

*They range in age from
fresh out of high school and can't even vote yet
to
older than you are, possibly, and with a lifetime of experience....*

***Listening to
Students of Different Ages***

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Listening to Students of Different Ages...

“It is hard to be a college student because there are so many expectations & stress in my own age.”

—a young woman

“At times I have experienced age discrimination on campus. I am proud of who I am as a person and the challenges that I have met and overcome to attend CSUS. However, I do not appreciate a culture of young students who create barriers to my learning experience.”

—an older transfer student

“No matter the age I get to meet different people and it helps me network through college so far.”

—I am a Asian female student and currently 18 years old turning 19 this year. With the challenges of being the first in my family to go to college, I am new to this experience of college.

“It’s a great place to learn. Most of my colleagues are around the same age, I’m not in a class full of 18 year olds.”

—white/older adult

“Being new to college does make it difficult to make friends on campus...due to the age difference.”

—New to College, Male, Hispanic

“Being an ‘older’ student I feel my perspective is unique. I chose not to get involved in groups, clubs, friends, etc., so I could focus on graduating and my education. Now that I am graduating my mindset is focused, determined and geared toward that goal.”

—commuter student, female, has been in college for 6 years.

“Being young puts a crutch on me being that the stereotype would be me partying all the time”

—Asian and new to college

“As an ‘older’ student I want to tell younger students to stop wasting their time & take school seriously.”

—Mexican Female Vet

“It’s hard being an older adult and attending college. With age comes many responsibilities like working full time, paying mortgage or being a wife and taking care of a household.”

—Age, Veterans (spouse.)

“There are several other older students here. I do not feel out of place and because there is such a huge demographic of students everyone seems to respect the environment. The students are mindful and mature outside of class.”

—older Parent Returning to School

“There are days that I feel younger students make too many excuses and lack accountability. I feel that if we’re to speak out against liberal ideas + ask that people to work or serve before getting privileges that I would be treated negatively.

—An Older White Male Veteran who is returning to school

“Being older than a large portion of the students is a bit intimidating but there is so much diversity in race/ethnicity and age here that makes it seem not so bad.”

—Returning Student

“Its interesting to be around so many young people.”

—Returning to School

“I feel like as students begin to get older in school they are not really acknowledged anymore.”

—a fifth year student.

“Being an older student was in many ways a benefit to me. The students appreciated that I am older and the faculty appreciated that I was older—we had that connection.”

—female, older student, returning to school, first generation college student, 3 car accidents (disabilities), visual processing disorder, dyslexia, ADHD

“At a young age, I feel the pressure by students, faculty, and family to graduate as soon as possible and get into the working world. It feels like no one wants to let me take it slow. They only want me to get in and get out.

The resources that are at my disposal have helped guide me my first two years.”

—No student specifics given

“I am often excluded from classroom conversation, activities, and lecture relevance because of my age.”

—Veteran, NonTraditional Returning, FTM, Gender Non-Conforming.

“I feel I wasn’t well prepared before coming to college. In class the work is so much harder & different you have to be focused and ready everyday. It’s hard because teachers don’t coddle you & hold your hand you gotta grow up.”

—17 year old male whose african american

“I love Sac State. I appreciate the wisdom that my age brings to my studies. It is not very often that I feel out of place in learning.”

—old, parent, returning to school – with college age kids

In the section to follow, you will find the perspectives of students from 18 to 19 years of age...

“I feel like a normal teen experiencing the stress of the ‘college life.’”

—Hispanic & white, female, 19 years.

“I consider myself an average student and I’ve been having a good time at CSUS. I’ve noticed many of the teachers are trying to get to know me and care.”

—female white 18

“Very involved on campus, tutoring, sorority, other sub groups. I’ve created my own family and culture here and it has helped me grow.”

—19, white, female

“It takes time to get used to college life and the expectations of attending class. It is exciting to meet new people and to explore campus and to learn many things here.”

—19 years old

“What its like to be a student with (my) perspective...is young and easy. Except for major life decisions, you have to handle those with extra care since it deals with your future.

CSUS is fun there lots happening, and all the experiences help you better and become a better person whether its education or social wise or both.

(I like) Being able to have someone for help with questions that you might have, being able to be ahead and focused to do good and educate yourself to better yourself.”

—From the perspective of a student who is Mexican/American, 19 Years Old.

Listening to Students Who Are 18-19...

“Entering college at 17, everything is so different in comparison to high school. So much is expected of you to fulfill alone.”

—Latina / 19 / First generation college student

“I just turned 18 so I am extremely young in college so it is hard to adjust.”

