

The Cost of Opportunity

Higher Education & Social Mobility in Rio de Janeiro's Baixada Fluminense

THE TEAM

We are a binational research team that consists of 10 U.S. and 12 Brazilian students, plus 8 faculty, two staff, and a rap artist and entrepreneur.



In June 2016, the Bass team undertook 3 weeks of collaborative fieldwork in the Baixada. In March 2017, 17 collaborators visited Duke for a 9-day exchange and daylong conference.

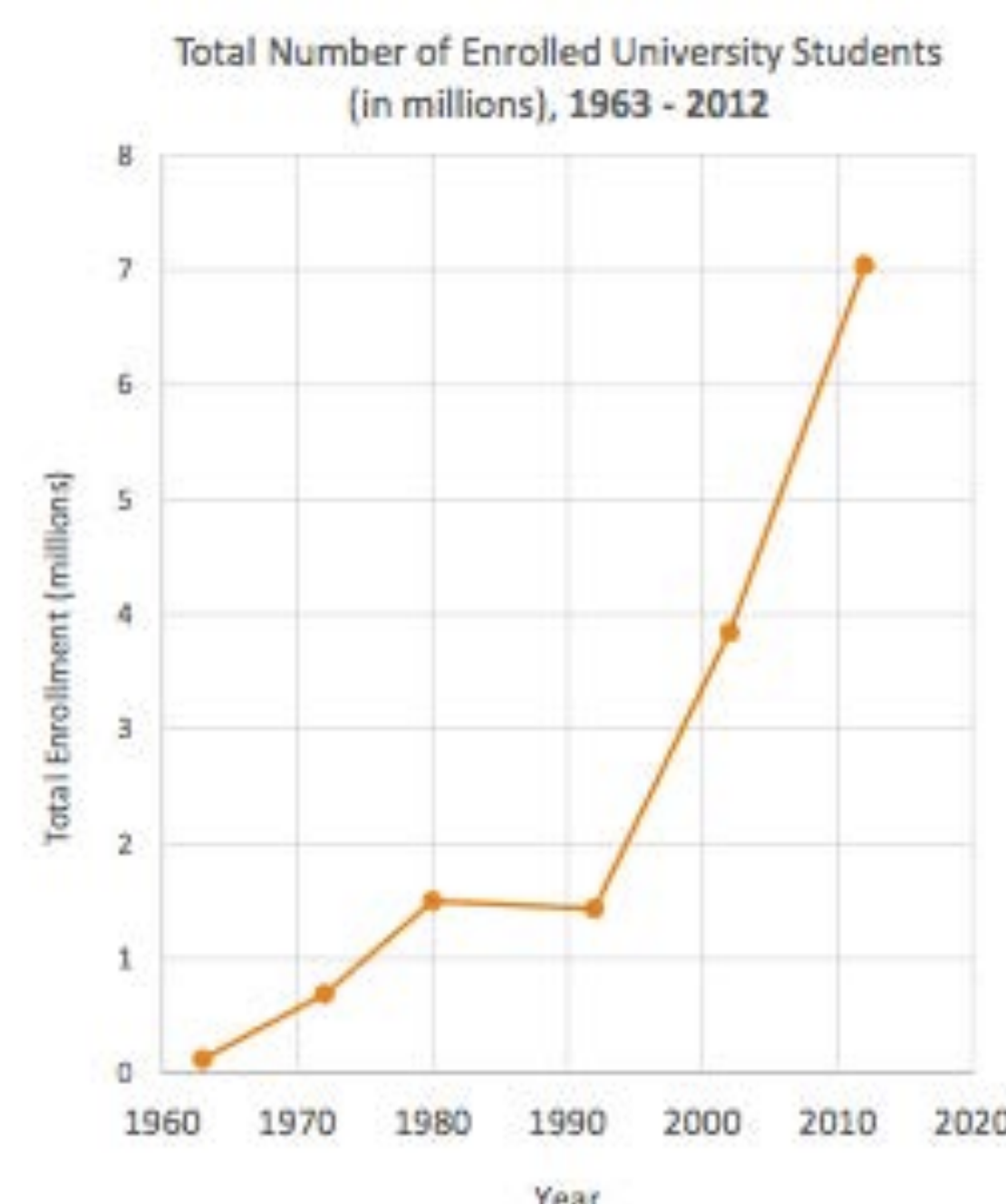


SUBJECT OF STUDY & SIGNIFICANCE

We are interested in the vast expansion of free public higher education in Brazil since 2003 as well as its effects.

