

Fiscal Year 2024 Annual report

December 2024



Dear friends,

I'm excited to share with you our inaugural annual report, highlighting Common App's activities, achievements, and financial status over the past fiscal year – spanning July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024. This report is also an opportunity to preview where we're headed as we continue to live out our mission of increasing access, equity, and integrity in the college admissions process.

A year ago, Common App launched what we're calling our Next Chapter. Tapping into the spirit of our founders in 1975 to increase access in the college application process, we set a goal to serve more students from low- and middle-income communities. We call it our moonshot: By 2030, Common App will close its equity gap in students pursuing postsecondary opportunities.

We're working with members, counselors, and other partners to reach this goal. This annual report will show the work we're achieving annually to reach our moonshot.

Common App's Board of Directors is charged with setting the organization's strategic direction and ensuring its long-term health and sustainability. I want to thank Dale Bittinger, our outgoing Chair, for leading the Board in this important work in the 2024 fiscal year. I also want to thank our outgoing board members: Cynthia Archer, Karen Richardson, Art Rodriguez, and Karen Stout. They provided immeasurable expertise and insight to our Board and we are grateful for their service.

As you'll see in this report, we've accomplished so much over the last year, and the Next Chapter is just getting started.

Sincerely,

Vincena Allen

Vincena Allen

Chair, Common App Board of Directors

Common App Board of Directors

2024–2025

Our board is made up of leaders from the college admission counseling profession and at-large experts from outside the field united by a passion for advancing college access on a global scale.