—white, 18 yrs old, student athlete, new to college

“To be a student with an age perspective here, there are times when I feel like my potential is useless because there are priority towards older students because they are perceived to be more capable of doing an array of things.”

—Age-18 years old.

“Well I am young, I see all the older people above me and think there is not chance to make it to my major.”

One time I went to ask questions...in lassen hall and the lady was very rude to me and did not help me at all. I don't know if it was because I looked young, but the whole time she was talking down on me. (But) Everybody is very nice here (for the most part).”

—a eighteen year old women

“Being 18 and considered as an adult, along with some students being independent is a big responsibility.”

—18

“Lots of freshman. Everyone is old and scary.”

—18, Filipino, Male

“I am a little young for a freshman and getting into upper division classes, even when I have all my pre-recs is hard.”

—White, 18, female

“I am only 18 and a new student. What is challenging about being young and new is the fact that a lot of people at times treat me like I am not capable of completing certain tasks and think I am so inexperienced.”

—I am a student who is new to college, who is also African American. I am a Christian and come from a religious background.

“Seeing individuals who are at this campus who are older than me continuing their education is encouraging.”

—Chinese American of 18 years of age

“Just being so young you have a lot to learn and as time goes on I learn more and more”

—African American & white, 18 years old

“As an eighteen year old, I like being in classes where the ages vary – it allows me to see and learn different aspects and viewpoints of life.”

—new to college, filipino female

“I'm very young for my grade. I'm a sophomore and I just turned 18.”

—18 y/o Caucasian male w/o mother/father, sophomore

“It is a bit challenging at times because there are students who are much older than me and it causes kind of a challenge when it comes to making groups in class.”

I have been in classrooms where I am one of the few first year college students. It was only challenging because the rest of the students were already use to the college community and I felt like I was still in high school.”

—New to College, female, 18 years old

“Some people are very rude, especially students who are not freshman. The older students are sometimes not very helpful.”

—18, female, Hispanic, math major.

“I feel like I fit in with a lot of my peers because there are a lot of people my age. Since I am advanced by a semester I think it will be hard to keep some of the same friends at Sac State.”

—an 18 year old sophomore

“It’s great being 18, but my birthday is in 10 days so I’m happy to be turning 19.”

—18 yr old hispanic girl

“My age does give me an extra year of experience in college.”

—Filipino and 19 years old

“I don’t know if it just seems like college. I’m pretty young comparatively.”

—19 Male White

In the section to follow, you will find the perspectives of students in their twenties...

“I am 21, so I am about the age of most students. I commute to school, so I don’t spend much free time on campus.”

—No student specifics given, other than what is stated above

“I’m always busy, I work full-time, manage a group of people, and go to school. Busy time in my life right now.”

—white/female/23

“I feel like every other student. I’ve been at Sac State since I was 18 so my age doesn’t bother me.”

Joined a frat. It was great in terms of socializing and networking but probably held me back in terms of graduating.

Having to work and take a lot of classes has sucked.”

—White/filipino, Male, 24

“Hopeful for the future, but scared and unsure if college will bring a career.”

Learn as much as you can.”

—22 White Male

“Typical college life. Arrive, conquer, and progress.”

—a 22 year old white male

Listening to
Students in Their Twenties....

“Everyone thinks I’m a baby and too young to graduate. People look down on me. I can’t wait until my graduation day when I will show everyone that I can do it.”

—20 yrs old

“I like being young and motivated”

—white, 20 yr old Female

“Just being young a lot of the times on campus sucks.”

—20 y.o. Hawaiian

“I just feel so much younger than everyone here.”

—1996

“interesting to be in upper division w/older students”

—twenty and pacific islander

“I feel younger than most students in junior standing.”

—20, female, white, junior standing

“A challenge could be that I am young and I often feel that older students are looking down upon me as inferior, because they are older.”

Engaging with more people on campus, especially those around my age makes me feel more comfortable”

—Hispanic & White, 20 years of age.

“There are no challenges being white and 20. People view me to be older than I really am.”

—White, Portuguese, 20 years old

“The place I feel most out of norms would be age, people are much older than me here.”

—Caucasian, female, junior, 20

“Its difficult to be 20 and in college. College itself isn’t that hard but I feel like I’m making the biggest decisions of my life and there’s no room for error.”

I feel like the world tells me my opinion doesn’t matter because I’m only 20 but the professors here really care. They actually care about what you have to say and will have discussions with you.”

—a caucasian 20 year old.

“Being female and 20 I think can be an upper hand because I am young and trying to put my life together at this age.”

