



2022 High School Student College Planning Report

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WHAT INFORMATION AND EXPERIENCES DO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS VALUE WHEN SEARCHING FOR COLLEGE?

The pandemic period of the past two years has altered many aspects of the high school and college experience for students. With more emphasis on hybrid and virtual experiences, how has this impacted the college search process for high school students? What do they value, what do they need to know, and what information have they seen?

RNL, Mongoose, Modern Campus, and PLEXUSS surveyed more than 1,000 high school students (9th-12th grade) to uncover their expectations, experiences, and preferences during the college search process. In this report, you'll see their responses on topics such as:

- When students start their college search and planning.
- What prospective students want out of their college experiences.
- Their plans and attitudes about college entrance exams.
- How far they are willing to travel to attend college.
- The information and influencers students value most.

These findings will help provide you with information that can help you assess your search communications and strategies as you engage prospective students and ensure they have the information they need to know about your institution.

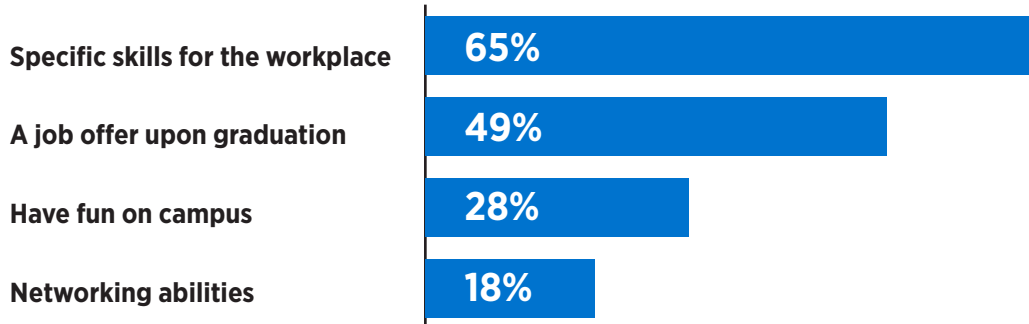
Talk to our enrollment experts about how you can build stronger search campaigns

Our enrollment experts have extensive experience working with colleges and universities on optimizing their search campaigns. Reach out for a free consultation and see how you can maximize the enrollment impact of your student search efforts.

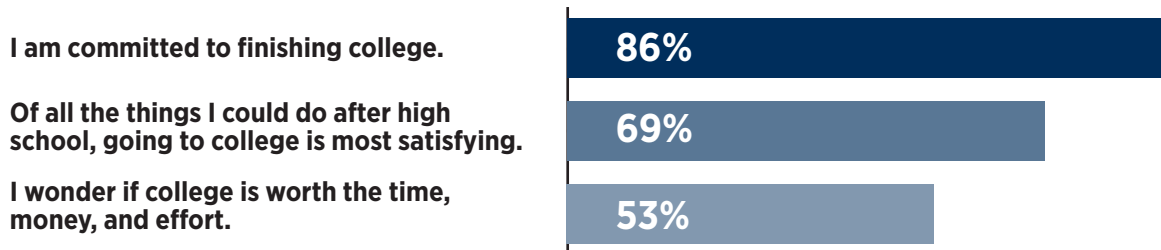
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WHAT DO STUDENTS WANT OUT OF THEIR COLLEGE EXPERIENCE?

