

Heritage Telecollaboration

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Access to Higher Education

Preparation and Resources

Objectives

Students will work independently and with their peers from both institutions (C1 and C2) to:

1. Compare the institutional similarities and differences between C1 and C2 through data collection, analysis and reflection
2. Explore and expand their knowledge of the higher education system in the United States
3. Reflect on their educational choices, including topics such as access, location, programming, and other institutional features
4. Analyze issues of inequality in the context of higher education

Materials

1. Readings and Videos: Below is a suggested list of resources that address each of the themes which appear in this module. Instructors are encouraged to select/add the resources that would be most meaningful for their particular group of students as well as the regional and demographic context of their institution.
 - a. Community Colleges
 - i. [Las ventajas de un community college](#)
 - ii. [Colegios comunitarios; por qué elegirlos](#)
 - iii. Colegios comunitarios, límites y desafíos (I, II, III)
 - <http://radiobilingue.org/features/colegios-comunitarios-respuesta-a-los-altos-costos-de-la-educacion-primerta/>
 - <http://radiobilingue.org/ultimas-noticias/colegios-comunitarios-sus-limites-y-desafios-segunda/>
 - <http://radiobilingue.org/features/los-colegios-comunitarios-y-la-filantropia-iii/>
 - iv. [Los colegios comunitarios ofrecen educación para los trabajos que Trump sigue prometiendo; entonces, ¿por qué los castiga tanto?](#)
 - b. Educational Inequalities in the United States
 - i. [Educación de peor calidad y más abandono entre negros e hispanos](#)
 - ii. [La educación en Estados Unidos: un acceso desigual](#)
 - iii. [El sistema educativo de Estados Unidos presenta claras desigualdades raciales](#)
 - iv. [Cómo la desigualdad asfixia a EE.UU.](#)
 - v. [“A Tale of Two Schools”](#) (video)
 - vi. [“Tale of Two Schools: Race and Education on Long Island - Part 1”](#)
 - vii. [“TEDxWashingtonHeights - Monica Martinez - A Latina’s Story of Attaining A Higher Education.m4v”](#)
 - c. Student Debt and Other Challenges in Pursuing Higher Education in the United States
 - i. [El impago de la deuda estudiantil se dispara en Estados Unidos](#)
 - ii. [Las razones por las que millones en EEUU no terminan la universidad](#)
 - iii. [Estados Unidos: ¿racismo y desigualdad en la universidad?](#)

- iv. [Life of Privilege Explained in \\$100 Race](#) [to be shown in class]
2. Fact Books from C1 and C2: Depending on the institution of higher education, instructors may be able to locate Fact Books containing detailed information about the student body, faculty, costs, and other information about their home institutions. See the [Queensborough Community College Fact Book](#) for an example.

Technology Resources/Requirements

1. Class website
2. Video conferencing platform such as Zoom, Skype, or Facetime (to be used with Mac/Apple users)

Note

This module will be most effective – yielding better class discussion – if the two telecollaborative schools differ in terms of demographics as well as institutional context (geographic location, professor and organizational characteristics, political surroundings, etc.). Ideally, the collaboration would be between a 4-year school and a community college.

Activity 1: Understanding and Analyzing Data

The purpose of this activity is for students to explore quantitative data about their institutions and the implications of these data vis-à-vis educational inequality, and to compare these ideas with their peers at C2.

Preparation for Videoconference: Reviewing Institutional Fact Books

Show students the institutional Fact Books or other data resources for the two institutions that are telecollaborating and demonstrate how to look for specific information in them. Brainstorm with students what kinds of people in what kinds of situations could potentially use the data.

Prepare students to collect data in order to write a summary (see Pre-Task B). Provide students guidance about what type of summary to write. (A helpful starting resource for writing a summary can be found at [10 características de un resumen.](#))

Have students review the data sources for their college (C1) and the partner institution (C2). Ask them to focus on salient similarities and differences between these two sets of data. What stood out to them as surprising, striking, and/or worth a closer look? Have students take notes on any data/information that they found worthwhile to discuss in class.

Divide the class into small groups and ask them to look for the following information in the Fact Books and/or other resources for C1 as well as C2. Inform students that some data may not be available in their institution's Fact Book or in the equivalent resource for C2.

