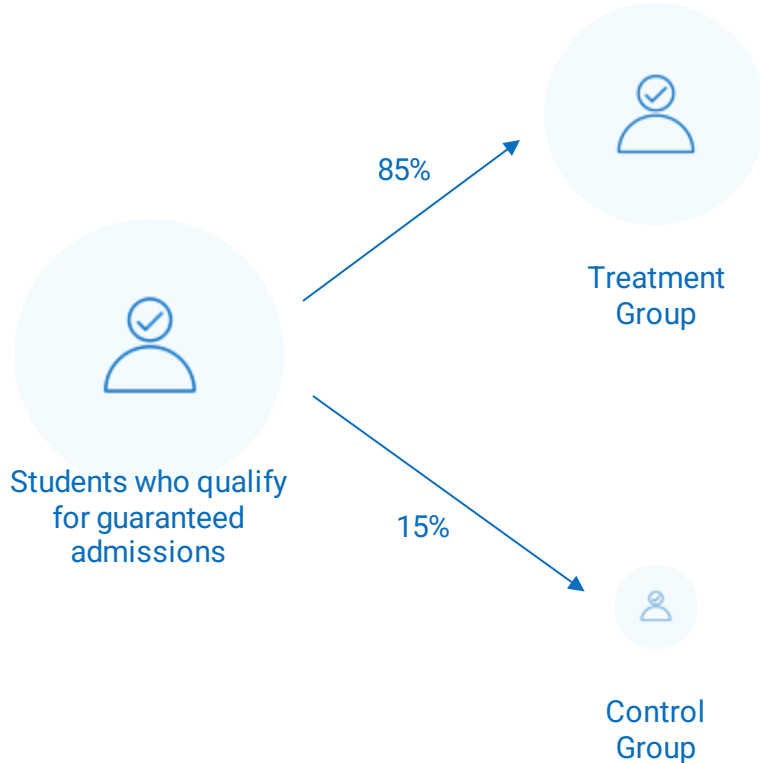
Conducted as a randomized controlled trial over the 2021-22 application cycle, this pilot program sought to learn if we could positively impact students submitting applications to colleges with guaranteed admission programs.



CTG phase 1 approach

Method/tactic	Transfer students supported	Transfer pathways supported	Aligned admission agreement(s)	Intended Impact
Nudge students who started a Common App for transfer application to submission by emailing them options for guaranteed admission (including articulation agreements).	Community college student seeking transfer to a 4yr college	Vertical	Guaranteed admission agreement; Articulation agreements	Increased visibility of guaranteed admission options for Common App for transfer students. Increased number of Common App students submitting an application.

Throughout phase 1 of the pilot, we collected data to help us evaluate next steps.



Data collection

- **Quantitative data:** We tracked quantitative data around engagement with emails and the application (i.e. number of applications submitted to a suggested match, number of students enrolled in a suggested match).
- **Survey data:** We sent out a surveys to students and members to track satisfaction rates.
- **Interviews and focus groups:** We conducted interviews with students to gather qualitative feedback and answer any remaining open research questions.

Results - inconclusive

Outcomes

- Recruited 25 participants from 13 states, 1 international, 16 private, 8 public
- Successfully launched CTG in October 2021
- 45k emails were sent to qualified students with a **61.2%** average open rate
- Quantitative and qualitative analysis completed September 2022.

Analysis

- Nudging campaign had **no significant impact** on students submitting a transfer application.
- Many survey and interview participants indicated they:
 - were unaware of guaranteed admission prior to receiving the email.
 - wanted more clarity and specifics around eligibility.
 - were motivated to look into the listed colleges.
 - felt more relaxed about the application process.

Continuing questions

- Should the strategy be more focused on highlighting 2YR/4YR partnerships?
- When is the best time to communicate guaranteed admissions information to students?
- How can Common App best engage its membership to impact transfer?

Recommendations

- Consider a regional approach
- Determine a best use case for nudging
- Consider an in-app solution
- Identify multiple channels to introduce CTG information to students
- Determine the best time(s) to introduce CTG information to students
- Revamp the communication approach

Further Common App research



State level reports

We're excited to provide some insight into how the pandemic has affected college admissions, now at a state level.

