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Today's College Students: Who Are They and What Do They Require from a College Education?

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Abstract

College students today are not like students from just a decade before. The purpose of this archival quantitative, data mining study using data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) of the National Center for Education Statistics was to identify the demographics of today's college students in the United States during the Fall of 2014. This study was significant because understanding who these students are and what they need from college is critical for providing them with an education to become tomorrow's leaders. Findings revealed that the majority of students tended to be under the age of 25; female; full-time; enrolled in face-to-face courses; and White. They tended to enroll in public 2-year and 4-year colleges. These female, full-time, White students attending face-to-face classes also tended to be stressed, stay in college longer, are not doing what they need to do to learn, are technologically proficient, are unprepared for college, are connected to family and friends, desire classes that are technologically-rich, are skilled in conducting searches on Google and Wikipedia but not in conducting academic research, enjoy some risk in the classroom, and are more diverse than past students.

Key words: College students, Graduation rates, Motivating college students.

Introduction

Who are the college students of today? Levine and Cureton (1998) suggested that the major change in the academy in recent years is the students. Less than 17% of college students today are traditional students, classified as between the ages of 18 and 22, full-time, and residing on campus. Today's college students are older, more diverse, influenced in the past by various political and social experiences, focused more on professional careers while in need of academic remediation, more in need of psychological assistance, and interact with others differently than previous college students.

What do today's college students want from an education? Levine and Cureton (1998) claimed that education is not as important to today's college students as it was to prior student cohorts. A college education has become just one more activity for students to juggle each day. Today's students want their colleges close by and classes that are offered when it is convenient for them. They want parking that is handy; they do not want to have to wait in lines; and they want to deal with courteous, cooperative, and competent employees. They expect colleges to run customer services like other businesses run their customer services. Their attention is on ease, value, assistance, and price. They do not trust the nation's influential or the societal organizations. They perceive that there are challenges everywhere. Furthermore, they have decided that they cannot ignore these challenges. Essentially, today's college students are not happy that they will have to resolve these challenges which they did not create.

What are the graduation rates of college students today? The 2013 graduation rate for first-time (a student who has no prior postsecondary experience), full-time undergraduate students who began earning a bachelor's degree at a 4-year degree-granting institution in the fall of 2007 was 59%. In other words, 59% of all first-time, full-time students who began earning a bachelor's degree at a 4-year institution in the fall of 2007 completed the degree at that institution by the year 2013 (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

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While first-time, full-time undergraduate students who began to earn a bachelor's degree at a 4-year degree-granting institution in the fall of 2007, the 6-year graduation rate was 58% at public institutions, 65% at private nonprofit institutions, and 32% at private for-profit institutions. The 6-year graduation rate was 56% for males while 62% for females; the graduation rate was higher for females than for males at both public (60% vs. 55%) and private nonprofit institutions (68% vs. 62%). However, males had a higher graduation rate than females (36% vs. 28%) at private for-profit institutions (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Six-year graduation rates for first-time, full-time students who began earning a bachelor's degree in the fall 2007 differed according to institutions' level of selectivity. Graduation rates were highest at postsecondary degree-granting institutions that had the lowest admissions acceptance rates. While graduation rates were the lowest at institutions that had open admissions policies. For example, at 4-year institutions with open admissions policies, 34% of the students completed a bachelor's degree within 6 years. At 4-year institutions where the acceptance rate was less than 25% of applicants, the 6-year graduation rate was 89% (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

As college students deliberately stay in college postponing graduation, colleges strive to improve their 4-year graduation rates. During the summer of 2009 President Obama reacted to the idea that college achievement was crucial for the United States to be able acquire international economic control. Obama introduced the American Graduation Initiative. This initiative requested that the college graduation rate be increased to 60% by the year 2020. This achievement would regain the United States' position of having the most citizens with college degrees. Consequently, a great deal of the colleges invested revenue on improving college graduation rates (Chen, & Yur-Austin, 2016).

The purpose of this paper was to identify the demographics of today's college students. This study is significant because understanding who these students are and what they desire and require from college is critical for higher education. Colleges have the duty to the society it serves to make education available for students to be in the best position to lead in the future. It is important to know who they are and what they desire and require from higher education in order to be able to provide them with an appropriate college education to meet their needs and wants. Furthermore, facilitating and encouraging students to step up and take their own initiatives is essential for student learning and ultimate college success. Identifying who these students are is the first step in addressing how to prepare them for the future.

A review of the literature presents a compilation of research, peer-reviewed journals, non-peer reviewed journals, books, and online sources on today's college students. The academic databases used were from the online library of Texas A&M University-Commerce and included, but were not limited to, Academic Search Premier, EBSCO, Education Research Complete, Eric, ProQuest, and Sage Publications. The key descriptive terms used for this research were college students, college students today, college student graduation rates, and motivating college students.

A Review of the Literature

Has the push on college admission numbers meant that college students are getting more intelligent? On the contrary, Kline (2015) claimed that American students are performing at or below students globally. She further claimed that student academic performance has declined during the past 10 years. Kline questioned the engagement of these more intelligent students and why they seldom come to their professors' offices to ask for help with the course or with exams. In addition, she found that students take very little advantage of online resources available to them from the course textbook publishers or spend nominal time in online courses. There is a perceived lack of motivation in today's college students (TCS). Kline maintained that it is too early to become disheartened and it may be that students today are experiencing too much of a good thing in technology.