—American/Russian, female, 20, Straight, Transfer Student

“Honestly, it is very normal. I feel as though the main thing that affects my perspective is being a growing adult because at my age lots of changes are occurring and so are my views.”

—20 year old white/Hispanic male

“Being 21, downtown is fun.”

—21 year old female. graduating senior. away from home here for college.

“We use our youth to our advantage. Whether it be your energy, laziness and technology use. Being young, I have more willingness to explore what classes to take and what interests I have in a major.”

—21 years old

“I do okay in classes, being 21 has affected my school work because I have an active social life.”

—an all American, 21 yr old girl

“I’m young, I have my whole life ahead of me, and I want to get my education done asap, and find a rewarding career.”

I like meeting new people my age, and also those who are older, who can share their own experiences.”

—21

“Being a student here at the age of 21 years I feel like I am on track on actually achieving my goal towards a BA.”

(I like) The fact that the teachers/professors here are always approachable no matter how old or young you are.”

—21 years old

“I feel given my age I would think that I am in the age range of the majority of the other students. Therefore it makes me feel like I am more at place, and comfortable knowing that people here tend to be around my age.”

—Caucasian, 21

“I feel like I meet a lot of young students now that this my 4th year at Sac State. I hope they make better decisions than I have over the years.”

—21 years old

“The age to me feels like we are pressured to graduate very soon. Also means that we should have our life together and have some sort of path for life.”

—21, Chinese, Male

“Being 21 & graduating puts me years ahead – most of my peers are 5 years older. I feel like an outsider for not squandering my early 20s.”

—Caucasian, Female, 21

“I like it because even though I’m still young, I feel like I’m getting more mature and school is taken much more seriously here at Sac State.”

—21

“At my age I think it’s much easier here compared to ARC because there are more students my age.”

—a female, hispanic, 21 years old.

“I enjoy being in class w/people my age, however also learn more when people that are older than me are in my class. They give me different perspectives.”

—Hispanic, 21, Junior in college

“Sacramento State is a very diverse school that varies in different ages. You are able to interact with many students that different and sac state makes it easy with it being a diverse school.”

—age 21, hispanic

“I feel pretty common. Many other students are my age and graduating in the same time line. It’s encouraging to see this and keeps me focused on my goal.”

—White & Pacific Islander (50/50) In my 4th year at Sac State, Straight, Female, 21 yo

“I feel like I should be closer to graduating than I am at my current age. But, the longer I stay in school, the more I seek education.”

—22 yr. old—White Male—PR Major

“Being 22 years old, I feel like I’m in the middle of the age range (18-35). I am mature enough to understand the campus’ new updates/policies.”

—22 years old

“Typical/average age group with other students”

—22 years old, Asian, female

“From perspective of age, being 22 years old allows me to feel confident and comfortable at this school. I’m not a new student and therefore am able to take advantage of the services provided by the school.”

—22, Female Senior Student

“What’s it like? Just like being a student at 21 and even 18.”

—a 22 yr old male

“I would have liked to have graduated at 21 years old, last semester but I am learning there are more students in my situation struggling to get classes and push back graduation.”

—Mexican/Sicilian, Female, 22 years old, Graduating Senior

“I think it gets easier (classes, knowledge of the school) with being 22 not 18 here. Now I know more about what resources CSUS has to offer.”

—Female, 22

“Full of adventures and challenges. I think I am at the perfect time and age to be here. I love college and all it has to offer.”

—22 yr old female

“Within the culture of CSUS, people look down on me for being 22 & still in college.”

—young + married

“I’ve met a ton of new friends who are around the same age and like the same things I do.”

—22 years old

“The challenge of being a 22 year old transfer student is to not feel the need to go with society’s mindset and think that I should already have my degree.”

—22-yr-old female, Hmong, transfer student

“Busy – unable to attend college events. I have something going on everyday and days w/o something going on is dedicated to homework or household necessities. Unable to relate to other students who are younger w/o as many responsibilities”

—full time student & employee married 22 year old commuter

“With the perspective of a 22 year old student, I am in the middle of the pack in age I have been here for 4 years now so I have student peers younger & older. Can learn a ton from both age groups.”

—Age: 22

“Being 22 years old makes me feel really old in some class but in my night classes I feel younger because older people are in my night classes.”

—white, female, 22 years old.

“It is interesting because to the rest of the world I am very young but to many students here, I am old.

Passing my classes now is much more difficult than when I was younger and at a junior college.”

—Male 22

“I feel younger than 22 and staying in the dorms I believe is mostly to blame.”

