



**PRESIDENTS' ALLIANCE** | ON HIGHER EDUCATION  
AND IMMIGRATION

## IMMIGRANT, INTERNATIONAL AND REFUGEE STUDENTS IN HIGHER ED DID YOU KNOW?

**\*\*Includes a preview of new data estimates from the Migration Policy Institute & Higher Ed Immigration Portal\*\***

⇒ **31% (5.6 million)** of all students enrolled in higher education are of immigrant origin\* with 3.7 million second-generation immigrant students and 1.9 million first-generation immigrant students.

- They are the **fastest growing** group of students in higher education (and accounted for 58% of an increase in higher education between 2000 & 2018)
- They are projected to drive the U.S. labor market growth until at least 2035

Sources: Batalova & Feldblum, 2020; Batalova & Feldblum, 2023 (forthcoming)

⇒ **Immigrant-origin students are contributing to the diversification of campuses:**

- 88% of Asian college students are of immigrant origin (37% 1<sup>st</sup> gen & 51% 2<sup>nd</sup> gen)
- 68% of Latine college students are of immigrant origin (18% 1<sup>st</sup> gen & 50% 2<sup>nd</sup> gen)
- 28% of Black college students are of immigrant origin (12% 1<sup>st</sup> gen & 16% 2<sup>nd</sup> gen)
- 10% of White college students are of immigrant origin (4% 1<sup>st</sup> gen & 6% 2<sup>nd</sup> gen)

Source: Batalova & Feldblum, 2023 (forthcoming)

⇒ **Immigrant-origin students account for a significant percentage in a growing number of states:**

- 54% of all students in higher education in California are of immigrant-origin
- Between 30% to 47% are in 12 other states (TX, NY, FL, IL, NJ, AZ, MA, MD, WA, CT, NV, & HI) and D.C.
- At least 20,000 students are in 32 states

Source: Batalova & Feldblum, 2023 (forthcoming)

⇒ **The majority are citizens:**

- 84% of immigrant origin students are citizens, the majority of whom (68%) are 2<sup>nd</sup> generation students and therefore U.S.-born citizens; another 16% are first-generation immigrants and naturalized U.S. citizens
- Among first-generation immigrant students, approximately half are nationalized citizens while the other half are green card holders, refugees, asylees, undocumented (including DACA recipients), TPS holders, etc.
- Both their social and economic trajectories are linked to their immigrant parents

Source: Batalova & Feldblum, 2020

⇒ **Community college plays an essential role in immigrant origin students' higher ed pathways:**

- Over half of immigrant origin students begin their higher education pathways in community college

Source: Teranishi et al., 2011

⇒ **Among first generation immigrants, undocumented students (or students with liminal immigration status) have an important presence in higher ed:**

- Over 400,000 are undocumented making up 1 in 50 college students (or 2% of all enrolled)
- Most current undocumented college students are not eligible for DACA because they arrived in the U.S. after June 2007. Further, new DACA applications have been blocked by legal challenges in the courts
- Types of liminality include: DACA; undocumented; TPS; asylum seeking
- They face a host of well-documented financial, social, and psychological challenges
- They are more likely to:
  - be first-generation to college
  - work part-time
  - juggle family obligations & concerns

- take longer to graduate
- They have no access to federal financial aid and no access to state financial aid in many states.
  - 23 states and D.C. provide in-state tuition to their state's undocumented students. Of those states, 17 also provide access to state financial aid. 7 states, including Massachusetts, provide access to in-state tuition only to DACA recipients.
  - The city of Boston recently expanded its tuition-free community college program to all residents, including undocumented students,
- They encounter hostile social attitudes and political/policy context
- Citizen students of mixed-status families face very similar challenges as their undocumented counterparts

Sources: Enriquez, et al., 2021; Higher Ed Immigration Portal, 2023; Suárez-Orozco, et al., 2015

#### ⇒ **International students\*\* are a separate but significant group to consider:**

- They make up only 5% of students but receive nearly half of MA & Ph.D STEM degrees
- There has been a rapid growth in last 20 years (from roughly 100K at beginning of 2000 to a peak of a million prior to the pandemic)
- While this group shrunk dramatically during Covid, the number of international students is now rebounding
- However, the U.S. is losing its global competitive edge as its share of new international student enrollment has declined from 28% in 2000 to 20% in 2020
- Many international students seek to stay in the U.S. after graduation but face significant immigration obstacles to do so

Sources: Ruiz, 2014; Silver, 2021; ETS, 2022

#### ⇒ **Only 6% of refugee students around the world access higher education:**

- While up from 1% in 2019, it is far below the global average higher ed enrollment of more than 40%
- UNHCR has called for a "15by30 target" –to increase the enrollment of refugee students in higher education to 15% by 2030
- In January 2023, the Biden administration announced the launch of Welcome Corps (private sponsorship of refugees) and in the coming year, as part of the new Welcome Corps program, public and private colleges and universities will have opportunities to sponsor refugee students, who will be able to come to the U.S. as refugees with a pathway to citizenship and as entering students.

Sources: UNHCR; Higher Ed Immigration Portal; Welcome Corps

#### DEFINITIONS

\* **Immigrant origin students** are part of the **domestic student** population in the United States and include both the **first generation** (who were born abroad & non citizens at birth) and the **second generation** (born in the U.S. to one or more immigrant parents).

\*\* **International students** are individuals from another country who are enrolled in coursework at an accredited, degree-granting higher education institution in the United States on a **temporary, non-immigrant visa** (usually an F1 visa) that allows for academic study

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