Technology and College Student Today

College students today are not like students from just a decade before due to technology. Students have never had the opportunities for selecting course material as they do currently (Robinson & Stubberud, 2012b). TCS are more technologically advanced (Brunner, Wallace, Reymann, Sellers, & McCabe, 2014; Crone & MacKay, 2007; McCoy, 2010; Ratliff, 2011; Robinson & Stubberud, 2012a; Robinson & Stubberud, 2012b; Russo, Fallon, Zhang, & Acevedo, 2014; Speaker, 2004) and are therefore more able to take online courses than students of the past, according to McCormack (2015). For these students (18–25) the Internet, Game Boys, smart phones, tablets, I-pads, Play Stations, and MP3 players (McCoy, 2010; Robinson & Stubberud, 2012b)

have been are part of their everyday lives. Moreover, technology has been incorporated into higher education. “Electronic mail, instant messages, chat, discussion boards, podcasts, Wimba, and web-based course management software” (McCoy, 2010, para. 1) are standard features of college online and blended classes.

Textbooks, whether electronic or not, are not TCS preferred method of learning, as maintained by Robinson and Stubberud (2012a). However, students save money by buying ebooks in place of textbooks and they will buy ebooks even if textbooks are required. A problem with ebooks is that professors may not allow the use of ebooks in class, which stops students from reading and replying to email and other social media communications. TCS tend to prefer notes posted in the cloud more (Robinson & Stubberud, 2012b) than the other available choices of educational devices for the classroom. They prefer notes because professors can make them available for the students to follow during lectures. Being able to follow along provides opportunities for making comments directly in the documents as the professor is speaking.

TCS expect to be entertained during the educational process (Robinson, 2013) because technology has become an integral part of the world in which they live (Crone & MacKay, 2007; Robinson & Stubberud, 2012a; Robinson & Stubberud, 2012b; Russo et al., 2004). Consequently, long lectures and Powerpoint presentations do not hold their attention (Crone & MacKay, 2007). They consider the time-honored classroom as humdrum (Robinson, 2013). They count on college faculty and administrators to communicate in a similar manner as students communicate in other areas of their lives (Ratliff, 2011; Speaker, 2004). They want to be linked continually, updated instantly, and are particular about how they reply. They are particular because there are many options available to them (Ratliff, 2011). They are technologically sophisticated and needy. Their social interactions are often digital communications. TCS are the virtual students. Social media permits them to locate others with similar pursuits, morals, and histories and to connect wherever and whenever (Brunner et al., 2014; Robinson & Stubberud, 2012a; Robinson & Stubberud, 2012b). TCS want to feel connected at all times (Russo et al., 2014).

Even though there has been much progress with the use of technology in the classroom (Kline, 2013; Speaker, 2004), Speaker (2004) claimed that professors lack the necessary training needed to be able to utilize these educational technologies effectively. Students have claimed that they do learn better when professors use these devices during class, as maintained by Speaker. TCS are much more advanced in the use of these technologies than the instructors who are educating them. Professors are encouraged to get the necessary training in educational technologies to be able to take advantage of these teaching devices. Professors are also encouraged to publish in course syllabi that these educational technologies are being used in the course.

The level of skill in the use of technology of TCS is a central element to take into account when developing technology-rich courses (Crone & MacKay, 2007; Robinson & Stubberud, 2012a; Russo et al., 2014). While this may be the age of the virtual students, McCoy (2010) cautioned course designers about making the mistake of thinking all students enrolled in a course are technologically savvy. Educators may take for granted that all students between the ages 18 and 25 are knowledgeable about all technology. This assumption may or may not be accurate. A student’s family financial standing, the quality of earlier education, and the family structure has an impact and factors into whether or not a student has access to computers. Moreover, a student’s family financial standing, the quality of earlier education, and the family structure also has an impact and factors into one’s opinion of one’s ability and level or proficiency with technology.

The preferences of TCS should also be considered when developing technology-rich courses. Different students have different preferences. Robinson and Stubberud (2012a; 2012b) deduced that course designers should consider students’ preferences and respond accordingly when requiring various devices for courses and coursework. Robinson and Stubberud (2012a; 2012b) emphasized that it is the responsibility of the professor to ascertain how to best serve the students enrolling in his or her courses.

TCS, often referred to as the Millennial Generation (Ratliff, 2011; Robinson, 2013; Russo et al., 2014), are losing the art of eye contact. They indefatigably check with “their phone for updates, text messages, emails, Facebook posts, and Twitter tweets” (Ratliff, 2011, p.68). At the same time faculty wrestle with pinpointing how these “digital students” (p.68) learn, higher education professionals wrestle with pinpointing effective means for interacting with them. According to Ratliff, there is little research on social media success in the academy even though many college professors are using technology to communicate with their student. While research is plentiful on classroom social media practices, this research does not present as much data by comparison to the research conducted on faculty communication with colleagues.

Utilizing social media to connect with TCS is to be expected, as maintained by Ratliff (2011). In order to communicate effectively with these students, college professors must incorporate innovative ways to utilize technology, research options to employ social media, and design strategies that regularly utilize what is trending to accommodate the shifting requirements of the students colleges serve. Research confirmed that TCS are on the Internet, connected, and want to be linked to their institutions. TCS are paying attention.