Enrollment in higher education in Brazil has **tripled in the last decade** in both for-profit private institutions and tuition-free public universities, historically the best, the most prestigious, and the most sought-after.

The number of students enrolled in higher education increased from **128,000 in 1964** to **7.3 million in 2013**, an increase in enrollment that far exceeded the increase in overall population (Schwartzman 1997).



Source: Schwartzman 1997

The governments of Lula Inácio da Silva (2003-11) and his successor, Dilma Rousseff (2011-16), sought to transform Brazil's historically **perverse system** of higher education—one in which the rich and white(r) dominate prestigious tuition-free public universities and have the advantage of attending **private K-12 schools of superior quality**.

The poorer and less white, however, receive an **inferior K-12 education** in underfunded public schools and find it difficult, if not impossible, to get into free public institutions.

THE IM: A CASE STUDY

The **Multidisciplinary Institute (IM)** of the Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRRJ) is a new campus in Nova Iguaçu, a city of 844,500.

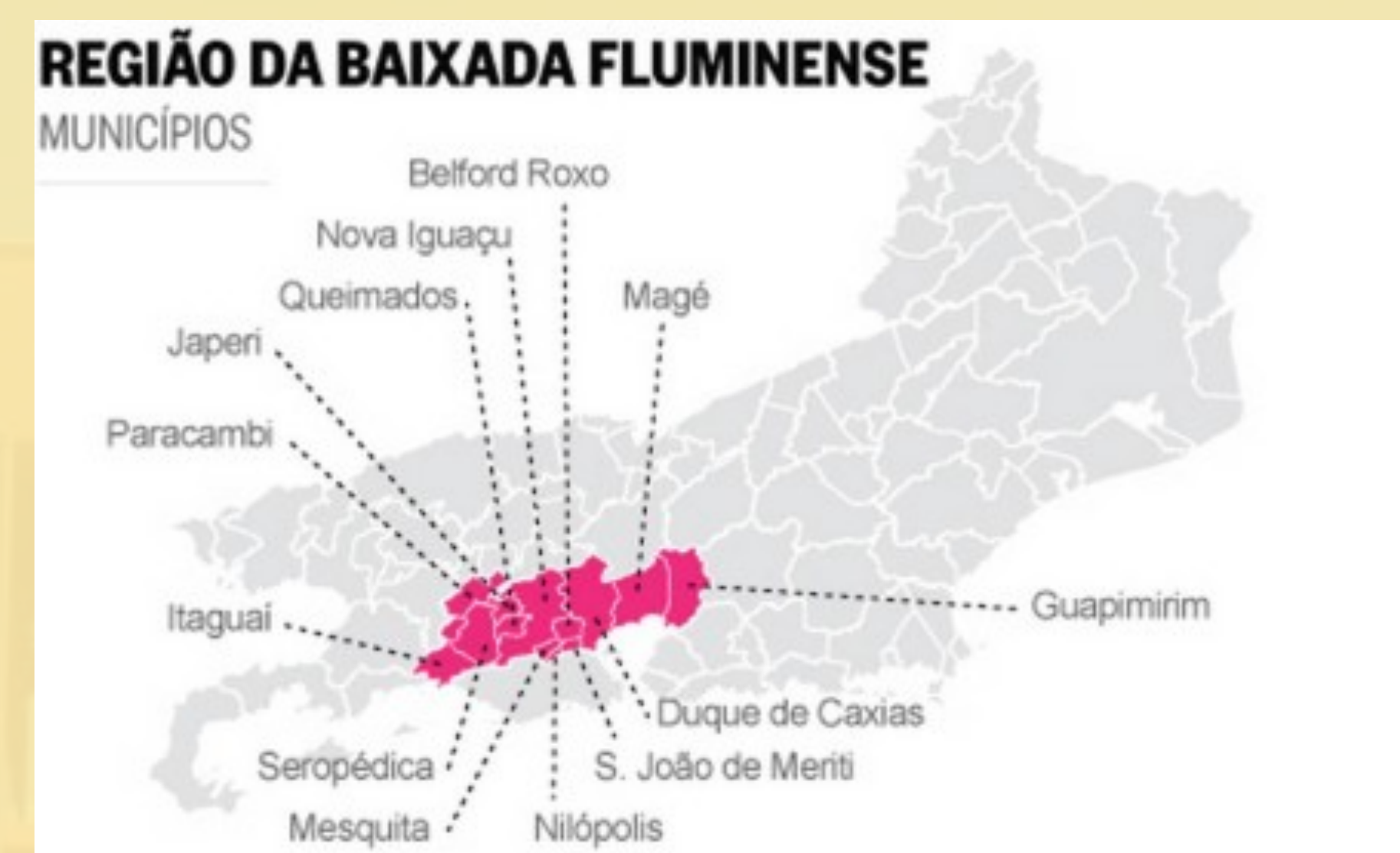


The Multidisciplinary Institute campus in Nova Iguaçu.

