

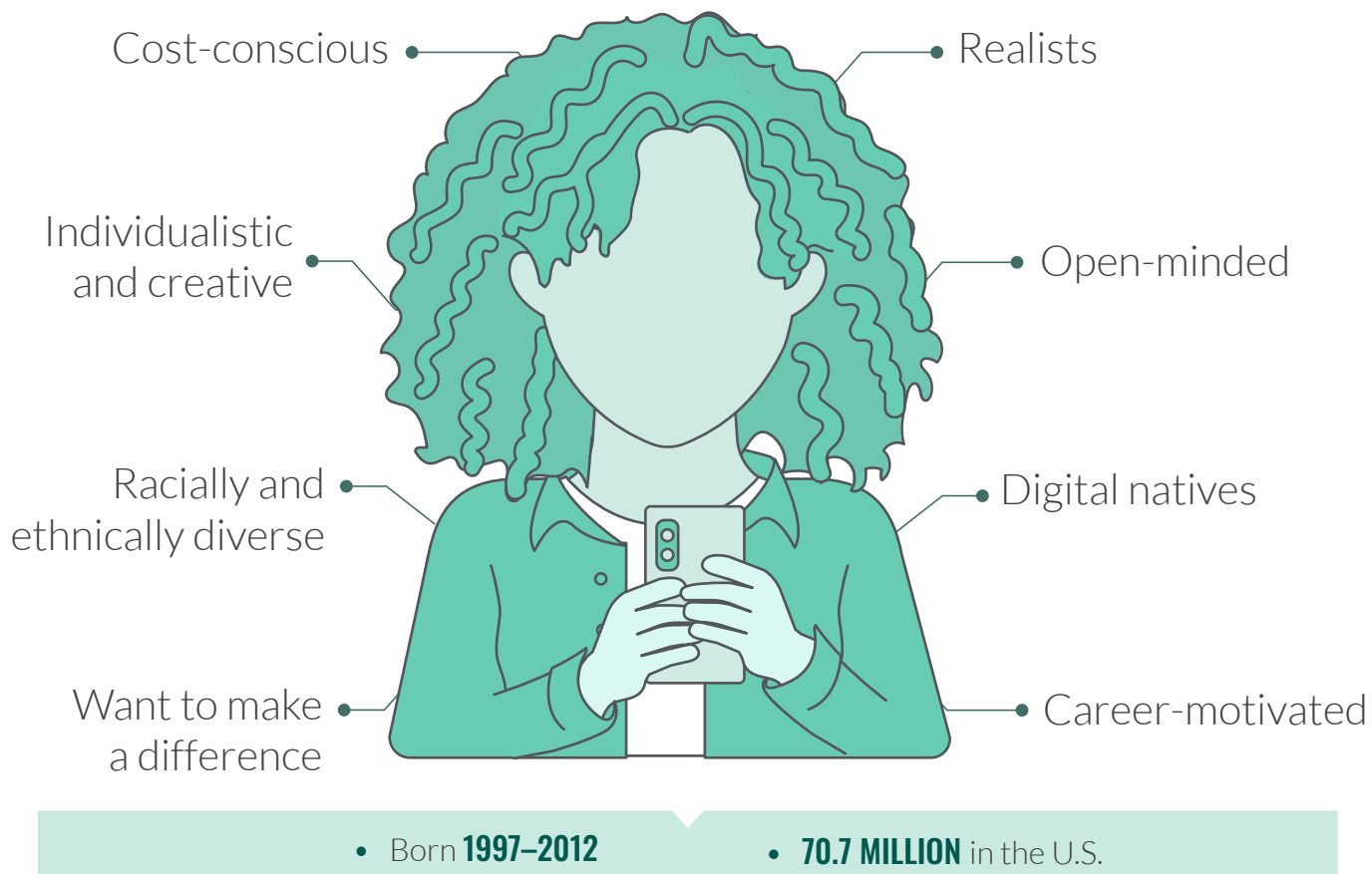
9 Tips to Attract Gen Z Students (and Prepare for Gen Alpha)

Now in their teens and twenties, members of Generation Z are diverse, tech savvy, and optimistic about their personal futures. But they're also cost-sensitive, skeptical about college ROI, and facing a difficult job market.