TOP FOUR THINGS STUDENTS WANT FROM THEIR COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

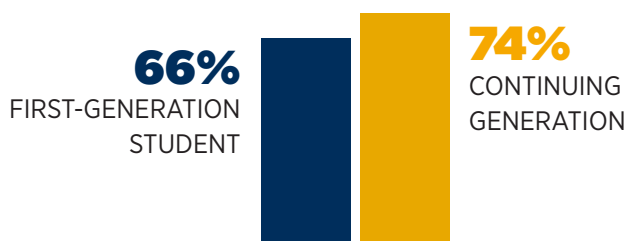


ATTITUDE TOWARD COLLEGE

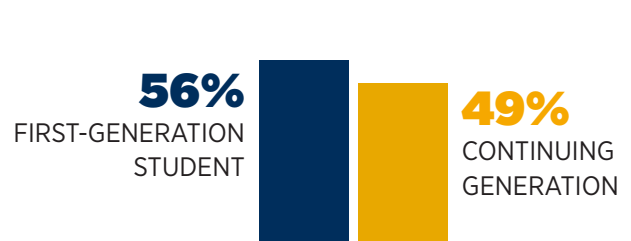


While more than eight out of ten high school students say they are committed to finishing college, half question whether college would be worth the investment. First-generation students are more likely to wonder if college is worth the time, money, and effort and question if college is the most satisfying path for them after high school.

Of all the things I could do after high school, going to college is most satisfying.



I wonder if college is worth the time, money, and effort.

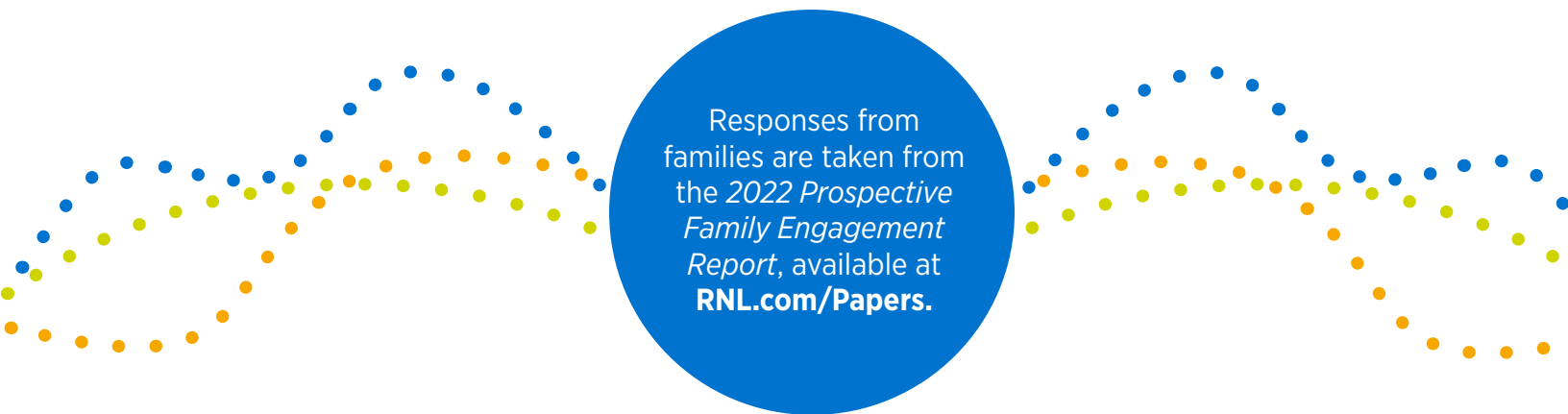


COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMS

Plans

Students were asked about whether they would take the ACT and SAT. Their responses here are compared to those from families who were part of the *2022 Prospective Family Engagement Report*.

TEST PLANS	FAMILIES	STUDENTS
The student will take the ACT.	22%	20%
The student will take the SAT.	40%	32%
The student will take both the ACT and SAT.	23%	34%
The student has no plans on taking any tests.	15%	14%



Responses from families are taken from the *2022 Prospective Family Engagement Report*, available at [RNL.com/Papers](https://www.rnl.com/Papers).

There were also significant differences by region, as nearly one out of three students in the Western region of the United States did not plan to take any exams.