Vincena Allen
The SEED Foundation

Yvonne Berumen
Pitzer College

Dale Bittinger
University of Maryland,
Baltimore County

Carolyn Blair
Clayton High School

Adele Brumfield
University of Michigan

Kim Cook
National College
Attainment Network

Miguel Costa
IE University

Jeffery Gates
Stetson University

Steve Hahn
Huron Consulting Group

Adrienne Amador Oddi
Queens University of
Charlotte

Descatur “Des” Potier
Morehouse College

Stephen Smith
Intellispark

Whitney Soule
University of Pennsylvania

Tevera D. Stith
KIPP Foundation

Sara Strickland
City Academy Charter
School

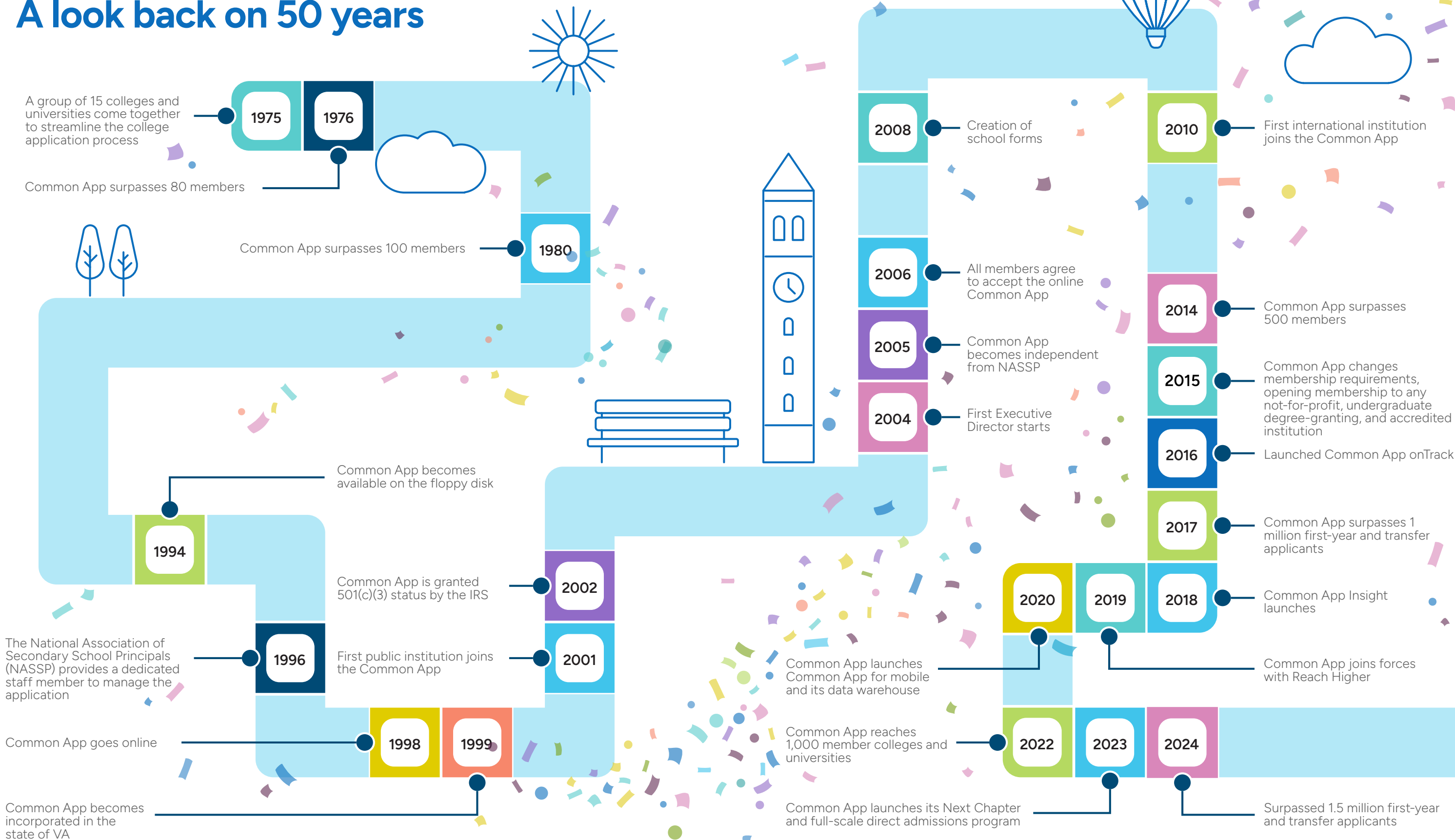
Anna Takahashi
Eastside College Prep

Jonathan B Williams
Pomona College

Jenny Rickard
Common App (Ex Officio)



Common App: A look back on 50 years



Investing in our mission: Common App's moonshot goal



In 2023, Common App launched our Next Chapter. Tapping into the spirit of our founders in 1975 to increase access in the college application process, we set a goal to serve more students from low- and middle-income communities.

We call it our moonshot. By 2030, Common App will close its equity gap in students pursuing postsecondary opportunities.

Common App's Next Chapter is in support of our mission:

We're committed to the pursuit of access, equity, and integrity in the college admission process.

Our vision is to be the trusted source to access, afford, and attain opportunity for all.



How we reached for the moon in 2024

Powered by technology and our membership, Common App's 2023–2024 application season saw record-increases in students pursuing their postsecondary dreams.

+5%

first-generation applicants

+12%

applicants from below-median income ZIP codes

+11%

underrepresented minority applicants

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Common App has committed to four specific goals. These goals lay out the work that needs to be done to make progress toward our moonshot goal by 2030.

Provide the gateway to explore and apply for many opportunities

Deliver tailored insights to expand outreach

Simplify access to financial assistance

Be excellent to one another in everything we do

Provide the gateway to explore and apply for many opportunities

Direct admissions

Direct admissions is designed to bridge the gap between high school and higher education by proactively admitting students into college. Common App's program identifies first-generation and middle- and low-income students who meet the admissions requirements of participating institutions and informs those students that they have been conditionally accepted to a given institution based on their qualifications.

FY24 progress

Common App launched its full-scale direct admissions program with 71 member colleges and universities in the fall of 2023. Over 400,000 first-generation and low and middle-income students across 28 states received proactive admissions offers.

3 out of 4

students who added a school to their college list upon receiving a direct admission offer applied to that school

3.8%

offers-to-application rate across all 71 member colleges varied among colleges from <2% to >15%

"I felt like I was wanted at a school after being rejected from my top 2 schools. It made me feel proud."

— Direct admissions offer recipient

"Mercy University is typically very localized in terms of where we're attracting students. And we're downstate in New York. One of our goals is to increase our application for mid-state and certainly upstate New York. And I think the direct admissions program has really helped us accelerate that process."

— Adam Castro, Mercy University

Student Context Pilot

In partnership with Making Caring Common, a project of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, we created a Student Context Inventory that gives students the option to tell us more about their circumstances and responsibilities in a checklist-style section of the application. This checklist allows students to think more broadly about the valuable experience they bring to the table, while also providing Common App members the ability to evaluate a student's academic record in a broader context. This signals to students that their lived experiences matter.

Students can include items like:

- Spending more than a certain number of hours a week working at a paid job to support their family
- Interpreting or translating for household members
- Taking care of their siblings

FY24 progress

There were a total of 23 participating members in the second year of the pilot.