—a 22 year old Mexican/American Indian/White Woman, transfer student.

“Not that different of an experience, I feel behind being 22 going on 23 and still 2 years away from my BA though.”

—Female, African-American & Filipino, 22 & heterosexual

“It feels like an accomplishment to be at a university but at 23 I sometimes feel like I’ve been here too long and should have already graduated.”

—23 year old woman, Latina, Returning to School (Junior)

“At first I thought I might be a minority on campus, in regards to age. It took me a while to figure out what I wanted to study and believed I’d be older than most students once I transferred. Even if this is true, I came across many students my age that encountered obstacles along the way and held them back. Makes me feel comfortable.”

—Mexican, 23 years old, transfer student, female, mass coms major

“I feel a little old, but I will be graduating soon so I am just trying to enjoy my time here.”

—Male, 23, Transfer

“I felt like I was slightly behind being 23 & taking me longer @ a community college. However, I’m entering my senior year and feel right on track now!”

—23, female, Caucasian, transfer student

“Me being a bit older at the age of 23 affords me a few more courtesies that I don’t think younger students do.

Being 23 is closer to the higher end of graduating students, people start to look at you as either a failure left behind, or someone close to being free. I have experienced a lot of negativity with being older....”

—White, 23, transfer student, male

“Being an older student, compared to majority of students in my classes I do feel some disconnect. However, because of my busy life outside of school I don’t put in very much effort to connect with my campus.”

—Filipino, Spanish, White, 24, female, transfer SCC, hetero.

“I feel old at times and out of touch with some of my peers.”

—Hispanic, Female, 24, engaged, pseudo-housewife

“Average, don’t feel a difference. Maybe more respect from younger students.”

—24 y/o male pacific islander/white

“It is like being a mature adult student instead of a more youthful student because I feel I should already be in the working world.

The majority of other students that I meet at school, at work and at my apartment are of younger age.

I like that age does not really matter to be able to succeed here, it is more of a personal issue.”

—24 years of age

“Based on my age I feel a lot older than most students. In some cases I feel I do not fit in.”

—African/American 24 years old

“I have taken a little longer to get through my degree; however, I feel as though it betters me. I have given myself time to truly find which path I want to take instead of going through school mindlessly age 18 years of age with no certain direction.”

—Caucasian, 24, working and going to school

“I’m older, so I feel I am more responsible than my peers as far as living on my own, handling/juggling priorities, I also pay for college myself.”

—Caucasian, 24, female

“My age at this school is not unheard of and therefore as a 24 year old jr. I feel very okay among my peers.”

—Mexican-American, 24 yrs old, Christian.

“I feel like a male who is 24 is an average demographic at Sac State.”

—male in his mid-twenties

“Being an older student, especially a student that started college at a later age (22 years old), I have found here at Sac State my GE classes are really helping me prepare for my later education. Almost all of the lower division classes have been extremely helpful.”

—25 year old female

“It’s just like my JC mixed age group so I feel more comfortable.”

—25

“Sometimes I feel too old to be here even though I’m only 25. Luckily I look very young so I blend in.”

—black, female, 25 yrs old. junior

“Most of my peers are much younger than I am.”

—white; female, straight, AD/HD, 25 years of Age

“I feel like I have taken longer than I should have here.”

—25 years old

“Feel older than many students unless in an upper division class.”

—25 year old male

“It’s different because I’m usually in classes that have students who (are) 3-7 years younger. I just want to be done with school altogether and be using my major in the professional world.

I don’t experience anything negative. Its usually all positive. I don’t feel like I belong here, it just seems like I won’t leave this place.”

—male, white, 25 years old, christian

“I feel like most undergrads are 18-22 and there aren’t many older people attending CSUS as an undergrad.”

—25 white & Mexican

“I don’t have many challenges other than feeling a little old to be a junior. ☺”

—25, transfer student, female

“it’s not good. I feel disconnected sometimes by age.”

—white 26 vet male

“Sometimes I do feel out of place because I am 26 and I feel so old compared to my peers.”

—Transfer Student, Asian, female, mid-20’s

“I think because I am older I am able to appreciate the things that CSUS offers.”

—white female 26 years old straight anxiety full time working transfer student

“Sometimes is frustrating to still be in school at 26. I see plenty of younger students in my classes and its embarrassing. I just want to be done!”

—26 year old hispanic female

“During group projects, fresh or younger students are not as responsible or reliable about their coursework.”

—Filipino, 26 yrs old.