Student information:

1. Student enrollment
2. The three majors with the highest enrollment
3. Percentage of men and women
4. Average age
5. Ethnicity and race, including changes in the last ten years
6. Primary language(s) spoken
7. Place of residence
8. High schools that students graduated from
9. Graduation rates in three, five, and six years
10. Percentage of students with financial aid
11. Average income of current students
12. Outside employment, including number of hours worked per week
13. Number of students per instructor
14. Tuition cost

Instructor information:

1. Ethnicity
2. Gender and rank
3. Workload (how many credits they teach per semester). If this information is not in the Fact Book, have students ask you or another professor.

Preparation for Videoconference: Class Discussion

After students have reviewed C1's Fact Book, reviewed the equivalent resource for C2, and taken notes on the above information, have them reconvene as a class to debrief. What were their findings, and what was striking, interesting or predictable about them?

Prepare students to write a summary (350–500 words) explaining the major similarities and differences that they have found. Their summary should cover the following points:

1. What new information surprised you about your college? What information surprised you about C2? What did you find unsurprising?
2. What do you think a Fact Book like this tells us about an institution of higher education? What do you think it leaves out?
3. What information might be different for a different type of college (community college, four-year college or university)? Why do you think so?

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Task: Videoconference

Advise your students that they will be preparing to discuss with their partners at C2 the data they have found about the two colleges. Divide students in small groups and ask each group to prepare a list of questions that they would like to ask their peers at C2. The list might include questions such as:

1. What did you learn about your college by reviewing the Fact Book? What surprised you? What confirms certain things you suspected or observed? Does this information change your perspective about your college? Why or why not?
2. Do you think and talk about "inequality" in your educational institution? If yes, in which context(s) (with instructors and classmates in class, with classmates outside class, with friends, family, etc.)? Think about what inequality means in economic, racial, gendered, and educational terms.
3. What do you think of educational inequalities in the US? Are they considerable or negligible? Why? What broader inequalities do you think they reflect?

Pair small groups of C1 students with small groups of C2 students. Have them pose their questions to each other via videochat. When students have completed their chat with their peers, have them upload their notes about the conversation to the class website in blog format.

Post-Videoconference Step: Class Debrief

Debrief about the videoconference in class. Ask what students learned over the course of discussing the similarities and differences between C1 and C2. In small groups or as a class, talk about the notes that students took during the conference sessions, and have them include the information they gathered from their Fact Books.

Prepare students to reflect on this experience in the reflection. Prior to assigning the written reflection, discuss the reflection 2 rubric with students. Inform students that they are preparing to write reflection 2, a 2–3 page essay (see sample at the end of this document) about their perspectives on higher education in general in the United States, and how this connects to their experience as a student in a 4-year college or a community college. Remind students to write in narrative form rather than responding to questions point by point. Invite them to incorporate the following themes, discussing what particularly interested them for each theme:

1. Education in the United States: What have you learned in this module? What topics have you found interesting, and how do they connect to your own educational experiences? Evaluate the education you have received up to this point. Do you think that it has been a quality education? What would you change about the education you have received?
2. The telecollaboration experience: What was the experience of sharing insights with your peers at C2 in the telecollaboration like? How do you think this added to your understanding of your own educational context and experiences, as well as of larger questions and struggles in education in the United States today?
3. New ideas, new directions: As a society, what can we do to provide educational equality for all children? For example, you might look into issues of policy (affirmative action as applied to education, education policy, housing policy, voting policy, etc.); social issues like racial segregation or income inequality; teacher education/preparation; programming that supports marginalized students and communities; and so on.

Have students write and post the reflection on the class website. Ask them to comment substantively on and/or ask questions about two other reflections either by their classmates at C1 and/or students from C2. Have students respond to one comment that they received about their own reflection.

Activity 2: Exploring Positive Experiences and Challenges in Higher Education

The purpose of this activity is for students to explore the concepts of privilege and educational inequality as systemic and historically informed features of their current experiences in higher education, and to draw connections between these experiences and those of their peers at C2.

Preparation for Videoconference: Choosing Your College

Have students discuss the following question as a class or in small groups: “Why did you choose a community college or a 4-year college for your education?” Using the board, brainstorm a list of possible reasons, including such themes as finances, location/proximity, reputation, convenience of schedule, and so on.

Discuss the term “privilege” with students. Have them write one or two sentences explaining what they understand by “privilege.” Facilitate a conversation about these ideas and expand upon them as a class.