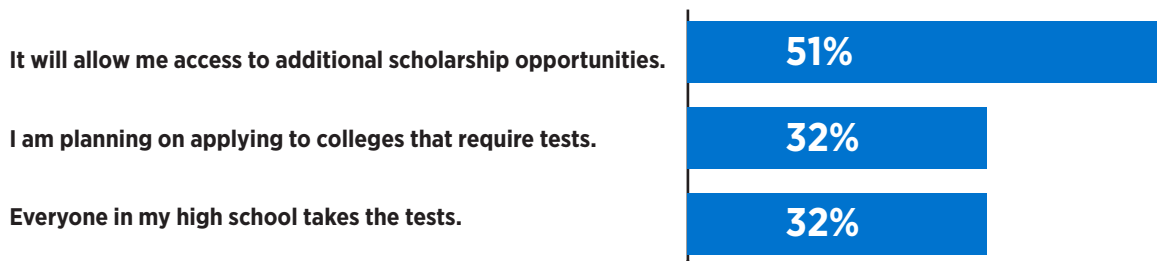
STUDENTS' TEST PLANS BY REGION OF THE COUNTRY

REGION	WILL NOT TAKE/HAS NOT TAKEN ANY ENTRANCE EXAMS
Northeast	13%
Midwest	7%
Southeast	11%
Southwest	8%
West	31%

Reasons for not taking tests

REASON	FAMILIES	STUDENTS
The student is not planning on applying to any colleges that require tests.	57%	42%
The family does not believe tests are a good measure of student.	52%	41%
Our student is not a good "test-taker."	27%	39%
The family can't afford to pay for tests.	5%	19%

Reasons students will take exams



Opinion of test-optional institutions

Nearly half of the surveyed students and parents think that institutions that don't require entrance exams are more welcoming regardless of their plans to take any tests.

OPINION	FAMILIES	STUDENTS
All should be test-optional.	48%	47%
Institutions that require tests are better/more prestigious.	27%	21%
There is no difference.	25%	36%
The family can't afford to pay for tests.	5%	19%

