



RETHINKING RECRUITMENT POLICIES

Colleges and universities wield enormous power in deciding who reaps the benefits of a college degree, and anti-racist and anti-classist recruitment policies have the potential to build a more equitable and just society. At present, however, college admissions are riddled with practices that perpetuate and deepen racial and socioeconomic disparities.

Recruitment policies are key to expanding access and promoting diversity on college and university campuses. For example, the high schools and college fairs that institutions choose to visit directly influence who enrolls—and these visits exert a particularly strong influence on college choice for first-generation students.²

Institutional constraints pose challenges in deciding who and where to recruit. But in an effort to improve rankings and prestige and meet revenue targets, many institutions sacrifice racial and socioeconomic diversity and expend significant resources recruiting White, wealthy, and out-of-state students instead.³

Indeed, some universities:

RECRUITING STUDENTS IN A GLOBAL PANDEMIC:
With stay-at-home orders, travel bans, and social distancing requirements in place, institutions have had to rethink their recruitment strategies, resulting in virtual campus visits and college fairs, online groups to meet other students, and increased communication with admissions staff during the recruitment process.¹ Moving forward, colleges and universities should make permanent any changes that improve equity, such as offering meaningful virtual engagements to students from rural communities.



PRIORITIZE VISITS TO WEALTHY, WHITE SCHOOLS

A study of 15 public research universities found that most prioritize visiting wealthy high schools and those with primarily White students, skipping visits to nearby lower-income schools and schools with higher proportions of students of color.⁴



DEPRIORITIZE VISITS TO RURAL AREAS

Institutions are less likely to visit rural high schools, which means students from rural areas miss out on meaningful recruitment experiences.⁵



OVERLOOK ADULT AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRANSFER STUDENTS

College recruiters target high school students, leaving returning adult and community college transfer students with few opportunities to engage with institutions.⁶



PRIORITIZE OUT-OF-STATE STUDENTS

Public universities, particularly public flagships, invest significant amounts of money, time, and energy recruiting out-of-state students, which research indicates can reduce campus diversity.⁷ And visits to out-of-state high schools tend to occur in neighborhoods with predominantly White and Asian students, whereas communities largely made up of Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students receive relatively few visits.⁸

At state flagships, when out-of-state student enrollment increases by 10-percentage points, the enrollment of Pell Grant recipients declines by nearly 3-percentage points.⁹

OPENING THE DOOR TO OPPORTUNITY: RETHINKING RECRUITMENT POLICIES

Creating a more equitable and just higher education system starts with implementing equitable recruitment policies.

INSTITUTIONAL LEADERS SHOULD:

ACTIVELY RECRUIT IN DIVERSE LOCATIONS, INCLUDING COMMUNITIES WITH HIGH PROPORTIONS OF BLACK, LATINX, INDIGENOUS, UNDERREPRESENTED ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER, AND LOW-INCOME STUDENTS:

College leaders also should diversify their recruitment roadshows and train recruiters to be culturally sensitive when engaging with all prospective students.

OFFER ALTERNATIVE RECRUITMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS IN RURAL AREAS:

Many of the nine million students who attend high school in rural communities are forced to navigate the admissions process without the opportunity to meet with institutions during high school visits or college fairs.¹⁰ Institutions should implement innovative recruitment strategies (e.g., virtual campus tours and visits with admissions counselors) to provide rural students with the support they need and, when possible, conduct campus visits or attend college fairs in rural areas.¹¹

PRIORITIZE STATE RESIDENTS IN RECRUITMENT EFFORTS:

Public universities should ensure that state residents make up the core of their incoming classes since they were established to provide an excellent education to state residents. Their recruitment policies should reflect this mission.¹²

State lawmakers can also help institutions reduce the number of out-of-state students by investing in higher education. Many colleges and universities have turned to recruiting large numbers of out-of-state students from wealthier public and private high schools—who typically pay **two to three times** as much to attend as in-state students—to generate revenue in the face of state budget cuts.¹³

ACTIVELY RECRUIT RETURNING ADULT AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRANSFER STUDENTS:

These students are disproportionately likely to be Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and from low-income backgrounds, and can benefit greatly from meaningful recruitment efforts.¹⁴

For full citations, please visit: www.ihep.org/mostimportantdoor/sources

1. Moody, 2020.
2. Ruffalo Noel Levitz, 2018.
3. Han, Jaquette, & Salazar, 2019.
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5. Boggs, 2019; Stone, 2018.
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10. Friess, 2019.
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12. Peters, & Voight, 2018.
13. Burd, 2015.

14. Fink, Jenkins, Kopko, & Ran, 2018; National Student Clearinghouse, 2019.

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