Create a list of words and/or sentence starters that relate to privilege. Suggestions include: privilege/privilegio, access/acceso, rights/derechos, finances/finanzas/economía, advantages/disadvantages/ventajas/desventajas, prejudice/prejuicio, barriers/barreras; Going to college is made possible when.../Asistir a la universidad se hace posible cuando... Use this list to create the questionnaires (see <https://cultura.mit.edu/cultura-questionnaires> for guidance), which can then be posted as hyperlinks on the project home space.

Work with the instructors at C2 to agree on a timeline for students’ completion of questionnaires and the publication of results. Invite students to complete the questionnaires in one sitting by responding to the prompts in any way that makes sense to them. Students can be encouraged to write in Spanish, English, or a combination of both languages.

Once students from both C1 and C2 have submitted their responses, publish the results from class on the project home site in a side-by-side comparison with the responses from the students at C2. (See example [here](#).)

After publishing the results, discuss them in class with students, inviting them to identify similarities, differences and patterns within and between the two groups, and asking students to formulate possible explanations for these differences. Have students work in pairs to make a list of questions for discussion that they will ask the students at C2.

Preparation for Videoconference: Watching *Life of Privilege*, In-Class Discussion

Show students the film “[Life of Privilege Explained in \\$100 Race](#)”

Have students discuss the video in small groups using the following suggested questions as a guide:

1. What is your initial reaction to the video? What is it like to watch this with your classmates?
2. Do you think this is an effective way of teaching what “privilege” is? Why or why not?
3. In an exercise like this, where do you think you would be positioned? Why?
4. Is it important to know what your position in the “competition of life” is? Why?

Discuss students’ responses to these questions as a class, and build vocabulary to support discussion.

Preparation for Videoconference: Building Background Information

Have students read the readings and watch the videos selected for class. Have them answer guiding questions and post their responses along with a picture they have taken of a place at the college that has meaning for them (e.g., a public meeting place, a classroom where they took a class that made an impact on them, etc.). Inform students that they will be commenting on the posts by the students at C2 as well. Guiding questions might include the following:

1. When you were making decisions about college, what institutions did you consider? What factors or characteristics of these institutions helped you make the final decision? What was most important to you?
2. Did you consider other options? Which?
3. The resources you have reviewed speak about educational inequalities in the United States. Respond to the following questions in a paragraph: How do these inequalities manifest in society? What are the causes?
4. You already have had experience in the educational system of this country. What have you observed and/or experienced with respect to the forms of inequality that were raised? If you are comfortable doing so, give specific examples.
5. Discuss whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: "There can be no equality in our society if the same educational opportunities do not exist for everyone." Include supporting details and examples to fortify your position.

After students have published their own posts, have them comment on two or more of the posts that the students from C2 published. Also have them respond to the questions and/or comments made on their posts.

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Task: Videoconference

Advise students that they will be preparing to discuss the topics of privilege and forms of inequality in higher education (including prejudices and barriers based on race, class, etc.) with their partner group at C2. In small groups have students prepare a list of questions they would like to ask their peers. Sample questions:

1. What was your reaction to the video “Life of privilege explained in \$100 race”?
2. What other resources did you review from the Materials list? What did you think about them and what feedback would you give the creator of these materials?
3. Do you consider your university a place for privileged students? Why or why not?
4. Do you have classmates or friends who rely on student loans? What have they said about this?
5. Why do you think that educational inequalities are so great in the US? What broader inequalities do you think they reflect?

Pair small groups of C1 students with small groups of C2 students. Have them pose their questions to each other via videochat. When students have completed their chat with their peers, have them upload their notes about the conversation to the class website in blog format.

Post-Videoconference Step: Blog

Meet as a class to debrief about the videoconference experience. Ask students to reflect on what they found interesting, surprising, troubling, inspiring, etc. about their conversations with the students at C2. What new insights do they have about their own educational institution, as well as about the community and region where it is located? Ask students to identify any patterns, similarities, differences, and/or unanswered questions that emerged in their discussions with the students at C2. How might this new knowledge contribute to knowledge-sharing and solidarity-building?

