

Equity in admissions

Breaking down Common App's moonshot goal

February 2024



Dear friends,

More than 45 years ago, a small group of colleges and universities got together to reimagine the college application process. One application, 15 forward-thinking institutions. The goal was to leverage the technology at the time — the photocopier — to simplify the application process.

Forty-five years later, Common App is now used by over a thousand colleges and universities. Each year, more than one million students — a third of whom are first-generation — apply to college, research financial aid and scholarships, and connect to college counseling resources through Common App. Our mission is focused on pursuing access, equity, and integrity in the college admissions process.

Over the last decade alone, Common App has made huge strides in expanding access for students pursuing postsecondary opportunities. Since 2019, low-income applicants have increased at nearly **three times** the rate of higher-income applicants.

But the path to higher education has changed. We all know there's still major inequity in the college admissions process. Our own data show that low-income applicants are still significantly underrepresented in Common App's pool. As a mission-driven membership organization, we are committed to helping more students from low- and middle-income communities access opportunities.

With that goal in mind, we're launching Common App's Next Chapter.

We're working with our member colleges, high school counselors and advisors, and other partners to expand those we serve to include more than 650,000 additional students from low- and middle-income households. This is what it will take to close our equity gap in students applying for postsecondary opportunities by 2030 — a goal we call our moonshot.

This report is the first in a series of annual publications we will release throughout the Next Chapter. Understanding those we serve is key to meeting our moonshot goal. We'll use this annual Equity in Admissions report to provide a deeper look at our applicant pool and track our yearly progress toward closing our equity gap.

Warmly,

Jenny Rickard
President & CEO
Common App

College is worth it

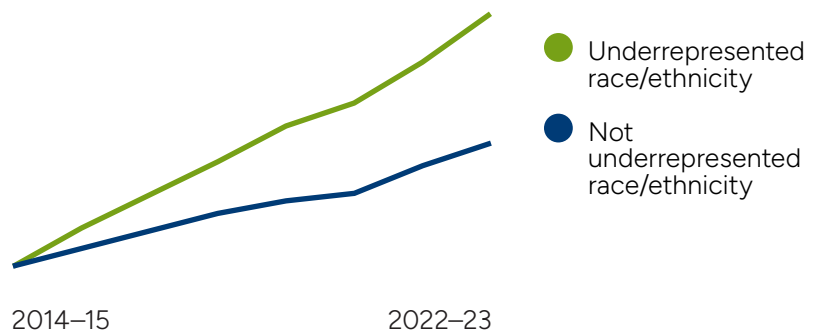
College is the most valuable investment a student can make for their future — both financially and personally.

College remains an engine for social mobility

Expected lifetime earnings based on education level:

- High school diploma: \$1.3 million
- Some college, no degree: \$1.5 million
- Associate's degree: \$1.7 million
- Bachelor's degree: \$2.3 million