“Sometimes it is hard to be patient in classes filled with less experienced students, but overall Sac State is a good school. I would just like to graduate and be done with school.”

—White, female, age 26, straight, married

“I am more mature.”

—27, female, American (w/a Mexican background), straight, 4’11” (short), returning to CSUS after 6 years.

“I don’t have enough time like I used to.”

—27 years old

“It hasn’t been challenging to come from this perspective, although it is different to be older than a lot of the student population.”

—Latina, Female, 27, legally blind, first-generation college student, transfer student

“The pressure I feel from my perspective is age. All my friends my age already graduated 4-5 years ago.”

—male, Hispanic/Portuguese, 27, straight, transfer student

“Its odd being one of the older students in class but at the same time it is nice because I tend to have more patience than those who are younger.”

—27 & Hispanic

“It feels weird, because most of my classmates didn’t know I was older than the average college student. At the same time I’m glad, because I look like I am 21.

It felt pretty awesome, because every time I tell my classmates my age they usually forget. I’m not shy about telling my age, because I want the older to know that they are not alone.

I was able to join club organizations in order to build my career resume. I can meet new people and be like an older brother to them.”

—27 years old

“I am a lot older than the average junior in college. I have a full time job & go to school full time. I have very limited time. College is more of a chore than a fun activity.

I love CSUS! It’s a beautiful campus, I like my teachers, I like my classmates but I just feel like I am missing out on the ‘typical’ college experience.”

—Hispanic/ Female, 27 years old

“It is a good accomplishment to be going to school to obtain a degree. However, at my current age of 27, I am very late on accomplishing this goal in my culture. Most 27 year olds are already graduated, married, and working instead of attending school. My experience at CSUS has been incredible and amazing. I am very happy I decided to return to school after 4 years off from it.”

—Culture = Sikhism Age = 27 years old

“I feel old. Very old compared to these younger students.”

—a 27 year old going on a decade in college

“It’s unusual to be slightly older than the average population of students.”

—White, 27, F., Transfer Student, Honors Student, I commute from Modesto 2 days a week.

“Not many challenges, except for being at the age of 28. It feels weird being in class with 19 yr olds.”

—28 years old Hispanic

“My age: I am now understanding why people should finish college by 21 or 22.... I am just getting too old and tired—less energy.”

—28-Year-Old Armenian-American Woman

“I feel like I’m the oldest person in all three of my classes. I feel like I take all my time here at school more seriously than others. Hopefully next semester will be different.”

—28, Mom, transfer student

“At times it is hard to relate to some students. I am usually 5-7 years older than my peers. At times I don’t talk to them because the age generation is too different.”

—Mexican 28-years-old male

“I feel like the only main factor affecting me differently than most is being an older student. I do not have as much in common with many student and my priorities are so shifted from when I was younger and first in college.

I’d like to say, being an older student and having spent time working in the career field that it’s ok to not know what you want to do and the best thing, in my opinion, is to just pick something to do and go with it.”

—female, 28, full time worker, mexican/american

“It is difficult to be almost 30 in a class full of 20 year olds but I used to be like them and I sometimes wish I could reach out to them and tell them that they have more potential than they are giving themselves credit for. I want to tell them that they don’t want to end up like me, they should and could work harder and smarter.”

—a 28 year old female

“I’m transfer student @ the age of 29 yrs old. I feel out of my element & hard to relate to younger students.”

—a transfer

“Being an older student sometimes it’s difficulty to make closer connections to younger students due to different maturity levels. I also expect more from my professors in regards to their lectures/exams/assignments.”

—Filipino – 29 years old – Female

In the section to follow, you will find the perspectives of students in their thirties, forties, and fifties...

Listening to Students in Their Thirties...

“So far my experiences here are good. This is my first semester and I just became a senior. If I had the time I would definitely like to be more involved in activities and just become a more active student.”

—Hispanic/Female/30/Transfer Student/Parent

“It is good, I like the new experience and there are a lot of healthy resources, such as the Well. I like the educational opportunity and the professors are good and challenging. Everything has worked for me so far.”

—Mexican-American and 30 years old. I am male.

“I am treated well regardless of being a older male student on campus. The younger students are respectful and polite.”

—Mixed race, European, Blind in left eye, Over 30 yr.

“I feel very privileged.

My experiences are very mundane. Just come to class, keep your head down, be an interesting student and get your s--- done.”

—30+ year-old white male

“At times, extremely easy. Maybe because I’m older, but these 18-21 year olds need to be spoonfed everything. Teachers make it too easy.”