Online education



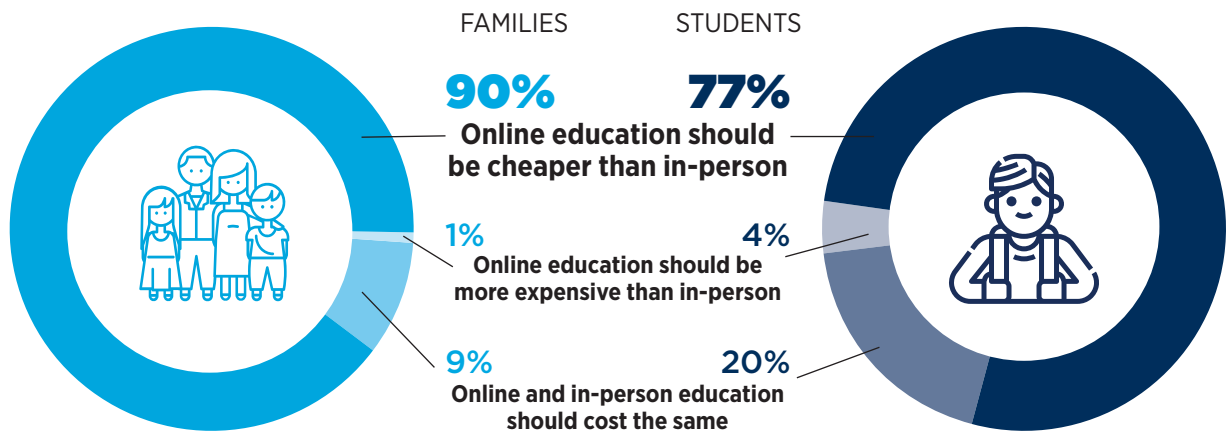
WOULD CONSIDER ATTENDING A COLLEGE ONLINE

10%
PARENTS



19%
STUDENTS

PERCEPTIONS OF THE COST OF ONLINE EDUCATION

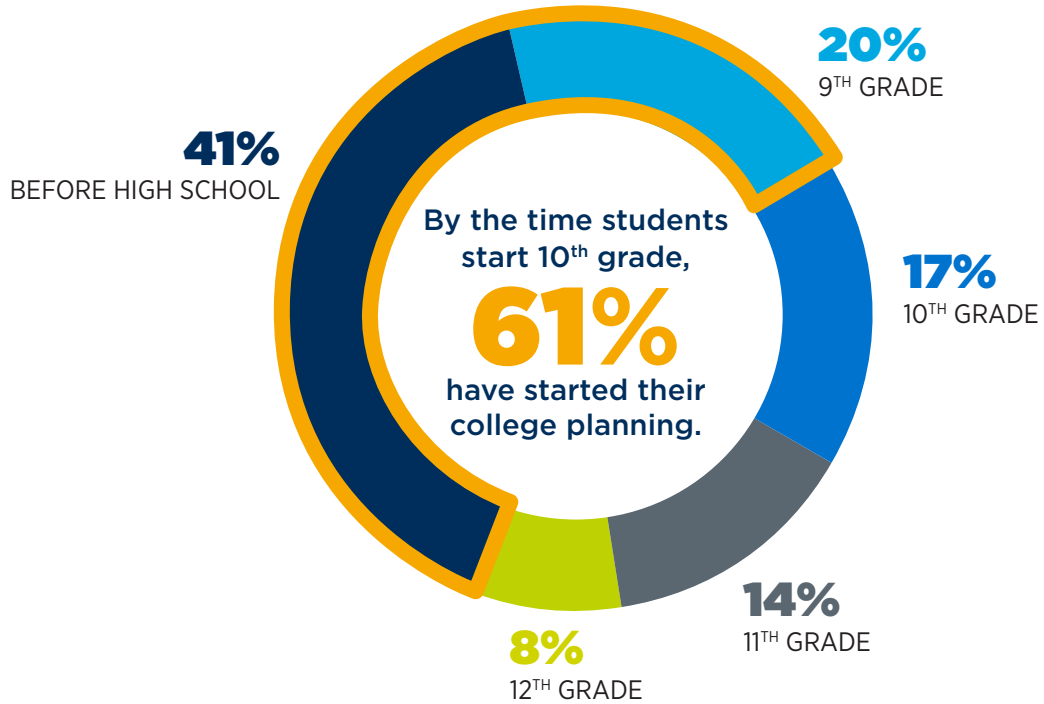


Reinforce the value of online education to families and students

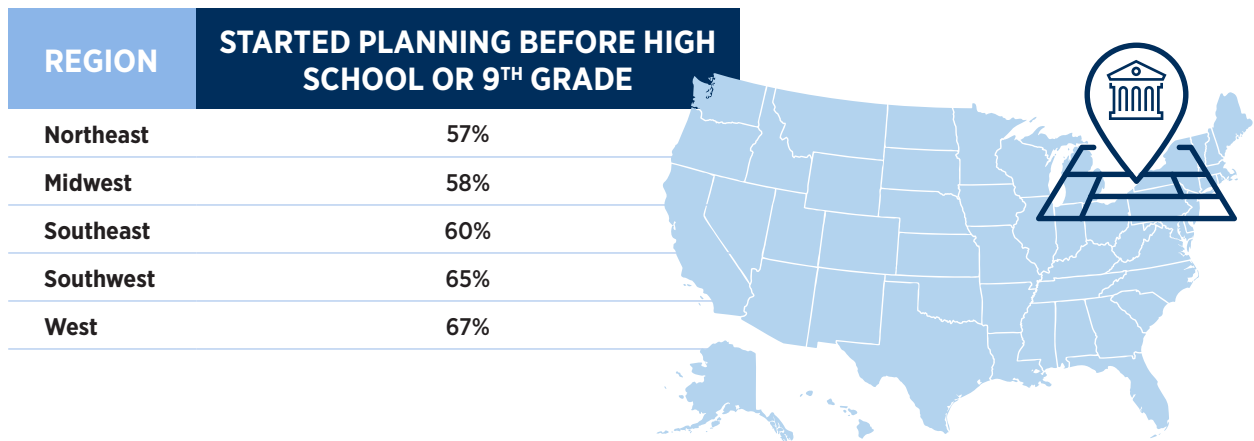
With nine out of ten families and three-quarters of students believing online education should be cheaper, it's important for campuses with online programs to stress outcomes and the value of that education regardless of how it is delivered.