The IM was authorized in 2006 and currently enrolls 3,500 students in 10 courses of study. The new campus is located in the **Baixada Fluminense**.

What is the Baixada Fluminense?

The Baixada is a fluvial lowland on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro with **3.6 million inhabitants** living in a densely urban settlement pattern.



Source: O Globo (2014).

The Baixada is very poor with a **weak local economy**.

- **1/3 of the population lives on less than 1/2 of the minimum wage.**
- **1/6 lives on less than 1/4 of it.**

The Baixada is highly **stigmatized** as a site of **corruption, danger, and violence**. The population is **overwhelmingly black or brown** (66%).

*Data in table drawn from report of The New York Times

(https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/01/18/upshot/some-colleges-have-more-students-from-the-top-1-percent-than-the-bottom-60.html?_r=0)



THE IM IN CONTEXT: NC UNIVERSITIES*

	DUKE	NORTH CAROLINA STATE	WINSTON SALEM STATE	NORTH CAROLINA CENTRAL
Median Family Income	\$186,700 12 x minimum salary	\$112,300 7.5 x minimum salary	\$38,700 2.6 x minimum salary	\$37,700 2.5 x minimum salary
Students from Top 20% (\$110k + annually)	69%	51%	10%	8.8%
Students from Bottom 20%	3.9%	4.3%	17%	19%
Students from Top 1% (\$630k + annually)	19%	1.8%	> 1%	> 1%