Rubric: Reflection

Instructions: Based on your research and the activities you have completed in this module, Activity 1, write a 2-to-3-page essay clearly delineating your perspectives on higher education in the United States in general, and the inequalities that have historically informed this context in particular. Make sure to include how these perspectives connect to your experience as a student in community college/4-year college. Please write in narrative form using the questions as a guide making sure to incorporate the following themes. Include commentary on what particularly interested you for each theme:

- Education in the United States. What have you learned in this module? What topics have you found interesting, and how do they connect to your own educational experiences? Evaluate the education you have received up to this point. Do you think that it has been a quality education? Why? What would you change about the education you have received?
- The telecollaboration experience. What was it like to share insights with your peers at C2 in the telecollaboration? How do you think this added to your understanding of your own educational context and experiences, as well as of larger questions and struggles around education in the United States today?
- New ideas, new directions. As a society, what can we do to provide educational equality for all children? For example, you might look into issues of policy (affirmative action as applied to education, education policy, housing policy, voting policy, etc.), social issues like racial segregation and income inequality, teacher education/preparation, programming that supports marginalized students/communities, and so on.

Important: All reflections must be spell-checked prior to submission. Include an APA-style bibliography of the sources that you have used.

Content	Excellent, very good 90–100	The author addresses all the topics laid out in the instructions. The reflection includes relevant details about inequalities and other insights regarding higher education, and how these connect to her own educational choices and experiences. All ideas are developed thoroughly and in depth.
	Good, acceptable 80–89	The author addresses most of the topics, but one or more important aspects related to higher education in the United States are missing or not sufficiently developed. However, there are some interesting observations.
	Poor 70–79	Several topics are not addressed or the observations and data are scarce, insufficient or irrelevant. The development of ideas is superficial and/or incomplete. There are not enough ideas or the same ideas are repeated several times.

	Insufficient Below 70	Not enough information to evaluate. Content is undeveloped and/or based on unsubstantiated claims.
Organization	Excellent, very good 90–100	The argument is developed clearly and organized in a logical sequence. The writing is cohesive and reinforces the main ideas. Very good transitions from one idea to another.
	Good, acceptable 80–89	Generally clear organization, though may at times lack clarity and/or show uneven organization. Some ideas overlap or are not well articulated with other ideas. Some transitions between ideas are missing.
	Poor 70–79	Unclear and/or inconsistent organization. It is not clear which are the most important ideas. There are few transitions between ideas.
	Insufficient Below 70	There is no logic in the organization of ideas. Difficulty in understanding the text.
Accuracy	Excellent, very good 90–100	Use of a wide variety of grammatical structures with minimal or insignificant errors that do not impede comprehension. Word choices and phrases suitable for the purpose, topic and audience. Rich vocabulary is selected for use. For the most part, the author has paid attention to spelling and accentuation.
	Good, acceptable 80–89	The use of grammatical structures is generally correct, though at times may tend to be repetitive. Excessive use of simpler structures. Occasional errors do not impede comprehension. Generally correct use of vocabulary, although sometimes it is insufficient or repetitive. Sporadic failures in spelling and accentuation.
	Poor 70–79	Grammatical errors, word choice/form, and/or syntax at times impede comprehension. Limited vocabulary which is often repeated. Confusing and imprecise terms sometimes make reading difficult. Frequent errors in spelling and accentuation.
	Insufficient Below 70	Multiple errors on various levels make understanding difficult. Very limited vocabulary which is repeated often and/or used inappropriately. Confusing and imprecise terms abound. Frequent errors in spelling and accentuation.

Sample Reflection

Reflexión sobre las diferencias entre las universidades

College 1 es una universidad comunitaria y pública y College 2 es una universidad privada de cuatro años. Soy una estudiante de College 1 y, al escuchar a los estudiantes de College 2, me he dado cuenta de similitudes y diferencias que son positivas y negativas.

Una diferencia muy notable es el costo de la matriculación. College 1 cuesta por semestre \$2,800 por doce créditos y al año cuesta un estimado de \$4,800. En contraste, el coste de matriculación de College 2 es aproximadamente \$40,000 por un año, más \$9,000 para los estudiantes que quieran vivir en los dormitorios. Comparando las dos instituciones, está claro que algunos estudiantes deciden matricularse en un Community College por ser más económico que una universidad privada. El costo de ambas instituciones no es la única diferencia. También hay muchas diferencias en el currículo académico. College 1 no tiene un amplio y extenso currículo académico como College 2. College 2 tiene más variedades de carreras. Al tener un currículo académico más amplio y extenso, los estudiantes tienen más posibilidades de encontrar una carrera apropiada para sus intereses.