These reports include a breakdown of data trends from all 50 states and the District of Columbia for the 2020–2021 application season.

<https://www.commonapp.org/statereports>

Common App in Illinois

2021–2022

Top applying counties in Illinois (descending)

- Cook County
- DuPage County
- Lake County
- Williamson County
- Kankakee County
- McHenry County
- Kendall County
- Winnebago County
- Saline County
- McLean County
- Champaign County
- Peoria County
- Sangamon County
- Madison County
- Tazewell County



Unique Applicants

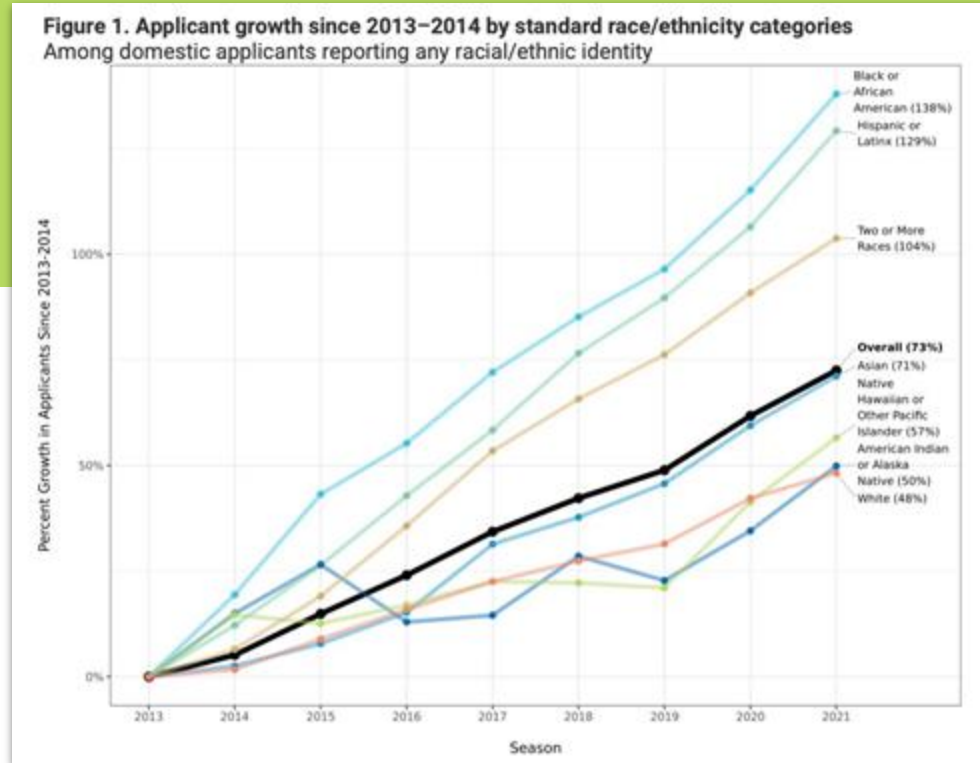


Unpacking applicant race & ethnicity

We use the detailed race and ethnicity data that first-year domestic applicants submit to offer one of the most nuanced examinations of demographic trends in college applications to date.

Whereas past analyses use standard race and ethnicity categories that simplify and conceal nuance, we are able to unpack these groupings further.