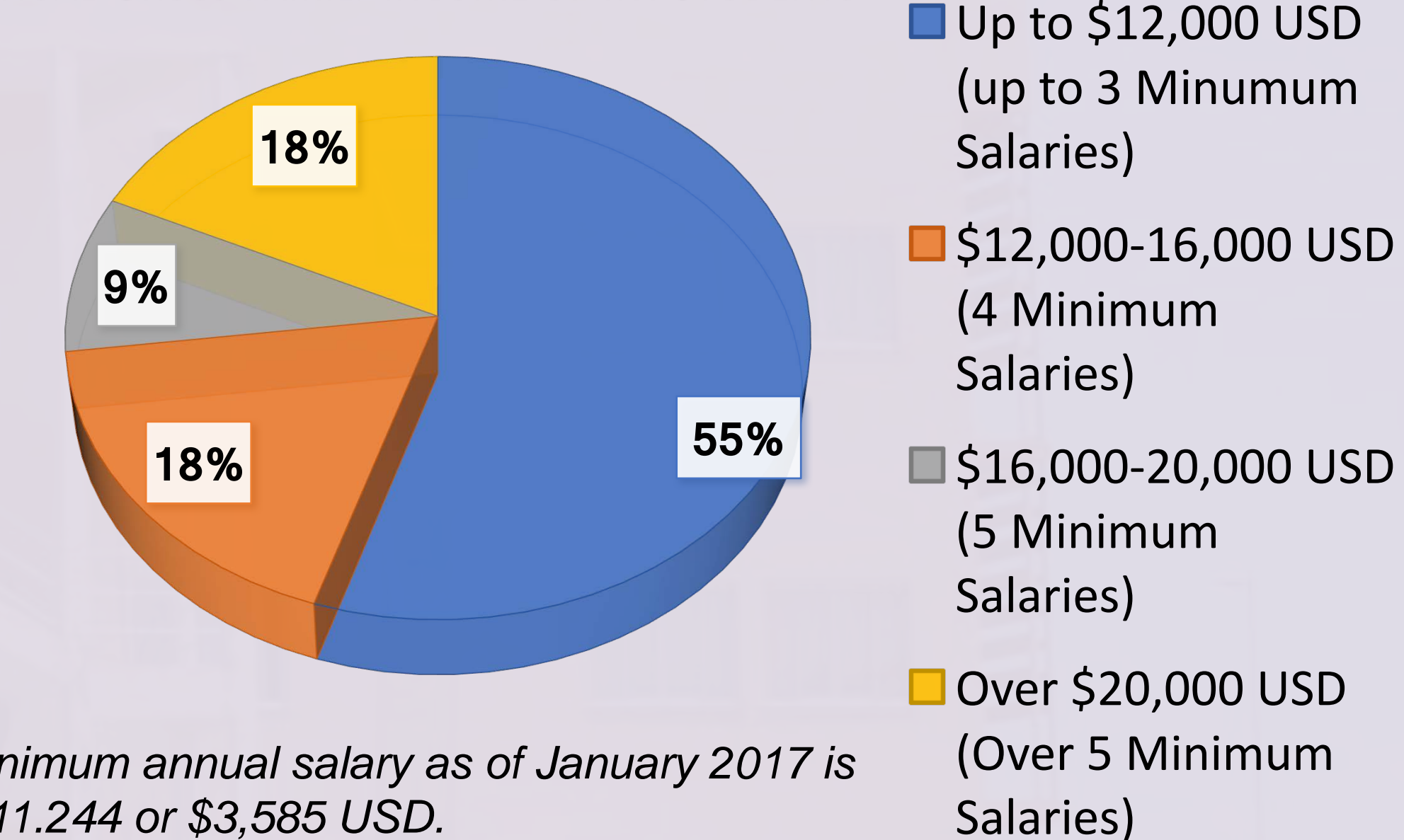
The student body at IM is **more socioeconomically diverse** than that of Duke University or even North Carolina State University in Raleigh.

The socioeconomic composition is more

like that of two **historically black college and universities** (HCBUS) in North Carolina: North Carolina Central (NCCU) in Durham and Winston Salem State University (WSSU).

The distribution of family income among IM students is far more broadly representative and democratic than Duke.

ANNUAL GROSS FAMILY INCOME OF IM STUDENTS



*Minimum annual salary as of January 2017 is R\$11.244 or \$3,585 USD.
Source: <http://g1.globo.com/economia/noticia/salario-minimo-em-2017-veja-o-valor.ghtml>

82% of current students come from families with incomes of less than \$20,000 USD. 55% come from families earning less than three times the annualized Brazilian minimum wage (\$12,000 USD).

TAKEAWAYS: Big Ideas Based on Qualitative Research



One must challenge the generally accepted belief that greater access to higher education **automatically** contributes to diminishing inequality by enhancing opportunity, as well as the idea that a college degree leads to significant improvements in wealth and labor outcomes.

Our research suggests that policy makers **do not sufficiently understand** the obstacles, both financial and psychological, that racially or socioeconomically marginalized populations face when they pursue mobility through higher education.

