Higher Education in United States

Vocabulary box :

| a college | une faculté/ un collège universitaire | to register/ to enrol  → registration/ enrolment | s’inscrire  →l’inscription |
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| a state/private university | une université d’Etat/ privée | to major in (US) | se spécialiser en |
| a polytechnic | un IUT | tuition  → tuition fees | les cours  → les frais de scolarité |
| an engineering school | une école d’ingénieure | a lecture  → a lecture room | un cours magistral  un amphithéâtre |
| a business school | une école de commerce | a grant | une bourse d’étude (selon les revenues) |
| a medical school | une faculté de médecine | a scholarship | une bourse d’étude  (selon les résultats) |
| a law school | une faculté de droit | a freshman (US) | étudiant en 1ère année |
| an art college | une école des beaux arts | sophomore (US) | étudiant en 2ème année |
| an arts college | une faculté de lettres et sciences humaines | junior (US) | étudiant de 3ème année |
| a term | un trimestre | senior (US) | étudiant de 4ème année |
| a semester | un semestre | the faculty | le corps enseignant |
| a lecturer | un maître de conférence | a dean | un doyen |
| a graduate | un diplômé | an undergraduate | un étudiant préparant la licence |

**The Ivy League** : group of eight prestigious private institutions of higher education (Harvard, Columbia, Yale, Penn, Princeton, Brown, Penn, Cornell, Dartmouth).

***Inequalities in Higher Education :***

In the US, students face **strong inequalities** because the **university you attend** impacts your **future salary** and career opportunities. Graduates from **prestigious schools** (like Ivy League universities) often access **high-paying jobs** and powerful networks, while students from **less famous colleges** tend to earn lower salaries and have fewer career options. This creates a **social divide**, where wealthier students, who can afford top universities, benefit the most, while poorer students are stuck with **student debt** and **lower returns on their degrees**.

***Relevant example :***  As shown by the 2021 Georgetown CEW study, graduates from elite universities can earn up to 40% more than those from lower-ranked schools, a gap that represents on average over **$80,000 per year** just a few years after graduation, while students from **less selective public universities** often earn **under $40,000** for similar jobs. This wage gap reflects **the "prestige premium"** attached to elite schools, which offer better access to **internships, alumni networks, and high-profile recruiters**.

**Varsity Blues Scandal** (2019):

**The Varsity Blues scandal was a massive college admissions bribery scheme uncovered in 2019, implicating wealthy parents, college coaches, and admissions consultants:**

### **Key Points:**

1. **Mastermind:** Rick Singer ran a fake charity ("Key Worldwide Foundation") to facilitate bribes.
2. **Methods:**

**Fake athletic profiles:** Bribed coaches to designate applicants as recruited athletes (even if they didn’t play the sport).

**Cheating on tests:** Paid proctors(surveillant) to correct SAT/ACT answers or falsified disabilities for extra time.

1. **Participants:**

**Parents:** Over 50 wealthy individuals, including celebrities (Felicity Huffman, Lori Loughlin) and executives.

**Coaches/Administrators:** From elite schools like Yale, Stanford, USC, and Georgetown.

1. **Legal Consequences:**

Over 50+ people charged; most pleaded guilty.

Sentences ranged from fines to prison (e.g., Huffman served 14 days; Loughlin, 2 months).

Singer cooperated with authorities and awaits sentencing.

### **Impact:**

-Exposed systemic inequities in college admissions.

-Led to reforms in athletic recruitment and testing policies.

-Damaged reputations of involved universities.

**The scandal highlighted how wealth could corrupt college admissions, sparking debates about fairness in higher education.**

**Affirmative Action in the US :**

Affirmative action refers to policies introduced to promote the representation and opportunities of historically discriminated groups (racial minorities, women, etc.) in areas such as employment, education, and public procurement.

**Historical context:**

Initiated in the 1960s during the Civil Rights Movement (President Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965). Intended to tackle racial inequalities and systemic discrimination against minorities, especially African-Americans.

**Main objectives:**

-Increase diversity and inclusiveness. - promote equality of opportunity

-Rectify historical injustices and reduce racial disparities.

**Implementation methods:**

Quotas (rarely explicit, often indirect) -Preferential admissions (universities).

Hiring practices favoring minorities or women when qualifications are similar.

**Controversies and debates:**

Supporters argue it addresses structural racism, promotes equality, and benefits society through diversity. Opponents claim it constitutes **"reverse discrimination"**, undermines meritocracy, and can stigmatize beneficiaries.

**Key legal decisions** **:**

* Regents of the University of California v. Bakke (1978): Supreme Court ruled explicit racial quotas unconstitutional but allowed race as one of several admission criteria.
* Grutter v. Bollinger (2003): Supreme Court upheld affirmative action, emphasizing diversity as a legitimate educational interest.
* Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard (2023): Supreme Court ruled race-conscious admissions unconstitutional, significantly limiting affirmative action in higher education.

**Current Situation:**

Affirmative action continues, though increasingly challenged legally and politically.

Ongoing debates intensified following the 2023 Supreme Court ruling, leading universities and institutions to rethink diversity strategies.

**Broader issues:**

Reveals persistent racial divides and debates over fairness and equality in American society.

Highlights complexities in balancing meritocracy and diversity.

**Here are some links to further your knowledge :**

<https://youtu.be/lWz-46NPqdk?si=WFiU4ve-FreA7_Gi>

<https://youtu.be/X___VpdI0_w?si=U3_3bkHwlf3moBqp>

<https://youtu.be/_6gra2-XCCQ?si=owJgjCQLp6sfHhuv>

<https://youtu.be/cwF_lSTz98E?si=WJHIc2RBut6re-0L>