As this generation rethinks traditional college and career pathways, higher education institutions must continue to adapt their recruitment and retention strategies to keep pace with Gen Z's motivations and evolving needs.

Use the proven tips below to help you engage this cohort more effectively, while also preparing for the next generation of students: Generation Alpha.

WHAT MATTERS TO GEN Z



36% of U.S. Gen Zers without degrees believe trade jobs offer better long-term security.

49% of high school juniors and seniors are extremely likely to pursue college, but likelihood decreases if they're low-income, male, first-generation, or have low GPAs.

47% of Gen Z teens agree a post-secondary education should last less than four years.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL INFLUENCES



- ▶ Important issues for Gen Z include health care, mental health, higher education, economic security, civic engagement, racial equity, and the environment.
- ▶ While Gen Z cares deeply about political and social issues, their confidence in the current political system is at a historic low, regardless of party affiliation.
- ▶ Gen Z students have been shaped by the prevalence of school shootings and domestic terrorism. In 2025, there were 233 shooting incidents at U.S. schools.

SOCIAL-CULTURAL INFLUENCES



- ▶ Gen Z was raised by Gen X parents who taught them to work and think strategically and make trade-offs.
- ▶ Gen Z is more racially and ethnically diverse than previous generations. One in four Gen Zers are Hispanic, 14% are Black, 6% are Asian, and 5% are another race or two or more races.
- ▶ Younger Gen Z's middle and high school experiences were significantly disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which may have affected their academic or social development.

FINANCIAL INFLUENCES



- ▶ Amid the economic pressures of inflation, high costs, and stagnant wages, Gen Z largely feels financially insecure, leading them to be financially conservative and risk averse.
- ▶ Prospective students' top factors for deciding where to apply for college are the availability of tuition assistance and overall affordability.
- ▶ Gen Zers are looking for institutions that can guarantee high future salary earnings and provide personal fulfillment.

