



National Conference for Hidden Student Populations

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<https://nchp.okstate.edu>

Current Hidden College Student Populations

May include those who have foster care histories, justice-involved experiences, who are survivors of sexual violence or sex workers, recovering substances addicts, who face housing insecurity, who have sought/seeking abortion care, or who have undergone or are in the process of gender reassignment.

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The Scholar-Practitioner is a monthly publication of research summaries that targets the research-to-practice-to-research gap for U.S. scholar and practitioner advocates for hidden college student populations.

This publication reinforces the work of the **National Conference for Hidden Student Populations (NCHP)** by providing a space to share research applications for practice. **NCHP** was the first research conference dedicated to this multidisciplinary area of study.

The **NCHP 5th conference** will be held February 19 - 20, 2025, virtually.

[Registration and call for proposals](#) are now open!

College Students' Attitudes Toward Denying Admission to Prospective Students With Criminal Records

Burton, A. L., Puddy, H., Hong, S., Burton, V. S., Jr., & Miller, W. T. (2024). College students' attitudes toward denying admission to prospective students with criminal records. *Journal of School Violence*, 23(1), 71-81.

Summary by Alexander L. Burton, Haley Puddy, & Sunmin Hong

Although many university admission offices ask prospective students to disclose criminal record information, little research supports such a practice. Evidence tends to suggest that college students who possess criminal records pose no more crime risk than students who do not. Thus, if the risk is lower, the campus community may not want individuals on campus with criminal records. That is false. Prior work examining both faculty and campus administrators' attitudes reveals that they are generally open to admitting students with criminal records. How about, then, the attitudes of the largest group of stakeholders on college campuses: students? Our study explored this issue.

Research Questions

The primary research question we explored was whether college students believe individuals with criminal records should be able to attend universities. In addition to assessing the students' opinions, we assessed factors that are associated with students' attitudes. Specifically, factors that theory and prior research suggest might shape students' attitudes toward this policy issue: punitiveness, racial resentment, conservative political ideology, and personal/vicarious contact with the criminal justice system.

Methods

Our study relied on survey data drawn from 846 students in social science courses at a large urban university in the Midwestern region of the United States. The survey included a variety of questions that assessed students' views toward admitting students with criminal records, racial and punitive attitudes, political leanings, and measures of personal and vicarious criminal justice system

contact. We used these items as the independent and dependent variables in our multivariate regression analyses.

Findings

The key finding of our study is that more than 80% of the students in our sample expressed some level of disagreement with the idea that students should be denied admission to universities based on possessing a criminal record. This finding is consistent with previous research on faculty and administrator attitudes toward the same topic, but it also reflects the broader societal trend of Generation Z and Young Millennials adopting increasingly progressive views. Our results also revealed that certain subgroups of students were more or less supportive of admitting students with criminal records. Students with prior contact with and exposure to the criminal justice system were more likely to be supportive of criminal record holders attending universities. Conversely, students with conservative political views, greater levels of racial resentment, and more punitive views were less accepting of admitting record holders to college campuses.

Implications for Practice

There are several implications for practice based on the findings of our study. First, we recommend that university admission offices and administrators make decisions for admission based on the entirety of a student's

application rather than deny them solely based on a criminal record. For applicants with criminal records, admission office staff should take a more comprehensive view of their criminal history to assess the risk they pose to their campus. Extensive empirical research shows that individuals with criminal records who attend universities pose no greater risk to campus safety than those without records. Moreover, reaching a stage in their life of applying to a university often signals that these individuals have made significant strides in turning their lives around. This study along with several others indicates that the largest group of stakeholders on campuses—students—are supportive of granting admission to universities for fellow students who possess records. We found that only 20% of the students in our sample do not think it is a good idea to admit someone if they possess a criminal record.

Second, our findings directly support the expanded use of “inside-out” exchange-type programs. These programs are designed to bring together college campus-based students and incarcerated students, making higher education/learning more accessible, and allowing participants to see others for how they truly are. Our findings suggest that students are likely to strongly support these types of programs, while also helping to shift the perspectives of those who hold negative views toward

individuals with criminal records.

Finally, as with most justice-related policies, there will be resistance to such policy changes and programs. Some individuals, regardless of the evidence, will seek to deny individuals access to universities solely due to their criminal past. In the case of our study, these individuals were students with stronger punitive and racially resentful views. To temper these negative sentiments, we suggest using positive stories of individuals who have overcome their pasts and have been successful on college campuses. Research indicates that emotionally powerful stories can lead to empathetic identification and change attitudes toward criminal justice-related policies.

NCHP

Virtual Conference

Save the date!

Feb 19 - 20, 2025

Register [here](#)

Call for Proposals **NOW OPEN!**

Presentations - Present an original empirical work or practice. Deadline January 10, 2025 (notifications by January 21)

PDQs - Lead a think tank discussion. Deadline January 10, 2025 (notifications by January 21)

More information: nchp.okstate.edu



To sign up for ongoing email updates about the 2025 national conference and/or for archives of *The Scholar-Practitioner*, go to: <https://risforthursday.okstate.edu>