Kline (2015) posed the question of whether or not technology is an asset or a liability for TCS. On the one hand, technology does make communication simple as well as offering an abundance of resources at one's fingertips. On the other hand, could technology be too much of an interruption? Does it offer a phony perception of self-confidence because students think that they can Google something later if needed? Kline claimed that the harmful effects of technology are prevailing over the helpful effects it provides. Students are less engaged, appear to be more diverted, and are busier than just 10 years ago. Technology seems to be impeding learning and classroom productivity for students, as maintained by Kline.

College Students Today

TCS are not doing what is necessary for them to learn (Kline, 2013). Some students are uncertain about the concepts learned in the classroom. They are also uncertain when asked a question even if the answer is written on the board. Their quality of learning and wanting to learn appear to be on the decline. They prefer to take a photo on their phones of the information on the white board instead of taking notes in class and asking questions during class. They do not appear to realize that learning occurs because of taking notes and also facilitates engagement as well. It appears that TCS do not want to ask questions or to spend time meeting with professors outside of the classroom.

Head and Eisenberg (2009) claimed that TCS tend to be troubled, puzzled, and irritated with conducting research and information literacy assignments. These reactions occur in spite of the easiness, handiness, and pervasiveness of the Internet. Students' reactions to conducting research and information literacy assignments include feelings of being overburdened with all the burgeoning resources available to them to search through. Students have specific problems negotiating the information highway. They have, for example, difficulty locating sources they need, are certain are available, and want immediately. Head and Eisenberg concluded that TCS are not trained in conducting academic searches.

However, McCormack (2015) pointed out that TCS conduct research on a daily basis on their devices through Internet searches. McCormack also pointed out that they only need to (a) learn to look critically at the Web for credibility and (b) evaluate sources thoroughly. They typically conduct research using Google. Accordingly, Wikipedia is has become a trendy reference resource. TCS are not conscious of questions regarding reliability and credibility linked with using Wikipedia, other than words of warning from professors who alert them to avoid using Wikipedia for academic research papers (Jennings, 2008).

Lawrence (2015) suggested that TCS have varied approaches for evaluating search results. Their approaches are established from their previous practices with Google and Wikipedia. Therefore, they developed confidence and habits from these previous practices. Professors are encouraged to take them where they are and augment their experiences with more accepted academic skills for research beyond Google and Wikipedia (Jennings, 2008; Lawrence, 2015). That is, if they would like them to become information literate in the information age. Professors are also encouraged to consider Wikipedia as a teaching tool for critical thinkers and lifelong learners who utilize all available information resources (Jennings, 2008).

The increased pressure on university admission numbers suggests that TCS are brighter. However, the ability of these students to stay focused has declined. This decline in focus is in spite of how easy it is to attain information. They do not appear to be as conscious of what is going on around them as prior students were. There is a lack of attention to local, national, and international news even though that they have multiple devices at their fingertips. Moreover, many of these students do not appear to think that what is going on around them locally, nationally, and internationally is important to them. They appear to be more attentive to what is on social media (Kline, 2013).

TCS have been compared to "Peter Pan" (Harden, 2013, p. 257). They are not interested in rushing into adulthood or taking responsibility for themselves. They are staying in school longer, taking longer to become self-supporting, and waiting longer to say "I do" and have children. Harden claimed that it is not easy to differentiate between "cause and effect" (p.257). Harden asked if students today are staying in college longer to

delay getting married or do they delay getting married because they need more time to complete their education? Furthermore, the college “hook-up culture” (p. 257) has provided the means for students to be sexually active while avoiding having to grow up and become responsible citizens. As a result, Harden claimed that the new Neverland is college.

TCS have experienced greater amounts of adult supervision. Consequently, they are as a group conservative, obedient, cooperative, and team players. These students have been brought up to think of themselves as “special” (Brunner et al., 2014, p. 262). They are self-assured, accomplished, active, intelligent, and motivated. They score higher on standardized aptitude tests, are efficient at handling multiple endeavors, and do well with educational interaction. They need organization and constructive comments on how they are doing, are results oriented, want to know what is expected, and would like to be evaluated on what they achieved.

This focus on achievement, obedience, and the value of friendships appears to have resulted in their being more “stressed-out” (Brunner et al., 2014, p. 262). As a result, the number of students taking advantage of college counseling services is growing (Levine & Cureton, 1998; Watkins, Hunt, & Eisenberg, 2012). Although TCS experience greater stress, they continue to report a high degree of satisfaction with their college experience. Research further indicates that the psychological health of these students is on the decline. The number of students today that are contacting counseling services is escalating from students in the past (Watkins et al.).

Career counselors are encouraged to try to modify student thinking toward making employment decisions that are more career-connected than accepting employment based on convenience and higher compensation. Research has suggested that job satisfaction improves as students obtain work that more closely aligns with their career goals. Employees tend to be satisfied when they have employment that supports their career objectives, which also offers them intrinsic happiness. Career counselors are further encouraged to suggest to students to search for work that will enhance their career development and present opportunities of assorted work related experiences, even though these jobs may pay lower salaries (Larkin, 2007).