commonapp.org/about/reports-and-insights

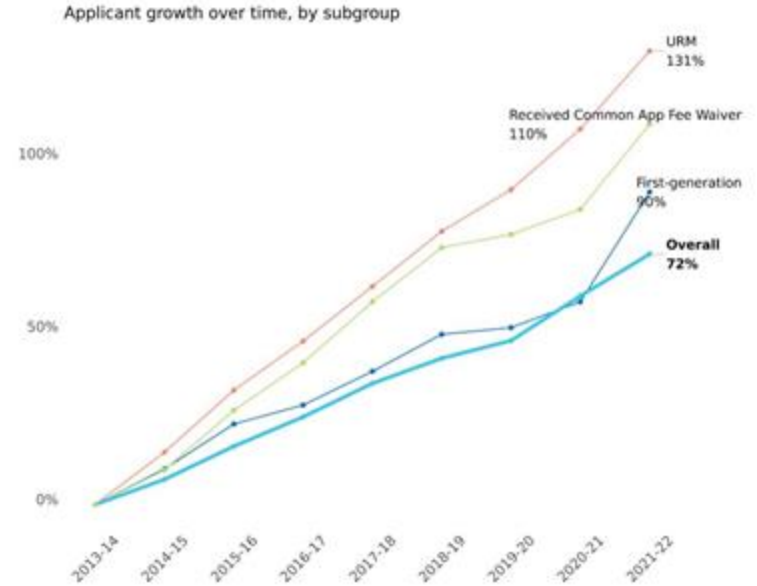


Long-term progress toward diversifying Common App's applicant pool

Noting disparities in college enrollment and attainment across students from different demographic and socioeconomic subgroups, Common App has committed to increasing the diversity of students using its platform.

In this research brief, we track long-term growth in the Common App applicant pool between 2013–14 and 2021–22.

Figure 2: Trends were most pronounced for first-generation, fee waiver recipient, and URM applicants (includes domestic and international applicants)



To assess the degree to which national population dynamics were driving these changes, we also analyzed high school graduation cohort data from each state since 2013. We found that changes in the racial/ethnic composition of high school graduates over the past decade do not explain the substantial shift in the composition of the Common App applicant pool.

Innovative approaches

How pilots contribute to our mission

- Allow us to iterate
- Test assumptions before putting into the app
- Prove market value

Common App initiatives

Direct Admissions

Flip the script on college admissions and offer proactive admission to students

Scholarships

Connect underrepresented students with critical scholarship aid

Minority serving institutions (MSI)

Expand MSIs in Common App's membership

Evolving the Application

Examine and revise questions that may act as barriers for historically underrepresented students

Direct admissions

Common App Direct Admissions aims to flip the script on college admissions and offer proactive admission to students.

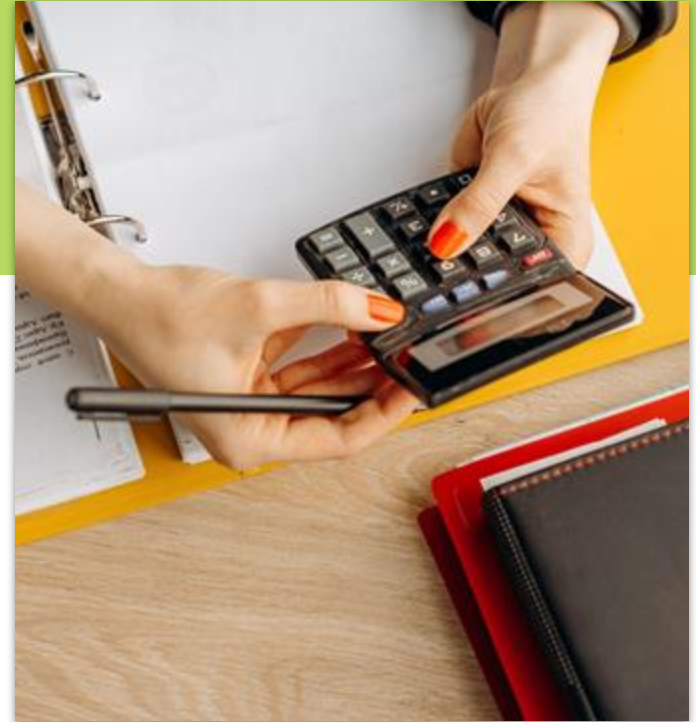
Our goal is to connect students who are college-interested with enrollment opportunities in their state. Common App's pilot consists of targeted email outreach to students who met direct admission criteria for one of our partner institutions.



Scholarships Pilot

Affordability continues to be one of the biggest barriers to a college education. That's why we teamed up with Scholarship America, the largest aggregator of private scholarships in the country.

This year, we'll be launching a pilot scholarship matching and notification service in the first year application, with the goal of connecting underrepresented students with scholarships they are likely to receive.