COLLEGE PLANNING

When does college planning start?



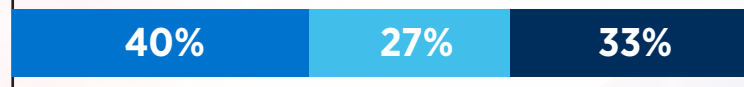
There were also differences regionally among students starting their planning before the tenth grade.



How far are students planning to travel to attend college?

■ <100 miles
 ■ 101-500 miles
 ■ >500 miles

ALL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS



Students are more likely to show interest in traveling further away to college earlier in high school, but as they get closer to high school graduation, they are more likely to stay closer to home.

Grade

9TH GRADE



10TH GRADE



11TH GRADE



12TH GRADE



Hispanic and Black students are also more likely to stay closer to home, as are first-generation students. Students in the West are the most likely to travel further to attend college

Student ethnicity

ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER



BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN



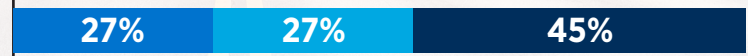
HISPANIC OR LATINO



WHITE



MULTI-RACIAL



First-generation status

FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT



CONTINUING GENERATION



Region

SOUTHEAST



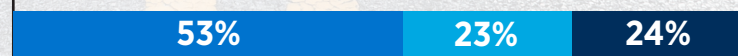
MIDWEST



WEST



NORTHEAST

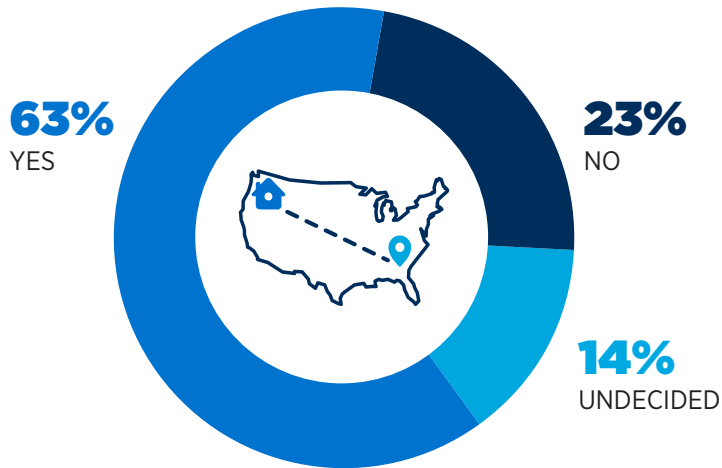


SOUTHWEST

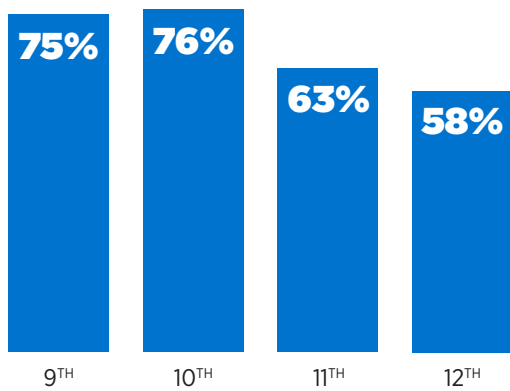


CONSIDERING OUT-OF-STATE INSTITUTIONS

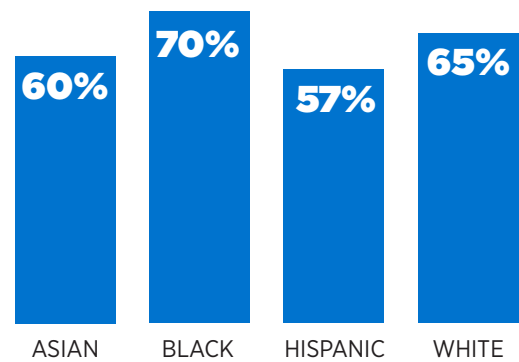
Are students considering out-of-state institutions?