TCS are risk-takers. Classroom activities that offer chances for instant responses and student participation are effective for learning. A majority of these students require shared, lively, and student-centered activities. These students have grown up with game shows on television, interactive video games, and the Internet. Game shows, interactive video games, and the Internet are all forms of entertainment as well as educational. Accordingly, TCS count on education being entertaining. They will stop concentrating if the learning activity does not entertain them. In contrast however, they will invest time and effort to learn a new game or technological device (Robinson, 2013).

TCS is a new cohort of students with different hopes and dreams from past cohorts. They have difficulty focusing in class when passively receiving information; on the other hand, they are easily engaged during shared, lively, and student-centered activities. This is particularly true in a shared learning activity. Professors have long utilized games for engaging students in the classroom. Games are effective activities for engaging students due to the mild stress that these learning activities produce. Research has indicated that men particularly enjoy the risk that games provide. Research as suggested that students desire a 25-50% risk factor. As follows, learning games that are well-designed can be effective activities to accomplish the objectives of the professor and the preferences of the students (Robinson, 2013).

Traditional college students are defined as those who have earned a high school diploma, enroll in college full-time immediately after earning their high school diploma, depend on parents for financial support, and work part-time. These traditional students make up a just under 30% of the current student body (Larkin, 2007). TCS are more ethnically diverse than student of past years, as maintained by Brunner et al. (2014). They are also not as concerned with race and ethnicity as past students were. Incidentally, minority women are breaking new ground by achieving more academic attainment than men and make up the majority of TCS.

Motivating College Students Today

Motivating college students to learn is fundamental for professors teaching in higher education. Motivation is also fundamental for learning. Even though motivation is fundamental for learning, motivating college students to learn is not clear-cut or simple. There are numerous aspects impacting students and student learning (Halawah, 2011). To begin with, TCS grew up in an era of “convenience and consumption” (Crone & MacKay, 2007, p. 18). A college education has become commercialized and thought of by these students just as one more of many achievements to be completed, instead of thinking of it as an opportunity in life to become engrossed in

and with the process of growth. Students in college are encouraged to become deliberate designers of their own education. They are encouraged to establish ambitions, to investigate, to contemplate, and to synthesize attained learning with enthusiasm for making the most of living in today's world.

Revering the strength of the need for connections of TCS with their parents is essential for preserving their enthusiasm for earning a college education. They seem to be the receivers of large amounts of parental interest. This parental interest persists during the college years. These students tend to carry on regular communications with their parents and other members of their families by means of texting, emailing, and phone calling to keep informed or to ask for advice on insignificant matters. Students are more in search of individuals that can provide organization, guidance, and approval than students were in the past, as maintained by Crone and MacKay (2007). Flanagan, (2015) stated that "the infantilization" (p.56) of college students today whose "whims and affectations [*sic*] ... must be constantly supported and championed" (p. 56). Halawah (2011) claimed that as students experience connection and support, they will be internally motivated to participate in class activities.

As a result, TCS frequently inquire of others about what they need to do rather than considering what they should by themselves. Crone and MacKay (2007) indicated that it appears as though these students prefer work to be organized for them or even completed. With the work previously organized or completed, they are able to proceed on to the next thing. Crone and MacKay alleged that a more effective approach for advising students would be to ask questions of them. By asking questions, students have to think through their answers and come up with their own responses to the questions. By answering questions and coming up the answers, the educational experience becomes theirs allowing them to own the process. This question and answer approach also encourages engagement, which leads to motivation. Spoon feeding them information will not produce the same motivational results.

Dynamic learning activities that are linked to the real world and where students are dealt with as scholars and achievers enhance motivation for learning (Halawah, 2011). Experiential learning is a specifically effective method of learning for TCS. Experiential learning tends to show evidence of understanding toward concerns of society. This may be due to 9/11 and other tragedies that these students have been exposed to during their lives. College activities that engage students and require them to relate their education to their everyday lives are more apt to hold their attention. Moreover, assisting students with the realization of how a college education is meaningful to their daily existence is imperative, as asserted by Crone and MacKay (2007).

Professors should be in the role of facilitating and encouraging students to step up and take their own initiative, which ultimately leads to student success and learning. In order to do this effectively, colleges must first know who these students are. Once it is determined who TCS are, college professors and administrators will be able to address their needs in order to inspire them to become independent adult learners who own their education and are prepared to become tomorrow's leaders (Crone & MacKay, 2007).

In conclusion, Levine and Cureton (1998) alleged that colleges have the duty to provide an education for TCS so that they will be able reach their potential and to be in the best positions to lead in the future. The college curriculum must include teaching optimism, accountability, acceptance of diversity, and confidence in one's self. Through ongoing encouragement, the behaviors of optimism, accountability, acceptance of diversity, and confidence in one's self could give power to these students that can be handed down to future cohorts.

In summary, professors are encouraged to (a) be knowledgeable in technology; (b) consider their students technological preferences and skill-levels when designing technology-rich classes; (c) incorporate innovative ways to utilize technology; (d) keep in mind that students today are conducting research on a daily basis on their devices through Internet searches; (d) teach students to look critically at and evaluate sources on the Web for credibility and reliability; (e) take these students where they are and augment their experiences with more accepted academic skills for conducting research beyond Google and Wikipedia; (f) remember that students need organization and constructive comments on how they are doing, are results oriented, want to know what is expected of them, and want to be evaluated on their achievements; (g) facilitate thought processes toward career-connected decisions that enhance career development; (h) bear in mind that activities that offer chances for instant responses and student participation are effective for learning; (i) consider games as effective activities for engaging students due to the mild stress that these games produce; (j) respect their need for connection; (k) ask questions of them to offer opportunities for ownership of their own education; and (l) link learning activities to the real world. These are suggestions from the review of the literature for professors to consider when teaching TCS for becoming tomorrow's leaders.