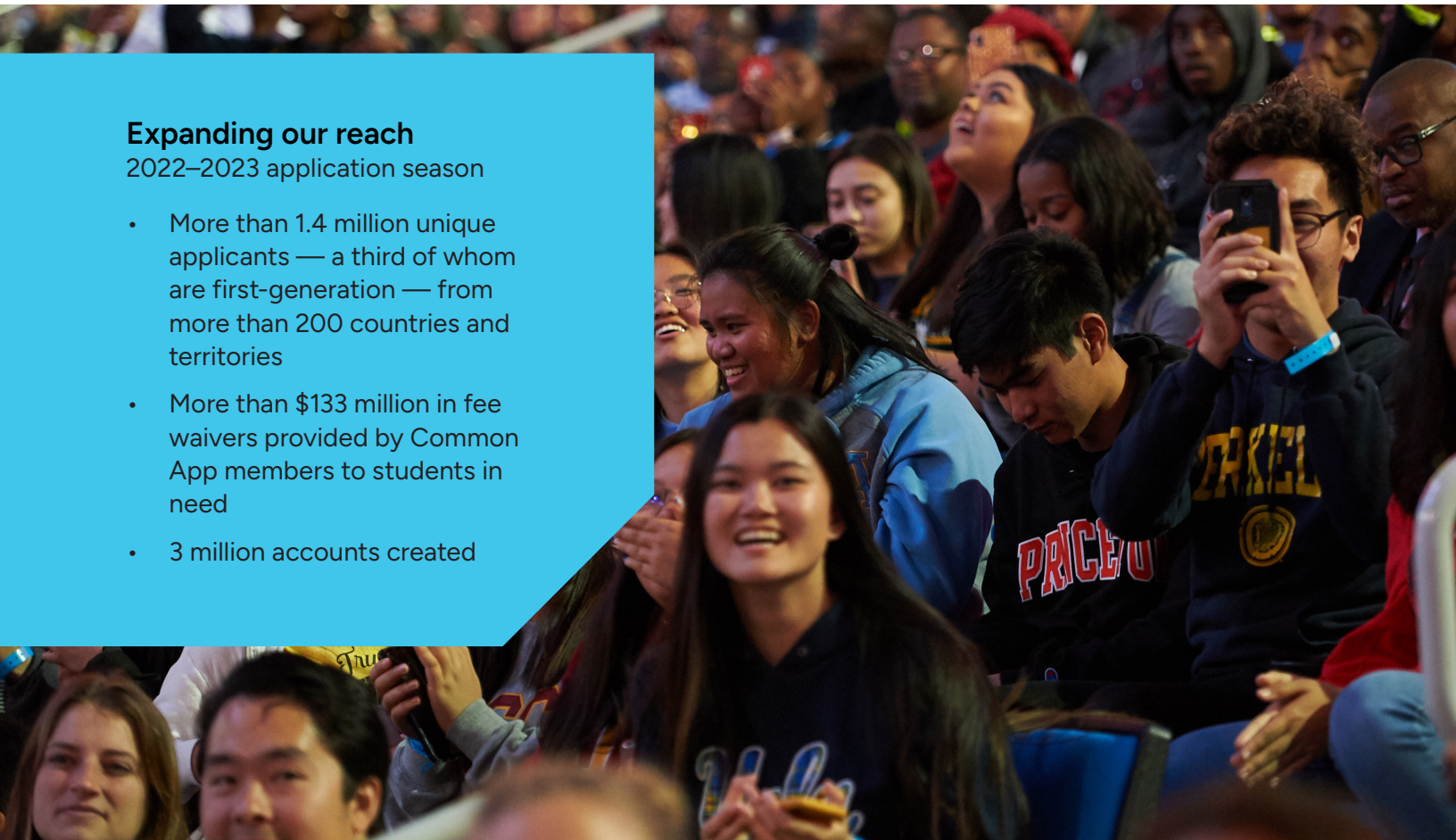
Common App's growth in applicants show that students continue to be interested in postsecondary opportunities



Expanding our reach

2022-2023 application season

- More than 1.4 million unique applicants — a third of whom are first-generation — from more than 200 countries and territories
- More than \$133 million in fee waivers provided by Common App members to students in need
- 3 million accounts created



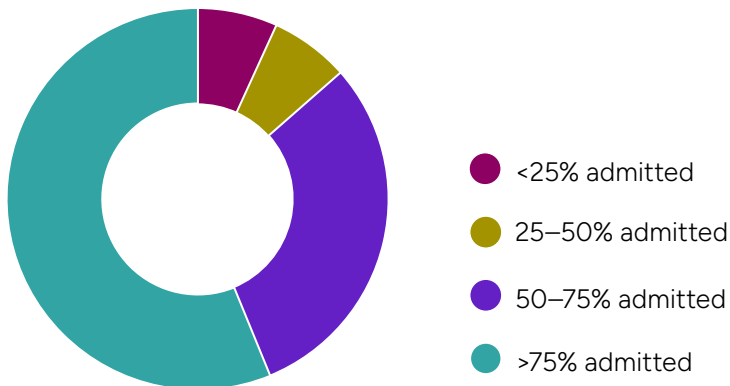
Our members

1 application 1,000+ opportunities

Since 1975, Common App has expanded from a grassroots effort by 15 colleges to a member organization of more than 1,000 colleges and universities.

Common App is intentionally investing in ways to support students who historically have faced barriers in the admissions process. That work has taken many forms, including an effort to increase the number of minority-serving institutions in our membership.

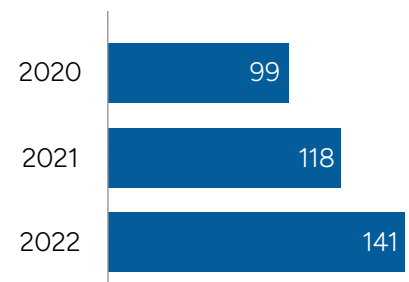
The Common App membership is composed of a diverse range of institutions with varying levels of selectivity.



Since 2014, the total number of Common App members has increased nearly 100%



Growth in Common App MSI membership by year



Reaching new students

Common App has set a bold goal to focus its work in the Next Chapter. We call it our moonshot.

By 2030, Common App will close its equity gap in students pursuing postsecondary opportunities.