Students Considering Out-of-State by Grade Level



Students Considering Out-of-State by Ethnicity



Students Considering Out-of-State by First-Generation Status



INFORMATION FOR SEARCH



Five most important topics for students for college planning

1	Academics (programs, majors, minors, etc.)	73%
2	Cost (tuition, fees, room, and board, etc.)	67%
3	Financial aid and scholarships	54%
4	The location (town, area, local spots, etc.)	36%
5	The strength of the academic programs (ratings, rankings, etc.)	32%

There was no difference in the importance of information for college planning by student ethnicity or between first-generation students and non-first generation. They all appear to value and prioritize the same information about the institution.

What information have students received/seen?

Students noted which information they recalled receiving from an institution or seeing.

Academics (programs, majors, minors, etc.)	85%
Location (town, area, local spots, etc.)	85%
Financial aid and scholarships	77%
Cost (tuition, fees, room, and board, etc.)	74%
Community life and activities	74%
Strength of the academic programs (ratings, rankings, etc.)	73%
Admission requirements	73%
Why the institution is different	71%
The application process and timeline	69%
Athletics	65%
Options to finance college education (financial aid, loans, etc.)	64%
Diversity and other demographics	62%
Co-curricular activities	61%
Housing	61%
Food services and dining	53%
Account services and paying the tuition bill	46%

When looking at this access to information by ethnicity, students of Black or Hispanic ethnicity were less likely to recall seeing information on the strength of academic programs or why the institution was different. For first-generation students, they were less likely to have accessed key information than non-first-generation students.

HAVE RECEIVED/SEEN INFORMATION (12TH GRADERS BY ETHNICITY)

INFORMATION	ASIAN	BLACK	HISPANIC	WHITE
Academics programs, majors)	97%	88%	90%	91%
Strength of academic programs	98%	76%	72%	80%
Financial aid and scholarships	92%	88%	89%	87%
Why the institution is different	93%	80%	72%	82%

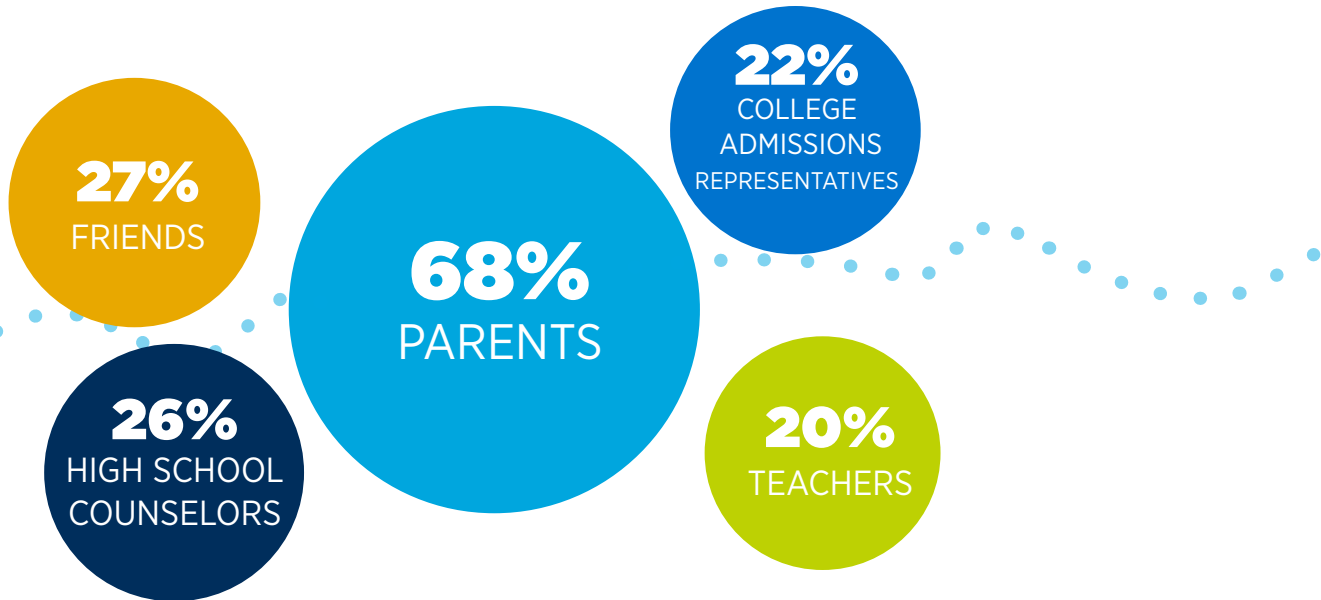
HAVE RECEIVED/SEEN INFORMATION (12TH GRADERS BY GENERATION STATUS)