Method

This research study was an archival quantitative, data mining study using data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) of the National Center for Education Statistics (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). IPEDS is a system of interrelated surveys compiled each year by the National Center for Education Statistics. IPEDS gathers information from colleges, universities, and technical and vocational institutions that are involved in federal student financial aid programs. The Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, requires institutions that are involved in federal student aid programs to submit data on enrollment, program completion, graduation rates, faculty and staff, finances, institutional prices, and student financial aid (The Higher Education Act of 1965). These data are made available to the public through the IPEDS Data Center.

This study identified the demographics of undergraduate enrollments during the Fall of 2014 according to available demographic data at public, private, and for-profit 2-year and 4-year or above universities in the United States. Data were extracted according to institution type in public, private, and for-profit 2-year and 4-year or above universities in the United States. The data were downloaded from IPEDS and converted into an Excel document. The Excel document was formatted and cleaned up.

Results and Discussion

The findings revealed the following information shown in Table 1 about Fall 2014 undergraduate enrollment demographics of students from public, private, and for-profit 2-year and 4-year or above universities in the United States. Of the undergraduate students enrolled during the Fall of 2014 in 1618 colleges in the United States, 72% were under the age of 25 while 28% were age 25 and older; 44% were male students while 56% were female students; 59% were full-time while 41% were part-time; and 9% were only enrolled in distance education courses, 18% were enrolled in some distance education courses, and 73% were not enrolled in any distance education courses.

Table 1. *Fall 2014 Undergraduate Enrollment by Age, Gender Attendance, and Distance Education*

Variable	N	Sum	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
Grand total - Age under 25	1,618	8,751,150	4	50,427	5,408	3,165
Grand total - Age 25 and over	1,618	3,375,365	10	40,658	2,086	1,153
Total men - Age under 25	1,618	3,995,701	1	23,198	2,422.69	1,353
Total men - Age 25 and over	1,618	1,387,019	5	16,021	857	449
Total women - Age under 25	1,618	4,755,449	1	28,783	2,939	1,747
Total women - Age 25 and over	1,618	1,988,346	3	25,315	1,228	671
Full time total - Age under 25	1,618	6,067,373	1	41,035	3,749	1,858
Full time total - Age 25 and over	1,618	1,115,859	1	11,808	689	433
Part time total - Age under 25	1,618	2,683,777	1	32,309	1,658	768
Part time total - Age 25 and over total	1,618	2,259,506	1	29,981	1,396	627
Students enrolled only in distance education courses	1,618	1,134,071	1	40,338	700	279
Students enrolled in some distance education courses	1,618	2,152,946	1	21,982	1,330	748
Student not enrolled in distance education courses	1,618	8,849,013	4	56,873	5,469	3,191

The findings also revealed the following information shown in Table 2 about Fall 2014 undergraduate enrollment demographics of students from public, private, and for-profit 2-year and 4-year or above universities in the United States. Of the undergraduate students enrolled during the Fall of 2014 in 1618 colleges in the United States, less than 1% were American Indian or Alaska Native students, less than 1% were Asian students, 12% were Black or African American students, 19% were Hispanic students, less than 1% were Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 53% were White students, 3% were two or more races, 4% were listed as race/ethnicity is unknown, and 3% were listed as nonresident alien.

Table 2. Fall 2014 Undergraduate Enrollment by Race

Variable	N	Sum	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
Grand total	1,618	12,136,030	24	91,179	7,500	4,594
American Indian or Alaska Native	1,618	84,967		2,659	52	19
Asian	1,618	713,540		9,464	441	81
Black or African American	1,618	1,439,913		18,520	889	341
Hispanic	1,618	2,247,838		44,870	1,389	339
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1,618	35,944		1,804	22	6
White total	1,618	6,379,565		61,498	3,942	2,416
Two or more races	1,618	372,044		3,489	229	97
Race/ethnicity unknown	1,618	502,615		18,469	310	118
Nonresident alien	1,618	359,604		5,359	222	42

The findings further revealed the following information shown in Table 3 about Fall 2014 undergraduate enrollment demographics of students from private, 2-year universities in the United States according to age, gender, and attendance level. Of 13,568 undergraduate students enrolled during the Fall of 2014 in 37 colleges in the United States 65% were under the age of 25 while 34% were age 25 and older, 39% were male students while 61% were female students, and 74% were full-time students while 26% were part-time students.