—30, Returning to School

“It feels odd, because sometimes I feel disconnected from the younger crowd. Their perspective is different from mine. I also feel embarrassed to admit my age to my peers, so I lie sometimes. This all leads me to detach myself from the campus and campus activities, because I just want to focus on finishing my schooling. That being said, I do notice the even older students who go back to further their ‘experiences’ and I feel a little jealous.

Experience and age has made planning and accomplishing my goals much easier. CSUS provides a lot of resources that I use now compared to when I was younger at a different school.”

—Vietnamese male returning to school (30 yrs old)

“It’s different than when I was a 19 yr old college student. Priorities are different as well as goals in school.”

—Asian, Veteran, Science major, 30

“It is ok. I haven’t had too many problems or hiccups yet. Lots of resources are available, so that’s nice.

It is never too late to try to reach your academic potential.”

—in her 30’s

“It’s fairly easy since there is no desire to B.S. I come to school, do my work, then leave.

I see things so much more clearly in coming here. Faculty in (my) department are amazing and keep everything interesting”

—African American Male Age 31

“The challenge is for me to come back to school as an older student and adapting to my environment.”

—31, female, mexican

“Older and returning to school has been an exciting time at Sac State. Although I try to participate in activities around campus I find time constraints due to ‘life’ outside of school sometimes limiting.

(I like) Time management. I found out what is important to me and make time to do the things I really want. (I don’t like) Getting some classes that fit my schedule. I was limited to 3 classes this semester because of scheduling conflicts.”

—31 yrs old. Returning to School

“It feels different like I don’t quite fit in. Most of my classmates are at least 10 years younger than me.

This semester I had a professor ...younger than me...and her maturity level shows it. I don’t blame her for being immature but then maybe she’s not ready to teach. I was still immature at (that age), but I also knew better than trying to teach college students.”

—Vietnamese Male/32/Returning to School

“Because of my age, I feel like a minority. I am the oldest student in half of my classes. I feel that there is a large difference between me and most students (about 10 year age difference). It is difficult to be paired up or put in groups with people so different.”

—32 year old Mexican female (I’m a mom also)

“My perspective is just like any other college student.

I like the gym and the number of ‘study nooks’ I can find. I don’t like the way the classes are offered. It is difficult to find classes that fit my schedule.”

—white male, 33 years old 1st year transfer student

“I’m a lot older. I’m not some kid out of school. I’ve been around the world. I know things, and I know my rights.”

—male, 33, straight, returning student, psychological depression, anxiety, OCD, physical challenges. A returning student, too.

“I feel as if I blend in with others just fine.

All staff is interested in helping me achieve my goal.”

—34, Mexican-American, Female

“Depending on the professor, there are classes that have the atmosphere of a junior high or high school classroom. Students don’t respect teachers/professors; professors treat students like children.

What has worked for me is surrounding myself with individuals & professors in my age range who are serious about education and learning. What has frustrated me the most are professors that allow disruptions and off-color comments in their class. I assumed at this level, professors would demand respect. I guess not.”

—an adult over 35.

“As an older college student, I feel like there are not as many opportunities and activities that I could participate in. Especially since I take night class.”

—Hmong (35 years old)

“Parking is bad, the kids don’t know how to park. I suggest a parking test as part of the enrollment process.”

—White, male, veteran, 35, first in family in college

“I have a lower tolerance for students distracting others in class. The rampant cheating I observe is more disheartening than when I was younger.”

—White male 36 years old, returning to school, ADHD

“It feels like most of the college social activities and class discussions are geared toward younger students.... I have teachers that are younger than myself.”

—Graduating Senior, Returning Student, GLBT, Male, 37

“Busy. School is enjoyable for me. The biggest obstacle is time. I’m fortunate in that I have a pretty great life. I feel a little old sometimes. I’m older than 2 of my professors this semester. It is fun, though.

I came to college in my 30’s. My experience has been fantastic! There is no excuse for falling through the cracks here.”

—married, white, male, 38, father of two, works full-time

“The ability to access information is fine, however, as one might expect, the college seems to be catering mostly to students that are much younger. By catering, I mean different events. For example: Job Fairs.

It’s nice because I can walk though the quad and not get interrupted due to looking much older than the typical student.

—Disabled, white, male, veteran, 39

Listening to Students in their Forties...

“I am as old as some of the teachers and have been mistaken as being one of the staff. I enjoy all the different backgrounds of the students in my class.

All wonderful students and teachers I work with in classes.

One thing is my not asking for help with my writing. My learning disabilities make writing difficult. My teaching credential program has been more demanding than my B.S.”

