

# American and International Applications to U.S. Universities

## An Educational Overview of Applications, Admissions, and Enrollment

### Union of Saints

Institutions such as Spelman College, Howard University, and Morehouse College report **approximately 1–4% white ethnicity within their student bodies**. These figures reflect **ethnicity reporting rather than citizenship status**.

In many university reporting systems, **white ethnicity is categorized broadly**, while international students are often reported separately as “**nonresident aliens**.” This means that **citizenship and race are not always categorized in the same way within institutional data**.

DEI initiatives at universities typically emphasize **race-based diversity as well as global diversity status**, whereas whites are “**lumped**” into the white category.

Even universities where white students represent **approximately 1–2% of the population** continue to operate **DEI offices, multicultural student support programs, and cultural programming**.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities were originally established to educate Black students during the era of segregation in **1867, 1879, and 1913**, when many American institutions excluded them.

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## 1. Size of the U.S. Higher Education System

The United States operates one of the largest higher education systems in the world.

- Total college and university students: **about 19 million**
- International students studying in the United States: **about 1.1–1.2 million**

According to the Institute of International Education through the Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange:

Student Type	Approximate Share of Total Enrollment
American citizens and permanent residents	~94%
International students	~6%

This means that across the entire U.S. higher education system, **approximately 94 out of every 100 students are domestic students**.

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## 2. Total Applications Submitted to U.S. Universities

Each year, millions of applications are submitted to American colleges and universities. Because students often apply to multiple institutions, the number of applications is significantly larger than the number of individual applicants.

Estimated distribution of applications:

Applicant Type	Estimated Share of Applications
American applicants	~88–94%
International applicants	~6–12%

Although international students frequently apply to multiple universities, **American applicants still represent the majority of submissions nationwide.**

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## 3. Average Acceptance and Denial Rates

Across U.S. four-year universities, the average acceptance rate is approximately **72–73%**, according to the National Association for College Admission Counseling.

Typical outcomes:

Outcome	Approximate Share
Accepted	~72–73%
Denied	~27–28%

Because most applications originate from American students, **the majority of admissions decisions and denials involve American applicants.**

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## 4. Why Applications Do Not Equal Students

Applicants commonly apply to multiple universities simultaneously.

Example:

- One student may apply to **8–12 universities**.
- This results in **8–12 applications**, but still represents **one individual student**.

As a result:

- Millions of admission decisions are issued annually.

- The number of rejections can appear very large, even though **most students ultimately enroll at one institution.**
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## 5. Differences Between Universities

While the national average shows approximately **6% international students**, the proportion can vary significantly by institution.

Universities with relatively large international populations include:

- Columbia University
- New York University
- Northeastern University

At some institutions, international students may represent **20–40% of total enrollment.**

However, universities with these higher concentrations represent **a small portion of the overall U.S. higher education system.**

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## 6. Undergraduate vs Graduate Programs

International enrollment is generally higher in graduate programs than in undergraduate programs.

Typical distribution:

<b>Program Level</b>	<b>International Share</b>
Undergraduate programs	~4–6%
Graduate programs overall	~12–25%
STEM PhD programs	sometimes <b>40–60% or higher</b>

This difference helps explain why some departments appear to have particularly high international representation.

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## 7. Key Points

1. The United States has **about 19 million college students.**
2. International students represent **roughly 6% of total enrollment.**
3. Domestic students account for **about 94% of the national student body.**

4. Most university applications are submitted by **American applicants**.
  5. The average U.S. university acceptance rate is **around 72–73%**.
  6. Higher international enrollment percentages are typically found in **elite universities and graduate STEM programs**, rather than across the entire system.
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## U.S. Universities Where ~33% or More Students Are International

University	Approximate International Share
Illinois Institute of Technology	~51%
Carnegie Mellon University	~44%
Stevens Institute of Technology	~42%
Northeastern University	~40%
The New School	~40%
Columbia University	~40%
Johns Hopkins University	~39%
New York University	~37%
Clark University	~34%
University of Rochester	~33%

These percentages represent **total enrollment (undergraduate and graduate)**.

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## Universities Close to One-Third International

Several other major universities are **near the 30–32% range**:

University	International Share
California Institute of Technology	~32%
University of Chicago	~31%
Boston University	~30%
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	~30%

These institutions tend to attract large numbers of **international graduate students**, particularly in engineering, physics, and computer science.