21%

of all applicants saw the question this season
up from 17% last season

60%

of all applicants who saw the question
provided at least one response

“[This question] helps students understand that we are looking at them in a holistic way. We’re showing them that we value all of what they’re responsible for and not just their activities.”

— Student Context Pilot
member participant

Context & Background

Sometimes academic records and extracurricular activities are impacted by family responsibilities or other circumstances. We would like to know about these responsibilities and circumstances. Your responses will not negatively impact your application. You may repeat some information you already provided in the Common App Activities section.

Please select which activities you spend **4 or more hours** per week doing.

☐ Assisting family or household members with situations such as doctors appointments, bank visits, or visa interviews

☐ Doing tasks for my family or household (cooking, cleaning, laundry, etc.)

☐ Experiencing homelessness or another unstable living situation

☐ Interpreting or translating for family or household members

☐ Living in an environment without reliable or usable internet

☐ Living independently or living on my own (not including boarding school)

☐ Managing family or household finances, budget, or paying bills

☐ Providing transportation for family or household members

☐ Taking care of sick, disabled, and/or elderly members of my family or household

☐ Taking care of younger family or household members

☐ Taking care of my own child or children

☐ Working at a paid job to contribute to my household's income

☐ Yard work/farm work

☐ Other (please describe)

☐ None of these

Continue

Deliver tailored insights to expand outreach

Common App is uniquely positioned to share data and provide insight into the college admissions process. Our reports and insights are driven by nearly 50 years of experience supporting applicants, recommenders, and admissions professionals.

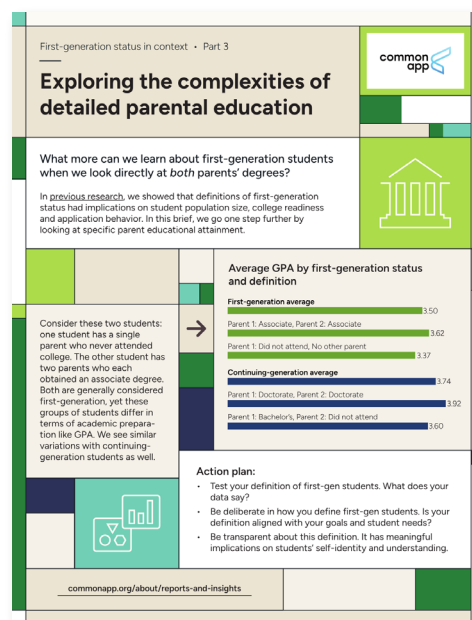
With more than 1,000 member colleges and universities serving over 1 million applicants each year, we can provide insight into application trends across the applicant lifecycle and identify potential barriers and opportunities to improve college access.

Unpacking the definition of first-generation

Common App's first research brief of the 2023–2024 application season took a deep dive into nearly a decade of application data for over 9 million applicants to analyze first-generation status, parental education, and related student characteristics. The analysis highlights who can be considered a first-generation college student and how best to think about and address their needs as a population.

Takeaways

- Common App data show that small details — specifically which parents' degrees and what types of degrees are considered — can have a big impact on which students are included in first-generation definitions.
- There are over 100 distinct definitions of first-generation status that can be constructed based on different parental characteristics and details. Each definition creates a different number of first-generation students with different levels of college-readiness and application behaviors.



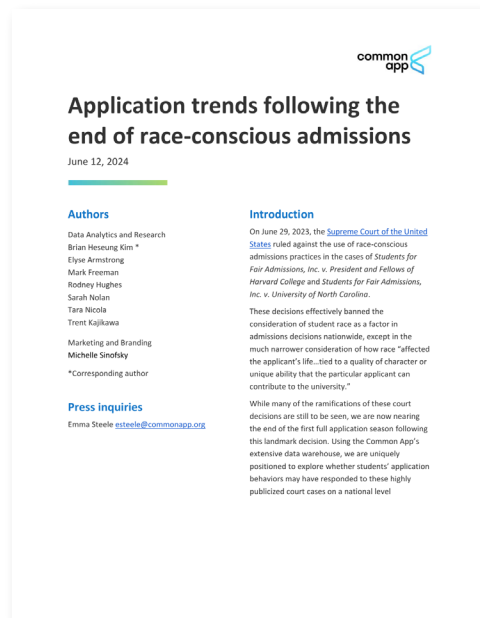
Application trends following the end of race-conscious admissions

On June 29, 2023, the Supreme Court of the United States effectively banned the consideration of student race as a factor in admissions decisions nationwide.