—Female Veteran 40 years old

“It is odd being 41 in class with so many students that are so much younger than me. Our life experiences are so vastly different that its hard to relate sometimes. Also a little lonely.

I am pledging a fraternity which is also odd but they are a very accepting group and it has made my time here easier.

I love the access to resources at almost all hours of the day. I wish a few more offices/places were open late for those that need later work places.”

—White, male, 41 years old, First Time College Jr.

“43, 18 units, 4 kids, divorced, poor...it’s awesome! Ha-Ha – I’ve overcome a lot and worked my butt off and I’m proud of it.

I really loved my...professors – especially the ones w/outside work experience that lends to teaching.”

—White Female 43 Hetro Return Stud. Parent

“I have a difficult time relating to some of the students due to the maturity.”

—43, student with disabilities, cognitive issues, visual impairment, physical disabilities (amputated fingers), chronic disease

“I like the other students in my classes. It’s nice to have familiar faces and the support. I was working on a project in this one class, and asked for help from the professor. He was a little harsh, when I asked classmates I got an overwhelming amount of support, and that was something I didn’t expect.”

—learning disability, veteran, female, 45, some depression

“It has been a challenge for someone my age because there is no returning/acclimating programs to visit.

Most of the professors are always in a rush with no time to hardly spare to make some of the assignments clear.

What has worked for me at CSUS is that I’m on campus every day to learn new things about myself.

Being an older student, I sometimes don’t feel comfortable about talking about some of the challenges that occur. For example, knowing how to navigate the SacCT system totally.”

—African American Woman 49

Listening to Students in Their Fifties...

“The environment is conducive to continual learning!”

—Staff member taking classes/50 yrs. old/Mexican

“It’s intimidating. I waited to come back to school. I don’t feel as smart as the younger ones.”

—Cerebral Palsy on one side, macular degeneration one eye, female, 51

“My biggest problem coming to college was I am so old. I had to start at the bottom, like I had just started school, had to learn basic arithmetic, everything. That’s why it took me 9 years. I was thinking I wouldn’t fit in because of my age—I’m 56—but I do fit in.

—chronic bipolar, struggled almost my whole life with this.

“It is hard sometimes because I get treated differently by the teachers, and the other students. It seems to me that the teachers expect me to understand new concepts more than the other students.

It would be nice if teachers would be more detailed in the directions they give and not assume that the student understands just because they are in a upper division class.

I don’t like the indifference the teacher shows to students.”

—Irish/Swiss/Mormon/disabled – back disc are out, older (57 yrs old)

“Classmates are younger. Sometimes instructors are younger. Having worked and retailed I know what things will actually apply in workforce and what is just busy work or really not necessary. Young people believe it. I know better.

Met so many wonderful people. Had some really great teachers. I was not a typical student. So I did not participate in social events, sporting events, etc. Maybe you need a class geared toward older returning students.”

—58 yrs, African American, Female, Retired, Christian, transfer from
ARC

Students of Different Ages

The Office of Institutional Research, Effectiveness, and Planning, in the “Enrollment Dashboard,” breaks the numbers down the most by age groups for Fall 2018:

Under 18: 865 students (3% of the student body)
 18-20: 9,628 students (31% of the student body)
 21-22: 7,642 students (25% of the student body)
 23-24: 5,006 students (16% of the student body)
 25-29: 4,998 students (16% of the student body)
 30-49: 2,732 students (9% of the student body)
 50-64: 246 students (1% of the student body)
 65 and Over: 15 students (less than 1% of the student body)

The “Fall 2017 Quick Facts: Sac State Student Body,” offers this:

Average Age for Undergraduates: 23
 Median Age for Undergraduates: 22

In the last *Campus Climate Survey Report* (Fall 2016), the Office of Institutional Research provided the following findings from a survey to a sample of all students here at Sac State:

In their classroom experiences...

82.3% of the students responding to this survey reported that they strongly agree or agree that all their professors are equally encouraging and responsive toward both older and younger students.

19.4% reported that they often or very often discussed issues in their classes related to age, and 64.4% felt highly or considerably comfortable discussing and debating issues in their classes related to age during the last year.

In their personal experiences...

3.3% of the students responding to this survey reported that they very often or often have personally been harassed or discriminated against on campus based on age, and 6.5% very often or often have seen or heard insensitive or disparaging comments, behaviors, or gestures toward others on campus based on age.

In their interaction with others and work and learning on campus...

79.0% of the students responding to this survey report feeling highly or considerably comfortable interacting with faculty, staff, and students who are different from them on the basis of age.