INFORMATION	FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT	CONTINUING GENERATION
Academic (programs, majors)	84%	95%
Strength of academic programs	73%	83%
Financial aid and scholarships	83%	93%
Admission requirements	79%	90%
Application process and timeline	76%	91%
Why the institution is different	75%	85%
Cost	80%	89%



INFLUENCERS

Who are influencers for students?



INFLUENCERS BY GRADE LEVEL

INFLUENCERS	9 TH	10 TH	11 TH	12 TH
Parents	66%	68%	69%	68%
High school counselors	28%	29%	24%	24%
College admissions representatives	19%	26%	23%	19%
Teachers	13%	27%	21%	18%
Friends	44%	23%	30%	25%

Parents remain important throughout high school, with nearly seven out of ten students saying their parents/guardians are enrollment influencers. Friends are more important in freshman year, while teachers, counselors, and college representatives are most influential during the middle years of high school.

How can you engage more students as they research colleges?

Talk with our enrollment experts about how you can supercharge your college search, target the students who are a best fit, and engage them all the way to enrollment.

Visit [RNL.com/CollegeSearch](https://www.rnl.com/CollegeSearch)

COLLEGE TOURS

Students who have taken a college tour



GRADE	VIRTUAL TOUR	IN-PERSON TOUR
9th	25%	42%
10th	37%	25%
11th	36%	48%
12th	57%	73%