To close the gap, Common App needs 650,000 additional applicants from low- and middle-income communities in 2030.

At a high level, Common App's applicant pool is quite diverse.

First-year student profile
2022–2023 application season

—————

First-generation status

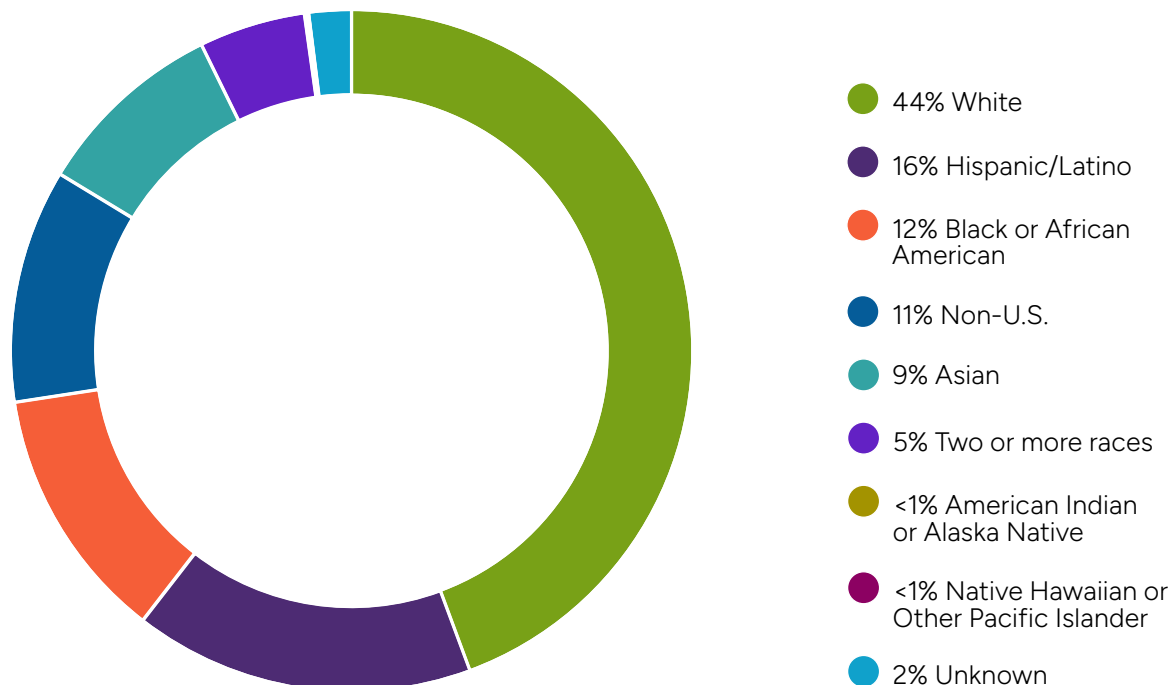
Continuing-generation

First-generation

66%

34%

Student race/ethnicity



Students from low-income communities are significantly underrepresented in our applicant pool

When we look at our applicants broken down by income, 30% of Common App applicants lived in communities below the median household income (\$69,021), while 70% lived in areas above it.

Percent living in ZIP codes with median household income above or below U.S. median household income

Census: Labor force



Applicants (2022–23)

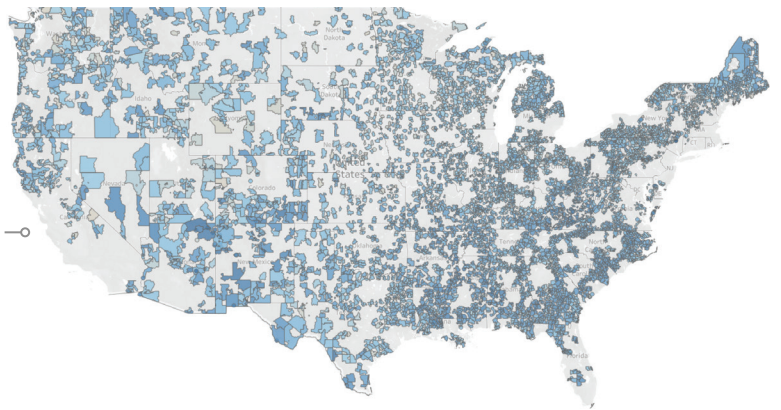


● Below median income ● Above median income

Focusing on income provides a powerful approach to ensuring as many students as possible can access a postsecondary education.