Scholarship America Pilot

In-app scholarship matching

65% Open rate for scholarship communications from Common App

11% Increase in Black, Latino, and Indigenous applicants

16% Increase in first generation applicants

\$357k Awarded to underrepresented applicants

The notification pilot builds on the success of three years of email outreach interventions.

- Notified students of high-fit Scholarship America opportunities
- Email outreach interventions successfully diversified participating providers' applicant pools
- Also connected underrepresented Common App students to critical scholarship aid.

Minority serving institutions (MSI)

The Minority-Serving Institution (MSI) Program Pilot aimed to increase MSI representation in Common App's membership and expand college offerings for Underrepresented Minority (URM) students.

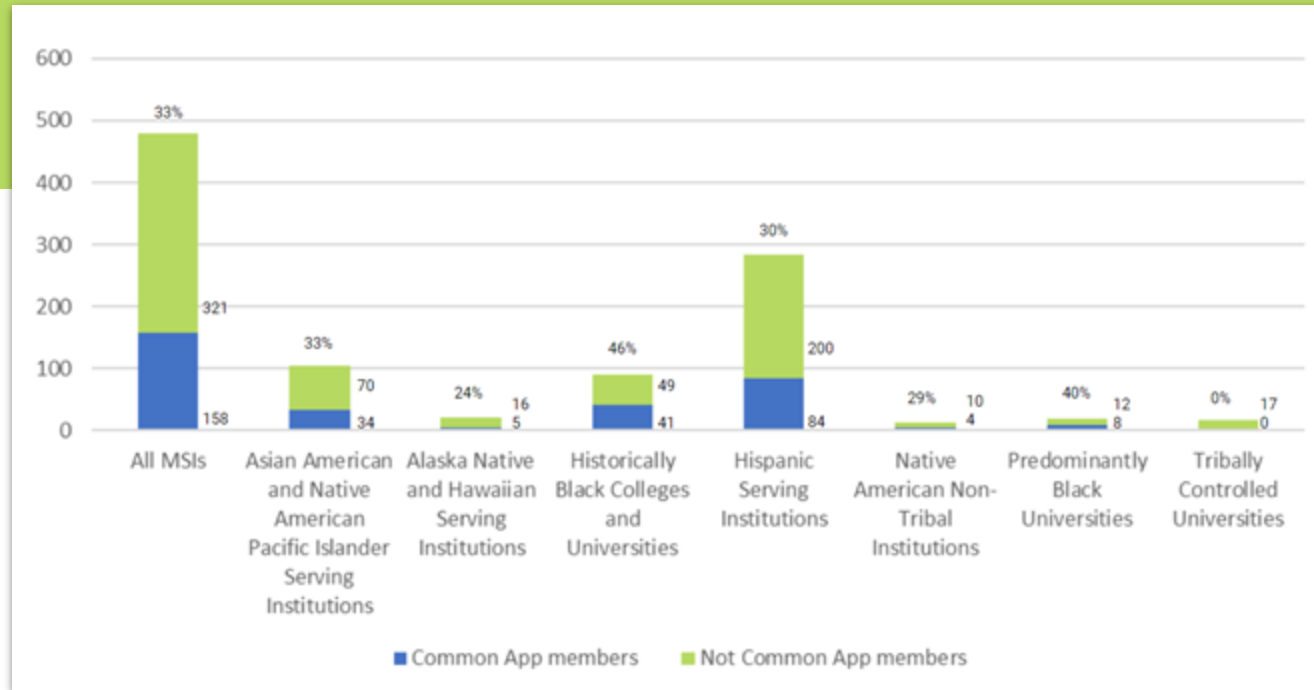
With support from the Lumina Foundation, the pilot implemented a pricing model and dedicated recruitment staffing to attract MSIs.



Minority serving institutions (MSI)

We added 67 MSI institutions to the Common App membership through the pilot.

This increased the representation of nationally-designated four-year MSIs from 19% in 2020 to 33% in 2023.



Evolving the Application

Evolving the Application (ETA) is Common App's annual process that examines and revises questions on the application that may act as barriers for students historically underrepresented in higher education.