Using the Common App's extensive data warehouse, we explored whether students' application behaviors may have responded to these highly publicized court cases on a national level.

Takeaways

Our research found that the Supreme Court decision did not seem to have a major impact on application patterns we studied through the Common App platform.

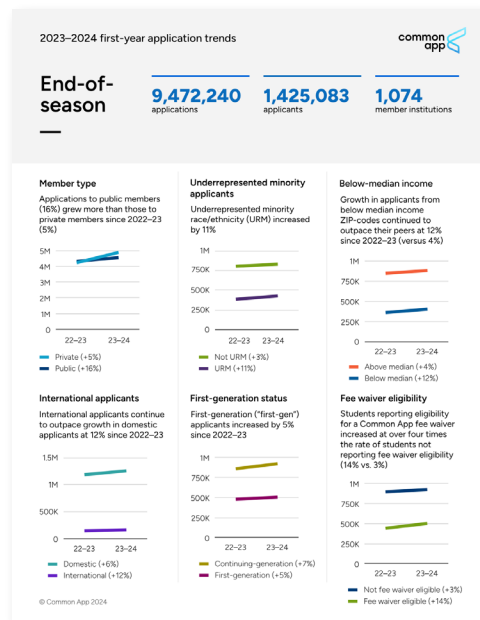


Deadline updates

Each year, Common App releases an ongoing series of "Deadline Update " research briefs to share detailed and timely insights about the state of first-year college applications and year-over-year trends up to a specific point in the application season. We time these briefs to capture activity around major college application deadlines on the first of each month from November through March.

Takeaways

- The 2023–24 application season was a record-breaking year, with over 1.4 million distinct first-year applicants submitting nearly 9.5 million applications to 1,074 member institutions.
- The number of applicants identifying as an underrepresented minority increased by 11%, with the strongest growth seen among American Indian, Latinx, and Black or African American students.
- Growth in applicants from below median income ZIP-codes continued to outpace their peers at 12% since 2022–23 (versus 4%).



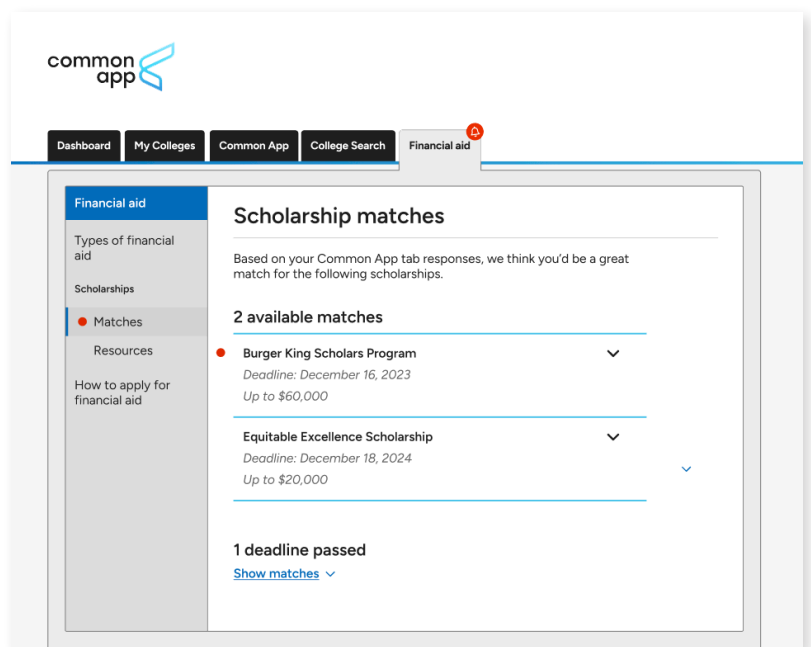
Simplify access to financial assistance

Supporting students through fee waivers

Each year, Common App member institutions agree to waive their application fees for students who meet our eligibility requirements, such as receiving free and reduced lunch, or if the student lives in subsidized housing. **In FY24, the 2023–2024 admission cycle, the total fees first-year applicants did not have to pay was nearly \$155 million.**

Scholarship partnerships

In 2024, Common App continued its partnership with Scholarship America, the largest administrator of private scholarships in the country, with a goal of connecting underrepresented students to scholarship opportunities to fund their post-secondary pathway. This year, we piloted a new scholarship matching feature on the financial aid tab of the application, which drove high student engagement.