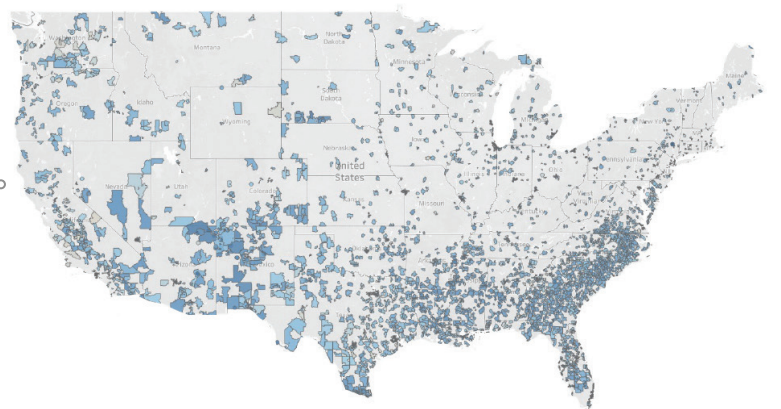
Students from communities below median household income come from rural, suburban, and urban regions across the country.

ZIP codes below the national median income — — — — ○



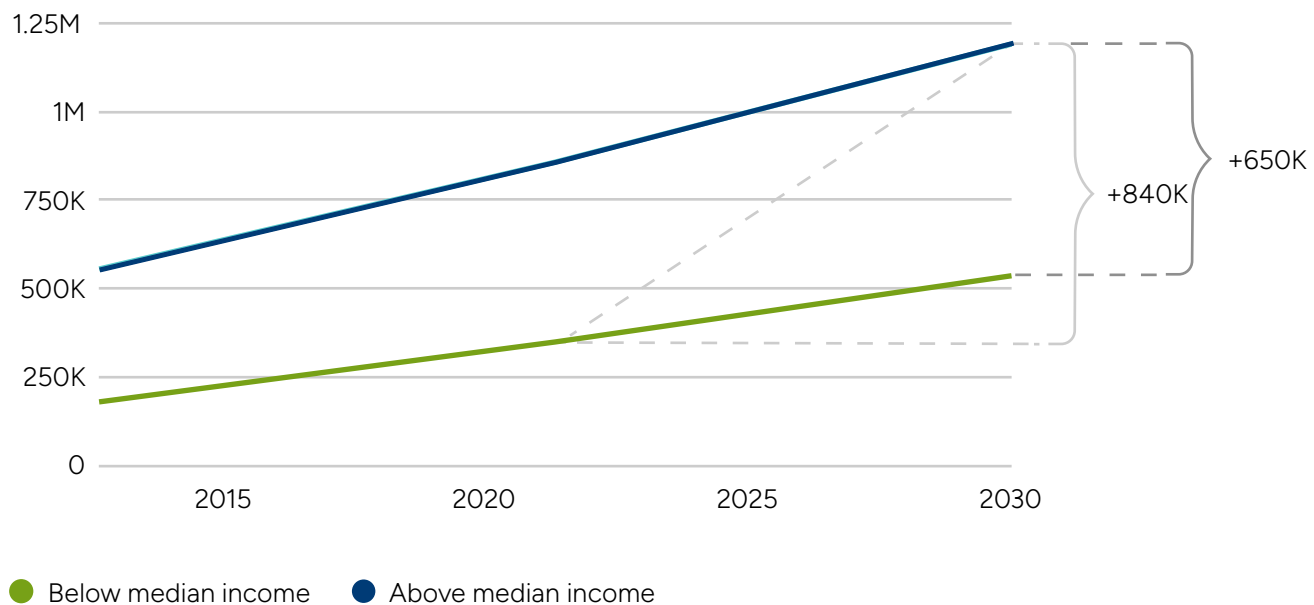
And, focusing on low- and middle-income communities lets us reach a diverse group of students.

ZIP codes that are below median household income with above-median underrepresented race/ethnicity population — — — — ○



Measuring our moonshot

Common App is working with members, high school counselors and advisors, and other key partners to expand those we serve to include more than 650,000 additional applicants from low- and middle-income communities. This increase of 650,000 students in 2030 represents a total increase of 840,000 applicants since we started this work.



Working toward our moonshot

Common App strives to be a trusted resource for our member colleges, students, families, and the people who support students navigating the application process.

Together, we can advance equity for students from low- and middle-income communities and help all students access, afford, and attain opportunity.

How we'll get there

- Reimagine college admissions to be more simple, logical, joyful, and equitable
- Expand access to more low- and middle-income students via partnerships and innovations
- Leverage our data and research to be a voice for equity in the admissions process
- Connect students to financial aid resources, information, and opportunities

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