Table 3. Fall 2014 Undergraduate Enrollment by Private 2-year Institution Type, Age, Gender, and Attendance

Variable	N	Sum	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
Grand total - Age under 25	37	8,756	5	1,502	236	85
Grand total - Age 25 and over	37	4,812	1	881	130	64
Total men - Age under 25	37	3,982		891	107	22
Total men - Age 25 and over	37	1,366		273	36	14
Total women - Age under 25	37	4,774	1	611	129	42
Total women - Age 25 and over	37	3,446		743	93	41
Full time total - Age under 25	37	7,181	5	1,065	194	51
Full time total - Age 25 and over	37	2,864	1	495	77	35
Full time men - Age under 25	37	3,377		630	91	17
Full time men - Age 25 and over	37	877		137	23	10
Full time women - Age under 25	37	3,804	1	435	102	34
Full time women , Age 25 and over	37	1,987		405	53	18
Part time total - Age under 25	37	1,575		437	42	2
Part time total - Age 25 and over	37	1,948		386	52	1
Part time men - Age under 25	37	605		261	16	1
Part time men - Age 25 and over	37	489		136	13	0
Part time women - Age under 25	37	970		176	26	0
Part time women - Age 25 and over	37	1,459		338	39	1

In addition, the findings revealed the following information shown in Table 4 about Fall 2014 undergraduate enrollment demographics of college students from for-profit, 2-year universities in the United States according to age, gender, and attendance level. Of 96,163 undergraduate students enrolled during the Fall of 2014 in 254 colleges in the United States 51% were under the age of 25 while 49% were age 25 and older, 36% were male students while 64% were female students, and 90% were full-time students while 10% were part-time students.

Table 4. *Fall 2014 Undergraduate Enrollment by For-Profit 2-year Institution Type, Age, Gender, and Attendance*

Variable	N	Sum	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
Grand total - Age under 25	254	48,837	1	2,439	192	133
Grand total - Age 25 and over	254	47,326	3	2,181	186	142
Total men - Age under 25	254	17,044		1,473	67	23
Total men - Age 25 and over	254	17,375		998	68	32
Total women - Age under 25	254	31,793		1,272	125	96
Total women - Age 25 and over	254	29,951		1,621	117	74
Full time total - Age under 25	254	45,248		2,286	178	115
Full time total - Age 25 and over	254	40,923	3	1,986	161	122
Full time men - Age under 25	254	16,136		1,473	63	18
Full time men - Age 25 and over	254	15,781		850	62	27
Full time women - Age under 25	254	29,112		1,173	114	85
Full time women - Age 25 and over	254	25,142		1,467	98	62
Part time total - Age under 25	254	3,589		153	14	0
Part time total - Age 25 and over	254	6,403		371	25	0
Part time men - Age under 25	254	908		90	3	0
Part time men - Age 25 and over	254	1,594		148	6	0
Part time women - Age under 25	254	2,681		121	10	0
Part time women - Age 25 and over	254	4,809		333	18	0

Additionally, the findings revealed the following information shown in Table 5 about Fall 2014 undergraduate enrollment demographics of students from public, 2-year universities in the United States according to age, gender, and attendance level. Of 5,235,483 undergraduate students enrolled during the Fall of 2014 in 687 colleges in the United States 63% were under the age of 25 while 37% were age 25 and older, 44% were male students while 56% were female students, and 37% were full-time students while 63% were part-time students.

Table 5. *Fall 2014 Undergraduate Enrollment by Public 2-year Institution Type, Age, Gender, and Attendance*

Variable	N	Sum	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
Grand total - Age under 25	687	3,321,723	20	50,427	4,835	3,303
Grand total - Age 25 and over	687	1,913,760	5	40,658	2,785	1,804
Total men - Age under 25	687	1,532,578	7	21,644	2,230	1,435
Total men - Age 25 and over	687	764,877	3	16,021	1,113	659
Total women - Age under 25	687	1,789,145		28,783	2,604	1,822
Total women - Age 25 and over	687	1,148,883	1	24,637	1,672	1,115
Full time total - Age under 25	687	1,461,583		18,118	2,127	1,474
Full time total - Age 25 and over	687	474,188		10,677	690	494
Full time men - Age under 25	687	695,160		7,832	1,011	667
Full time men - Age 25 and over	687	204,591		4,142	297	199
Full time women - Age under 25	687	766,423		10,286	1,115	789
Full time women - Age 25 and over	687	269,597		6,535	392	283
Part time total - Age under 25	687	1,860,140		32,309	2,707	1,730
Part time total - Age 25 and over	687	1,439,572		29,981	2,095	1,307
Part time men - Age under 25	687	837,418		13,812	1,218	737
Part time men - Age 25 and over	687	560,286		11,879	815	449
Part time women - Age under 25	687	1,022,722		18,497	1,488	991
Part time women - Age 25 and over (14)	687	879,286		18,102	1,279	795

As well, the findings revealed the following information shown in Table 6 about Fall 2014 undergraduate enrollment demographics of students from private, 4-year universities in the United States according to age, gender, and attendance level. Of 1,731,180 undergraduate students enrolled during the Fall of 2014 in 631 colleges in the United States 79% were under the age of students 25 while 21% were age 25 and older, 44% were male students while 56% were female students, and 83% were full-time students while 17% were part-time students.