FY24 progress

89K+

racially underrepresented and fee waiver eligible students reached

\$4.8M+

awarded to underrepresented students due to Common App outreach

Common App outreach drove an:

- 18% increase in Black, Latino, and Indigenous applicants to participating scholarship programs
- 18% increase in first-generation applicants

Be excellent to one another in everything we do

Over the last year, the Common App team engaged in a collaborative, cross-organizational process to establish our core values.

Our internal working group, the Values Committee, worked alongside the senior leadership team to identify and define values terms and statements that are directly connected to our mission, vision and moonshot.

Our core values guide our behaviors and relationships to our constituents, and amongst each other.



Responsibility

We take ownership and accountability of our work and behavior to pave the way for equity and access in higher education.



Growth

We pursue learning and innovation to achieve advancement for ourselves, our organization, and the people and communities we serve.



Action

We power positive change and innovation through intentional actions.



Human-centered

We prioritize understanding and empathy for all, focusing on the diverse needs, perspectives, and experiences of our colleagues, students, counselors, members, and partners.



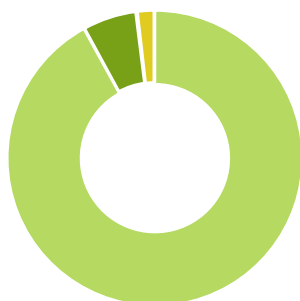
Collaboration

We embrace unity and respectful discourse, bringing together diverse skills and perspectives to act toward our shared purpose.



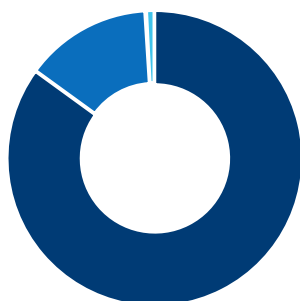
Funding our mission

Common App's mission to advance access, equity, and integrity in the college admissions process has never been more important. We use our revenue to fund the several initiatives we have underway that are meant to help more students access, afford, and attain postsecondary opportunities.



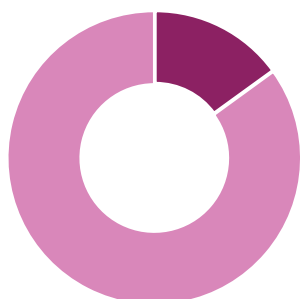
Revenue

		2024	2023
92%	Program services	\$58,347,823	\$53,252,147
6%	Investment income	\$3,567,405	\$1,188,256
2%	Grants and contributions	\$1,248,671	\$353,069
0%	Other income	\$37,500	\$41,680
	Total	\$63,201,399	\$54,835,152



Expenses

		2024	2023
85%	Program services	\$41,387,844	\$37,944,906
14%	General and administrative	\$6,750,373	\$5,143,960
1%	Fundraising	\$275,130	\$258,339
	Total	\$48,413,347	\$43,347,205



Liabilities and net assets

		2024	2023
15%	Liabilities	\$12,954,689	\$9,259,995
85%	Net assets	\$71,319,265	\$56,531,213
	Total	\$84,273,954	\$65,791,208



Net assets breakdown

		2024	2023
99%	Without donor restrictions	\$70,491,028	\$55,295,915
1%	With donor restrictions	\$828,237	\$1,235,298
	Total	\$71,319,265	\$56,531,213



Dear friends,

I want to express my thanks and sincere appreciation to our members, partners, counseling community, and the incredible Common App team for the work they do every day to expand access to those who need it most. Our first-ever annual report shows Common App's incredible growth and impact.

This innovative work would not have been possible without the more than \$11 million in grant funding we've received throughout the last few years. We are grateful to our partners for helping us continue increasing access for underrepresented students and helping them overcome barriers to college.

Fiscal Year 2024 was quite a year, and all signs are pointing to continued growth and expanded access for students in fiscal year 2025. We'll continue to expand our initiatives, including a scaled direct admissions program with 120+ participating colleges and universities, and a more robust scholarships matching program directly in the application. Our research agenda for the year will explore the diversity of our applicant pool and our counselor population. We'll also be kicking off our 50th anniversary, where we'll spend the year celebrating how far we've come together, but also to look ahead to the more simple, logical, joyful, and equitable future we're working together to build.

As we forge ahead into our Next Chapter, we are grateful for the great idea that led our founders to create Common App nearly 50 years ago — with a mission and purpose strong enough to continue to inspire us today and in the years to come.

Warmly,

Jenny Rickard
President & CEO, Common App



We're so excited to share more about Common App's Next Chapter with you. For more information, visit commonapp.org/about/next-chapter