Where students signed up for a college tour



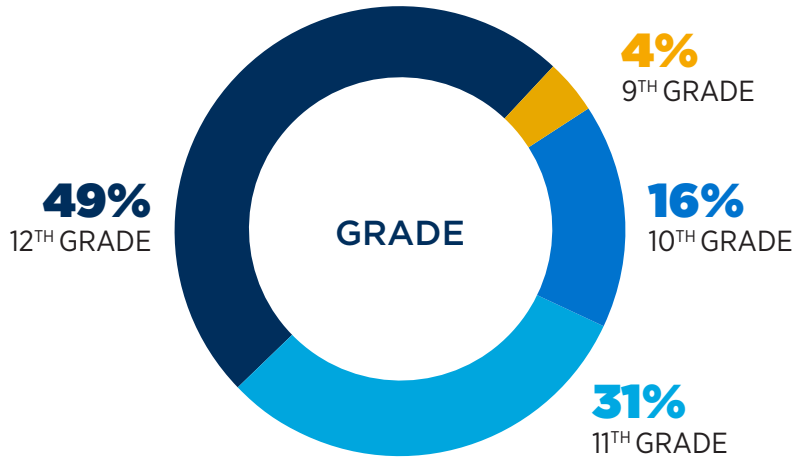
Satisfaction with college tours



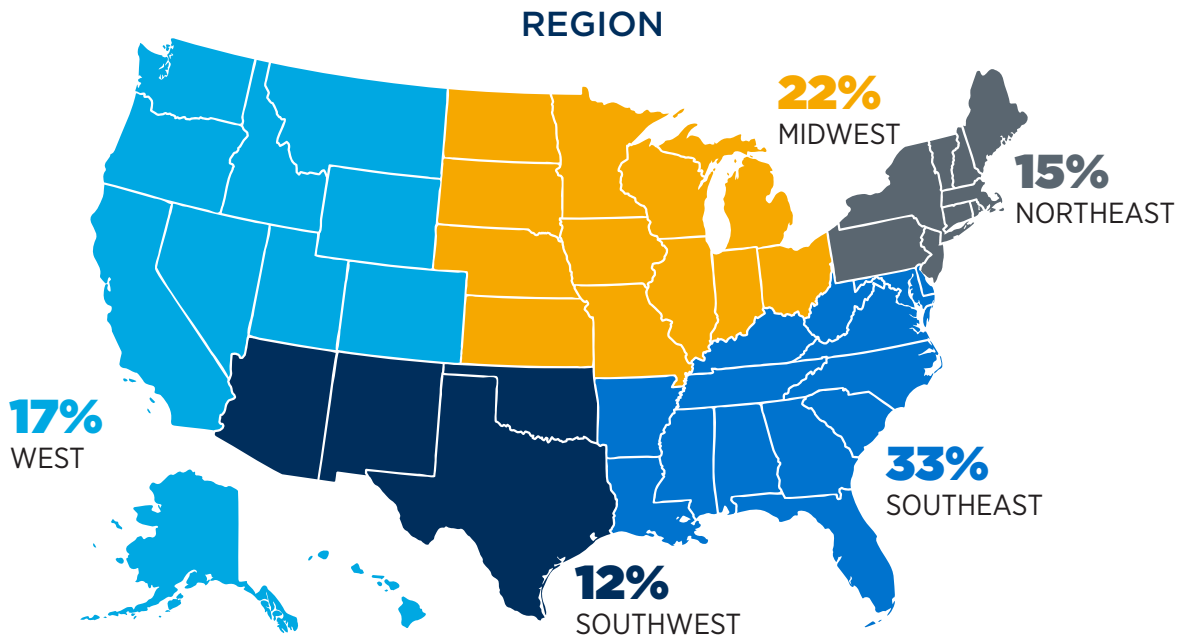
SATISFACTION	VIRTUAL TOUR	IN-PERSON TOUR
Very satisfied	25%	52%
Somewhat satisfied	46%	34%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	18%	9%
Somewhat dissatisfied	8%	4%
Very dissatisfied	3%	2%

ABOUT THE STUDY

Students were invited to participate by our partners from PLEXUSS between the middle of January to the end of February of 2022. We received 1,025 completed responses.



GENERATION STATUS



ETHNICITY

Asian	6%
Black/African American	28%
Hispanic	20%
Middle Eastern	1%
Native American or American Indian	1%
White	50%
Multi-racial	4%
Prefer not to disclose	1%
Not listed above	1%

GENDER

Female	72%
Male	19%
Transgender Female	1%
Transgender Male	1%
Non-binary/third gender/Non-conforming	4%
Prefer to self-describe	1%
Prefer not to respond	2%



ABOUT THE RESEARCH SPONSORS



RNL is the leading provider of higher education enrollment, student success, and fundraising solutions. The firm serves more than 1,900 colleges and universities through data-driven solutions focused on the entire lifecycle of enrollment and fundraising, assuring students find the right program, graduate on time, secure their first job in their chosen field, and give back to support the next generation. With a deep knowledge of the industry, RNL provides institutions the ability to scale their efforts by tapping into a community of support and resources.

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PLEXUSS is a mission-driven digital platform impacting how prospective students and post-secondary institutions connect. Since 2015, the PLEXUSS Global Student Network™ has grown to over 7 million student users and nearly 18,000 post-secondary institutions worldwide. By leveraging proprietary AI technology, PLEXUSS engages students over longer periods, getting to know each student's individual needs and goals.

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How to cite this report

Ruffalo Noel Levitz, Mongoose, Modern Campus, & PLEXUSS (2022).
High School Student College Search Report. Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Ruffalo Noel Levitz.
Available at:
[RNL.com/Search2022](https://www.RNL.com/Search2022)

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