Una diferencia que me llamó mucho la atención es la cifra de graduación de ambas instituciones. En College 1, que es una institución de dos años, es 17% en tres años, lo que está muy por debajo de College 2, que es 67% en cuatro años. Me hubiera gustado que la cifra de graduación fuera más alta en College 1, pero al escuchar a mis compañeros hablar sobre los motivos por los que la cifra de graduación es baja, puede entender bien por qué algunos estudiantes no pueden graduarse en dos años. Factores como la economía de la familia, el tener que trabajar y las responsabilidades familiares impiden que algunos estudiante se gradúen a tiempo.

College 2 ofrece dormitorios, algo que College 1 no tiene. Me hubiera gustado haber asistido a una institución que ofrece dormitorios, ya que es una experiencia única. Desde mi punto de vista, los estudiantes que viven en dormitorios aprenden a ser independientes y responsables. No solo eso. Como han comentado algunos compañeros de College 1, nosotros vivimos con nuestras familias y estamos muy afectados por todos los problemas familiares que van surgiendo. Si viviéramos más lejos, podríamos enfocarnos más en nuestros estudios y menos en nuestra situación familiar.

Otra diferencia que hay entre College 1 y 2 es el espacio que los estudiantes tienen en la clase. En College 1, hay como 30 o más estudiantes en un mismo salón. En College 2, en un salón hay, como mucho, de 15 o 20 estudiantes. Cuando hay más estudiantes en una clase, a los profesores se les hace más difícil ayudar a los estudiantes que lo necesitan. En cambio, donde hay menos estudiantes, los profesores pueden explicar con más detalle y de forma más individual para que el estudiante pueda entender la materia. Además, cuando hay muchos estudiantes en la clase, no todos participan y a veces ni siquiera llegan a conocerse. Pero, aunque las universidades privadas ofrecen clases más pequeñas, son muy caras y una gran cantidad de los estudiantes se gradúan con una buena parte de la deuda. En nuestra conversación con College 2, me pareció interesante hablar de “el estigma” que hay contra las universidades comunitarias. Hablamos de que en algunas zonas del país y en ciertas escuelas secundarias hay un sentimiento de que las universidades comunitarias son peores que las universidades de 4 años. Se piensa también que las universidades comunitarias son para personas que no tienen dinero o personas que no son inteligentes. Yo no era consciente de esto.

Encontramos que en muchas escuelas secundarias, la opción de asistir a universidades comunitarias ni siquiera se plantea y que muchos de los estudiantes de College 2 no sabían que era

posible la transferencia de una universidad comunitaria a la universidad de 4 años. En cambio, hay escuelas secundarias en las que los consejeros nos presentan primero la opción de universidad comunitaria y nos hablan muy poco de la de cuatro años. Ambas instituciones ofrecen deportes, organizaciones y eventos sociales para los estudiantes. College 1 ofrece deportes para hombres y mujeres, como basketball, balonmano, natación, fútbol y otros más. También tiene organizaciones como el Drama Society, Creative Writing Club, Chemistry Club, Mock Trial Association, etc. Sin embargo, he observado que College 2 también tiene asociaciones para estudiantes que se dedican a temas de justicia, de derechos humanos e incluso de derechos de los animales, algo que, por ejemplo a mí, me interesa mucho.

En general, creo que las universidades comunitarias son una muy buena opción para los estudiantes con menos recursos económicos, como es el caso de mis compañeros de College 1. También es buena opción cuando los estudiantes no saben qué especialidad estudiar. Es ridículo que estos estudiantes derrochen su dinero por un período de dos años a la hora de decidir su especialidad. Por otro lado, me he dado cuenta de que College 2 tiene mejor reputación y probablemente los estudiantes tengan mejores trabajos después de graduarse. Yo realmente no era consciente de que hay tantas diferencias entre estudiar en un tipo de universidad o en otra. Creo que durante la escuela secundaria no nos han dado suficiente información a mis compañeros de College 1 y a mí porque, por ejemplo, hasta ahora no sabíamos que en las universidades privadas de cuatro años hay becas. Si hubiera tenido esta información, tal vez habría solicitado estudiar en una institución como College 2.