22.7% have very much/much interest in issues related to age, with 8.9% very much/much actively involved (organizations/events volunteer) in issues related to age.

12.2% students say they very frequently or frequently have opportunities for structured dialogue (e.g., workshops, training, seminars, etc.) about issues of age within the university, and 20.6% report the same within their major.

What We Can Do

The ages of our students vary widely, but we can still say with some certainty that older students and younger students will have different mindsets and experiences, and, therefore, require different things from us.

Remember What It Was Like to Be a Younger Student

Because most of us are older in age, we sometimes forget just what it's like to be a younger student at a university.

Go Back in Time

As youth in college, this may have been our first taste of being an adult, first time away from home, first time no one was telling us what to do or where to go. The freedom can be heady, and not all young people are prepared to handle it in terms of proper time management and decision making. For young people, too, interactions with peers, faculty, and staff may be where they will largely base their sense of self, for good or for bad. A criticism or disappointment, relational difficulties or conflict, all can sometimes seem like the end of the world and potentially take a huge toll on a younger person in terms of self-esteem, sense of belonging and competency, and emotional well-being. Those older in age sometimes forget just how big these things are in a young person's world, and may dismiss or misinterpret what a student says or does when these are the underlying issues at hand, known or unknown to us.

Make it Easier for Them to Connect with You and Others Older In Age

Young folks are often intimidated at the prospect of talking with any older adult, much less a professor or university staff member, and may feel awkward in their interactions with us. We can make coming to see and conversing with us easier for them with genuine invitations to talk or visit us in office hours, a warm and approachable demeanor, small talk that is enjoyable, and showing a real interest in who they are and how they are doing as a student. We can also help to facilitate to make younger people feel more comfortable when they're put with older students in classroom work or group projects.

Bring Down the Age Gap with Older Students

Age is often the single greatest source of divide for returning students. They may well feel the difference in age when they look around at the other students or listen to the youthful comments or conversations that surround them in the classroom or campus life. While staff and faculty work with this age group, some of our returning students may not be familiar at all with the young adults of today and feel very out of place or sharply different from their classmates. We can help to mitigate age differences in a few key ways:

Watch What You Say

When we are with the general undergraduate student population out on campus or in the classroom, we may not recognize just how much of what we communicate directly or indirectly assumes a younger audience. We often don't realize this until we look around and see the discomfort in an older student and feel the distance created by our words.

Assumptions made regarding age often include that all students: are single or dating (rather than married or in committed, long-term relationships); don't have children (rather than have started their families); live in the dorms or at home with, or in housing financed by, their parents (rather than have and pay for their own homes); work part-time or not at all (rather than have full-time jobs and possibly established careers); and spend free time engaging in campus life or going out (rather than not having free time, or spending time outside of school or work caring for their families). Those who teach GE classes or work with new student populations, in particular, need be especially mindful to guard against such references.

Connect with the Student

Because faculty and staff are typically older in age and working professionals, many older students will likely relate much better to us than their classmates. You may be the one person at the campus with whom the student connects, the only person that the student feels “gets them,” includes them, with whom the student feels comfortable conversing. Talking with the student about things academic or otherwise helps to create a climate of inclusion for older students that they may find very difficult to achieve with the majority of their younger classmates. Such conversations also pave the way for the student to turn to you with questions, concerns, support, or assistance in navigating college life or determining major or career path, making it easier on older students who may be reluctant to ask for help when they need it. Introducing the student to or including the student in conversations with other faculty and staff, can, similarly, help to expand connections made on campus.

Maximize the Value of Age Differences for All

Students of different ages bring perspectives that enhance the learning experience for all. When students are exposed to different views, values, and life-worlds that come with age, this may broaden their perspective and help them to more effectively communicate with people of different ages in their personal lives and the working world. As faculty and staff, we can create that climate where students of all ages feel comfortable in contributing and can facilitate realization of, or make explicit ourselves, the value of age differences.

The Value of the Youthful Perspective

Students older in age often come to realize just how helpful their classmates may be in increasing their awareness of the younger population, which can come in handy in their role as parent to their own children, employee who works with a younger population, or person wanting to keep up with trends in our culture. Older students will often tell you just how much they appreciate the outlook of youth: the way of thought freeing, the optimism inspiring, and the freshness invigorating.

The Wisdom that Age Brings

You can see students younger in age listening with even greater attention when their older classmates share their wealth of experience, the wisdom age brings, and valuable “big picture” perspective. Younger students will often say they really want to know about the “real world” of work from those actually in it, and how they appreciate the insights of longer life experience shared by their older classmates.