The 2022–2023 ETA cycle examined LGBTQ+ student safety.

commonapp.org/evolvingtheapp



Evolving the Application 23-24 process

- Discovery included focus groups & interviews
 - Campus Pride
 - Dr. Genny Beeman
 - Student focus groups
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) for IPEDS impacts
 - Confirmed reporting is on gender, not sex
 - Starting in 2023-24, colleges can report students whose gender is other than male or female
- Analysis of Common App sex and gender data



65% of Common App members are in states that offer a third option on legal documentation

24

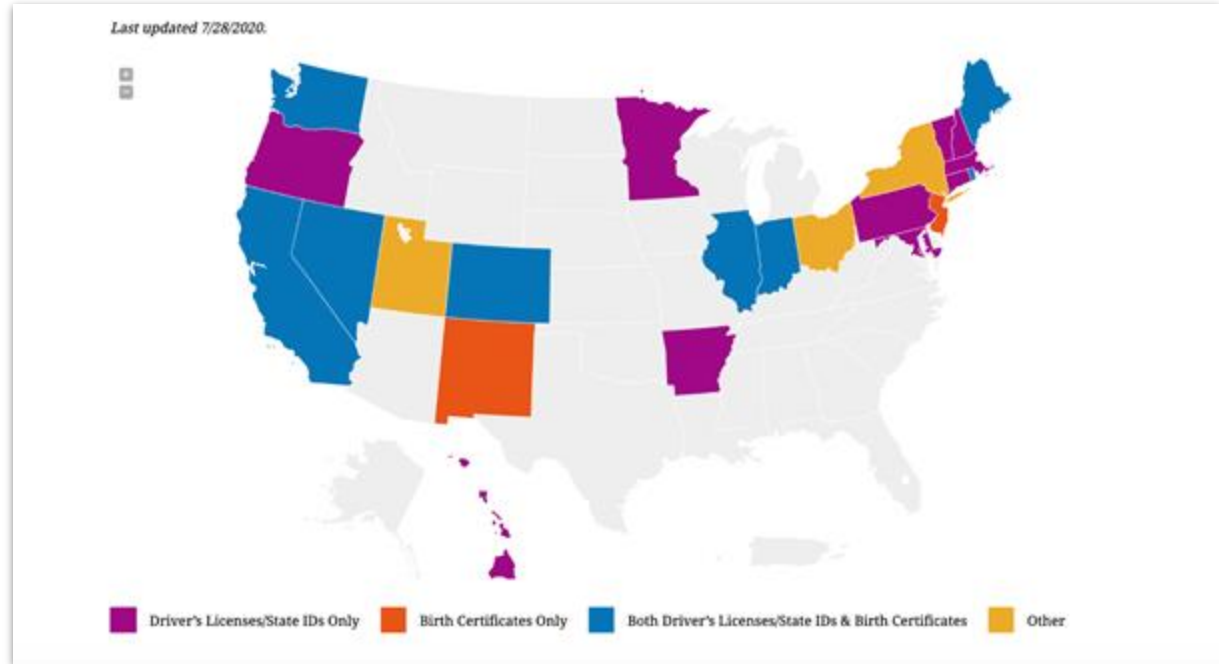
States and DC offer a third option on driver's licenses and birth certificates ¹

650

Members located in these states

100%

All U.S. citizens now have option of using X on passport²



¹ [Lambda Legal, 2020](#)

² [U.S. Department of State, 2021](#)



It's human decency to refer to people by their preferred name.

It's imperative that this happens. This is suicide prevention.

- Nonbinary student

Legal sex & name revisions

After Common App presented our research to Liaison, we aligned on changes to the CAS platform.

- Addition of a third legal sex option
- Specifying which name question should include the legal name
- Revising the other name questions to be more inclusive

Sex

* Legal Sex

Female Male X or another legal sex

My Name

* Would you like to share a different first name that people call you?

Yes No

* My First Name

My Middle Name

Former Name

* Do you have any materials under a former legal name?

Yes No

* Former First Name

Former Middle Name

* Former Last Name



common
app



In support of providing change management resources, we published a joint brief with Campus Pride.





Where do we go next?

ideas.commonapp.org

Connect with Common App



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Questions?

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