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Fast Facts on Today's Four-Year College Students

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Photo by Allison Shelley/Complete College Photo Library

Regional public universities (RPU) educate nearly 70% of four-year college students, yet national higher education conversations focus on a small number of elite universities, overlooking the experiences of RPU students. To better understand these students' experiences, Third Way partnered with GS Strategy Group to survey 500 current RPU students about who they are, what they value, and how they view their education, campus experience, and the value their college provides.

For more information, [read the full report](#).

Fast Facts on Today's Four-Year College Students

Nearly

70%

of all college students pursuing a four-year degree enroll in regional public universities (RPU).



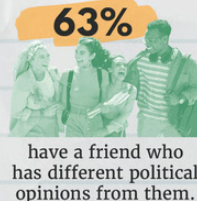
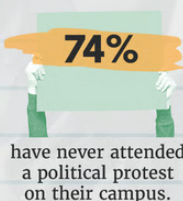
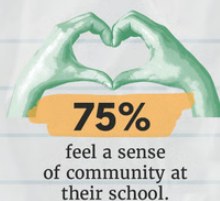
Who Are Today's College Students?

- 86%** attend college in the same state where they grew up.
- 62%** get news and information from TikTok or Instagram.
- 40%** describe their political beliefs as moderate.
- 38%** are among the first in their family to attend college.

What Financial Pressures Are They Facing?

- 77%** are worried that a financial emergency will prevent them from continuing their college education.
- 71%** are working while attending school, with almost 1 in 5 working full-time.
- 65%** are just getting by or finding it difficult to get by financially.
- 33%** are caregivers for children under 18 or other family members.

What Is Their Campus Experience Like?



Source: Third Way Polling: Shining the Spotlight on Regional Public University Students, June 2026.