Table 6. Fall 2014 Undergraduate Enrollment by Private 4-year Institution Type, Age, Gender, and Attendance

Variable	N	Sum	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
Grand total - Age under 25	631	1,361,571	4	23,829	2,157	1,470
Grand total - Age 25 and over	628	369,609	2	40,966	588	192
Total men - Age under 25	631	604,431		12,335	957	620
Total men - Age 25 and over	628	151,295		16,587	240	66
Total women - Age under 25	631	757,140		13,342	1,199	823
Total women - Age 25 and over	628	218,314		24,379	347	108
Full time total - Age under 25	631	1,263,111		22,889	2,001	1,346
Full time total - Age 25 and over	628	179,607		40,966	285	89
Full time men - Age under 25	631	563,085		11,544	892	572
Full time men - Age 25 and over	628	76,567		16,587	121	35
Full time women - Age under 25	631	700,026		12,953	1,109	753
Full time women - Age 25 and over	628	103,040		24,379	164	45
Part time total - Age under 25	631	98,460		4,844	156	55
Part time total - Age 25 and over	628	190,002		35,454	302	66
Part time men - Age under 25	631	41,346		2,030	65	21
Part time men - Age 25 and over	628	74,728		16,193	118	21
Part time women - Age under 25	631	57,114		2,814	90	32
Part time women - Age 25 and over	628	115,274		19,261	183	42

The findings revealed too that the following information shown in Table 7 about Fall 2014 undergraduate enrollment demographics of students from for-profit, 4-year universities in the United States according to age, gender, and attendance level. Of 572,186 undergraduate students enrolled during the Fall of 2014 in 341 colleges in the United States 77% were under the age of 25 while 23% were age 25 and older, 40% were male students while 60% were female students, and 66% were full-time students while 34% were part-time students.

Table 7. Fall 2014 Undergraduate Enrollment by For-Profit 4-year Institution Type, Age, Gender, and Attendance

Variable	N	Sum	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
Grand total - Age 25 and over	341	442,338	1	128,994	1,297	281
Grand total - Age under 25	338	129,848	1	26,876	384	103
Total men - Age 25 and over	341	181,111	1	41,682	531	128
Total men - Age under 25	338	48,002		7,455	142	46
Total women - Age 25 and over	341	261,227		87,312	766	113
Total women - Age under 25	338	81,846		19,421	242	47
Full time total - Age 25 and over	341	283,031		128,994	830	186
Full time total - Age under 25	338	92,255		26,876	272	77
Full time men - Age 25 and over	341	113,118		41,682	331	92
Full time men - Age under 25	338	33,002		7,455	97	35
Full time women - Age 25 and over	341	169,913		87,312	498	79
Full time women - Age under 25	338	59,253		19,421	175	35
Part time total - Age 25 and over	341	159,307		36,030	467	61
Part time total - Age under 25	338	37,593		7,890	111	18
Part time men - Age 25 and over	341	67,993		23,285	199	27
Part time men - Age under 25	338	15,000		4,519	44	9
Part time women - Age 25 and over	341	91,314		21,907	267	25
Part time women - Age under 25	338	22,593		5,168	66	8

Finally, the findings revealed the following information shown in Table 8 about Fall 2014 undergraduate enrollment demographics of students from public, 4-year universities in the United States according to age, gender, and attendance level. Of 6,010,017 undergraduate students enrolled during the Fall of 2014 in 574 colleges in the United States 80% were under the age of 25 while 20% were age 25 and older, 46% were male students while 54% were female students, and 76% were full-time students while 24% were part-time students.

In summary, of the students enrolled in 1618 colleges in the United States, 72% were under the age of 25 while 28% were age 25 and older; 44% were male students while 56% female students; 59% were full-time while 41% were part-time; and 9% were only enrolled in distance education courses, 18% were enrolled in some

distance education courses, 73% were not enrolled in any distance education courses; less than 1% were American Indian or Alaska Native students, less than 1% were Asian students, 12% were Black or African American students, 19% were Hispanic students, less than 1% were Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 53% were White students, 3% were two or more races, 4 % were listed as race/ethnicity is unknown, and 3% were listed as nonresident alien.

Table 8. *Fall 2014 Undergraduate Enrollment by Public 4-year Institution Type, Age, Gender, and Attendance*

Variable	N	Sum	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
Grand total - Age under 25	574	4,835,538	17	45,628	8,424	5,732
Grand total - Age 25 and over	573	1,174,479	11	22,211	2,049	1,374
Total men - Age under 25	574	2,231,745	6	23,198	3,888	2,389
Total men - Age 25 and over	573	521,031	3	9,724	909	590
Total women - Age under 25	574	2,603,793	11	24,194	4,536	3,227
Total women - Age 25 and over	573	653,448	1	14,129	1,140	759
Full time total - Age under 25	574	4,070,059	14	41,035	7,090	4,622
Full time total - Age 25 and over	573	516,585	11	5,418	901	671
Full time men - Age under 25	574	1,884,473	6	20,808	3,283	2,047
Full time men - Age 25 and over	573	256,580	3	3,422	447	324
Full time women - Age under 25	574	2,185,586	7	20,227	3,807	2,589
Full time women - Age 25 and over	573	260,005	1	3,372	453	336
Part time total - Age under 25	574	765,479		23,096	1,333	774
Part time total - Age 25 and over	573	657,894		17,827	1,148	663
Part time men - Age under 25	574	347,272		10,537	605	350
Part time men - Age 25 and over	573	264,451		9,665	461	258
Part time women - Age under 25	574	418,207		12,559	728	415
Part time women - Age 25 and over	573	393,443		10,757	686	397

Of the 13,568 students enrolled in 37 private, 2-year colleges 65% were under the age of 25 while 34% were age 25 and older, 39% were male students while 61% were female students, and 74% were full-time students while 26% were part-time students. Of the 96,163 students enrolled in 254 for-profit, 2-year colleges 51% were under the age of 25 while 49% were age 25 and older, 36% were male students while 64% were female students, and 90% were full-time students while 10% were part-time students. Of the 5,235,483 students enrolled in 687 public, 2-year colleges in the United States 63% were under the age of 25 while 37% were age 25 and older, 44% were male students while 56% were female students, and 37% were full-time students while 63% were part-time students.

