**The Benefits of a Diverse Student Body in College**

When you’re [researching colleges](https://blog.collegevine.com/what-to-consider-when-applying-to-and-choosing-colleges/), “diversity” is a word that you’ll find wherever you look. Colleges are proud to state that their student bodies are not only talented and qualified, but also inclusive of students from a wide range of different backgrounds and perspectives.

You might be tempted to dismiss diversity as a buzzword, but there are some very real reasons why a diverse student body is good for colleges — and for you personally. Read on to learn more about what it means to attend a diverse college, what you can gain from engaging with a wide range of different people, and how diversity in educational settings prepares you for adult life in a diverse world.

**What does it mean to have a diverse student body?**

If you attend a diverse college, you’ll be part of a community of people whose experiences and viewpoints are different from yours — sometimes substantially so. You’ll be exposed to and challenged by these differing viewpoints on a daily basis, in the classroom and outside of it, and you’ll have the opportunity to learn from and be shaped by them.

**The diversity you’ll encounter among your fellow college students might come in any of the following forms, in addition to many more not listed here:**

* Race, ethnicity, and culture
* [Nationality and national origin](https://blog.collegevine.com/how-is-the-admissions-process-different-for-international-students/)
* Urban, suburban, or rural upbringing
* Religion and denomination
* Gender and sexual orientation
* [Age and marital status](https://blog.collegevine.com/can-i-attend-a-top-college-if-im-a-nontraditional-student/)
* Ability and disability
* Income, [socioeconomic status](https://blog.collegevine.com/what-does-middle-class-mean-to-colleges/), and [parents’ educational background](https://blog.collegevine.com/how-does-being-a-first-generation-college-student-affect-my-application/)
* Political and ideological convictions

These factors can be immediately visible, or they can be things you don’t discover until you’ve known someone for a while. Either way, you might be surprised to learn how much variation you’ll find in a single college’s matriculating class.

Many colleges hope and intend to create a diverse student body; they see having a diverse campus as beneficial to both students and the institution as a whole. Fostering a varied student population where many different perspectives are represented is a factor that’s often taken into account as colleges review applications.

This doesn’t mean that being part of an underrepresented group or having a unique personal quality grants anyone automatic admission to competitive colleges. It simply means that when colleges think about the student bodies they’re creating, they make an effort to ensure that different perspectives are represented in order to enrich the community. Campus life would be pretty boring if everyone were the same.

**How Diversity Adds to Your College Experience**

It’s clear that diversity is important to colleges today, but how will it impact you individually as you attend college? There are plenty of tangible ways in which diversity can positively contribute to your college education. Here’s how being part of a diverse student body can benefit you, no matter what background or situation you come from.

Learning and Growing

Meeting people from a broad range of different backgrounds gives you the opportunity to learn from them firsthand. You’ll expand your knowledge about the world, and especially those parts of it that aren’t part of your own personal experience, in a way that’s much more vivid and personal than learning from books or media.

Being a college student is all about growth, and coming to better understand the world beyond your upbringing is an important part of that growth that colleges actively promote. Engaging with a diverse range of classmates and friends will broaden your horizons, provide context for your life goals, and add depth and nuance to your own perspective.

Working with All Kinds of People

Sooner or later, it’s inevitable that you’ll encounter people who are different from you, from coworkers and clients to friends and neighbors. The sooner you learn how to listen, adapt, and be respectful of differences, the better you’ll be prepared to navigate these situations when you encounter them as an adult.

You’ll also develop your skills in approaching people you disagree with in a civil and mature manner. This can be challenging, but that’s actually a good thing. Being able to effectively interact and even engage in conflict with people whose views are the polar opposite of yours is an essential skill, and it’s a good idea to practice doing that sometimes-difficult work before you’re facing the higher stakes of the professional world.

Changing Your Mind

No matter where you go to college, your experience there is likely to be one of great change. As you attend class and work toward your degree, you’ll also go through the process of becoming a young adult with new responsibilities, new goals, and a new perspective on the world. Being part of a diverse student body will introduce you to new ideas and options that may significantly change you.

You might reconsider your opinions on important issues or begin to think seriously about topics you’d previously ignored. You might discover an entirely new passion in life or reject your initial plans. Whatever happens, interacting with a diverse range of people in college will help expose you to more options.

Developing and Refining Your Own Perspective

Meeting people with different perspectives doesn’t mean you *have* to change your mind. Even if you maintain the same basic convictions, dealing with others who question or challenge you can help you to develop a more thoughtful and nuanced stance on important issues.

Considering dissenting opinions will bring you to a stronger understanding of why you believe what you believe, and also help you to make informed decisions as you grow into adulthood. In addition to refining your own position, you’ll work on your ability to explain and defend that position to others who might not agree, which is a skill that will benefit you whenever you advocate for your convictions in the future.

**The Value of Your Unique Perspective on a Diverse Campus**

So far in this post, when we’ve talked about diversity, we’ve mostly considered how diversity among your future college classmates and friends will impact you. That might lead you to believe that diversity is about other people and *their* perspectives, not yours.

However, it’s important to realize that you’re not just a beneficiary of the diversity on your campus — you’re also part of it yourself! Your unique combination of background, experiences, talents, and challenges is itself a valuable addition to the community at your college.

Your presence and voice can have the same benefits for others as theirs do for you; you might introduce your roommate to the traditions you grew up with, help dispel stereotypes about a group you’re a part of, or help a friend discover an interest that turns into a career. You’ll bring a much-needed perspective to the topics you’ll grapple with in and out of the classroom, particularly if your perspective is currently lacking representation.

It’s not always easy to attend college on a campus where you stand out as different from most other students in one way or another. Sometimes, that experience can include loneliness and self-doubt, or difficulties in finding people who you feel really understand you. You might even feel like you don’t belong at that school.

If you end up struggling with these issues, you can remind yourself that if a competitive college accepted you, they actively want you to attend.