TECHNOLOGICAL INFLUENCES

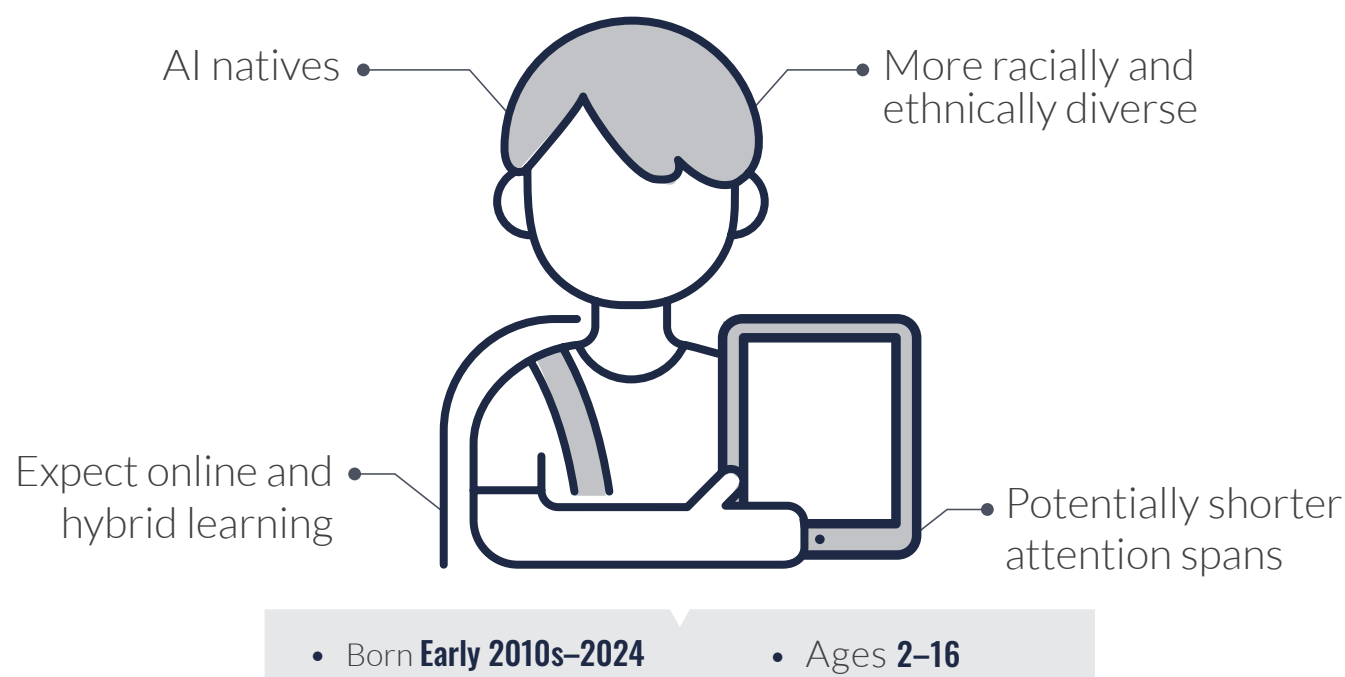


- ▶ Gen Z addresses new technology as an "extension of themselves" rather than an addiction or compulsion.
- ▶ As AI use becomes ubiquitous in society, Gen Z tends to use AI as a productivity tool more than a social one, with 65% using an AI chatbot as a replacement for Google searches in the last month.
- ▶ 91% of Gen Zers say the ability to work with cutting-edge technology would influence job choice among similar employment offers.

9 TIPS TO ATTRACT GEN Z STUDENTS

- 1 Highlight any accelerated programs, flexible start dates, experiential learning opportunities, or prior learning assessment programs that help students move more quickly and efficiently through post-secondary education.
- 2 Adapt teaching models to fit Gen Z learning preferences, such as individualistic learning and hands-on model-to-application learning.
- 3 Offer comprehensive and convenient support services that provide academic, financial, and personal assistance.
- 4 Provide training and support on the technology, software, and devices in use on your campus. Despite being digital natives, Gen Z values support and service as part of their educational experience.
- 5 Focus institutional branded messaging on the return on investment that students receive, and clearly connect practical skills and career outcomes to all academic programs.
- 6 Transparently provide tuition and fee information while emphasizing generous financial aid packages to address Gen Z's concerns around debt and affordability.
- 7 Revise admissions policies and procedures to reduce friction during the enrollment process for students. Consider practices such as direct admissions, test-optional policies, tuition and fee adjustments, or expansion of dual enrollment options.
- 8 Market your institution with short, authentic videos on social media. Gen Zers are discerning consumers and can quickly filter through content to determine what is worth their time.
- 9 Increase faculty and staff accessibility to students through multiple communication channels, including in-person and online options.

INTRODUCING GENERATION ALPHA



Sometimes referred to as "iPad kids," Gen Alpha is the first generation born entirely in the 21st century, with their early development shaped by technology and the COVID-19 pandemic. The oldest members of Gen Alpha are high school age, and will begin to enter college or pursue careers in the next few years. Like Gen Z, they are racially and ethnically diverse and will begin to immerse in technology-based learning. However, the jobs and careers they will pursue as adults largely have not yet been created.

Colleges and universities should begin engaging with Gen Alpha middle and high school students now. As this generation ages, institutions should continue to monitor their values, educational preferences, and career goals to be prepared to meet their future needs.

Solve your toughest recruitment and retention challenges. Download our guide **5 Ways to Enhance Strategic Enrollment Management with Data.**