While 1,731,180 students enrolled in 631 private, 4-year colleges. Of those, 79% were under the age of 25 while 21% were age 25 and older, 44% were male students while 56% were female students, and 83% were full-time students while 17% were part-time students. At the same time 572,186 students enrolled in 341 for-profit, 4-year colleges in the Fall of 2014. Of those, 77% were under the age of 25 while 23% were age 25 and older, 40% were male students while 60% were female students, and 66% were full-time students while 34% were part-time students. And 6,010,017 students enrolled in 574 public, 4-year colleges. Of those, 80% were under the age of 25 while 20% were age 25 and older, 46% were male students while 54% were female students, and 76% were full-time students while 24% were part-time students.

Conclusion

Who are the college students of today? The majority of students today tend to be under the age of 25 (72%); female (56%); full-time (59%); not enrolled in any distance education courses (73%); and White (53%). They tend to enroll in public colleges with 5,235,483 students enrolled in 687 2-year colleges and 6,010,017 students enrolled in 574 4-year colleges. While there are more 2-year colleges, the majority of undergraduate students enrolled in 4-year public colleges in the United States during the Fall of 2014. Also, the majority of students enrolled part-time in public, 2-year colleges as opposed to enrolling full-time in private and for-profit 2-year colleges and public, private, and for-profit 4-year or above universities as well full-time in the overall total enrollments in the United States for the Fall semester of 2014.

These female, full-time, under the age of 25, and White students in face-to-face classes in public institutions tend to be stressed, stay in college longer, are not doing what they need to do to learn, are unprepared for college, are connected to family and friends, enjoy some risk in the classroom, and are more diverse. They are technologically proficient and therefore desire classes that are technologically-rich in design. They are skilled in conducting searches on Google and Wikipedia on their various devices while they are not skilled in conducting academic research for their information literacy and other assignments.

Because the major change in the academy in recent years is the students, today's professors need to become knowledgeable about their students. It is critical that professors today also be knowledgeable about technology in order to be able to design and deliver technology-rich classes and incorporate innovative ways to utilize technology to meet the needs and desires of their students. Professors must also understand that students today conduct research on a daily basis on their devices through Internet searches and consider their students' technological preferences and skill-levels when designing technology-rich classes.

What do today's college students want from an education? In consideration that education is not as important to today's college students and that obtaining a college education has become just one more activity for students to juggle, professors need to instill the value of an education in their students. In order for these students to be successful citizens and future leaders they need to be taught how to think critically and how to evaluate sources on the Web for credibility and reliability. These students need organization and helpful comments concerning how they are doing. They also need help with making career-connected decisions to enhance career development. Professors are encouraged to design learning activities that invite student participation; consider mild stress games to engage students; recognize students' need for connection; ask students questions to offer opportunities for ownership for their own education; and link learning activities to the real world.

Colleges have the duty to society to deliver an education to students that prepares them to lead in the future. It is important to know who these students are and what they desire and require to be able to provide them with an appropriate college education to meet their needs and wants. Furthermore, facilitating and encouraging students to step up and take their own initiatives is essential for student learning and ultimate college success.

Implications

The implications from this research are numerous. To begin with, determining who these students are and what they desire and require from colleges is critical for higher education. Colleges have the duty to the society it serves to make education available so that today's students are in the best position to become tomorrow's leaders. It is important to know who these students are and what they desire and require from higher education in order to be able to provide them with an appropriate college education to meet their needs and wants. Furthermore, facilitating and encouraging students to step up and take their own initiative for their education is essential for student learning and ultimate college success. Identifying who these students are is the first step in addressing how to teach these students successfully. Also, there are a number of college students who never graduate. Colleges must follow these students to determine what happens to these lost students. Higher education must examine the demographics of its college students to avoid potential loss of valuable student resources. Another implication, there are a number of potential students who never enroll in college courses. Consequently, college administrators must communicate with these individuals to determine if colleges are providing sufficient outreach.

Limitations and Delimitations

At the onset of this study, specific limitations and delimitations were recognized. In view of the completed study, discussion of these limitations is needed. The quantitative data for this study were obtained from the 2014 academic years of institutions that reported to IPEDS. An examination of previous or subsequent years may have yielded different results. Additionally, data were only gathered from institutions that report to IPEDS. Although the IPEDS Data Center provided large sample sizes in all sectors of institutions, the inclusion of institutions that do not report to IPEDS may have altered the results of this study. In addition, as with all self-reported data, it is possible that data were reported to IPEDS incorrectly. If this were the case, the information would yield inaccurate results.

Recommendations

It is recommended that this study be replicated to validate these findings. Further research could be conducted examining why these demographics exist in the first place. Moreover, why are there more women enrolling in colleges today? Why are minority groups underrepresented in college enrollments? It is also recommended that studies be conducted to determine if the enrollment numbers for the Fall of 2014 was impacted by other factors than student demographics. In addition, studies could be conducted to ascertain if similar numbers exist in other countries regarding college students today. It is further recommended that ongoing studies be conducted to monitor college students in the United States.

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