

College Bound

ISSUES & TRENDS FOR THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS ADVISOR

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Admissions Watch

“Most Confusing” in 30 Years

ACCEPTANCE LETTERS from many colleges across the nation were in the mail as *CB* went to press. We'll have more results next month.

But already this admissions season has become “the most confusing” in 30 years, Jonathan Brown, president of the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities, told the *Los Angeles Times*.

However, the March 8 *New York Times* predicted that the uncertainty of this year could be good news for students. “Colleges will admit more students, offer more generous financial aid, and, in some cases, send acceptance letters a few weeks earlier. Then again, it could prolong the agony: some institutions say they will rely more on their waiting list. But there is no question, admissions officers say, that this year is more of a students’ market.”

Barbara Fritze, vice president of enrollment at Gettysburg C., told *The Times*, “It’s like the dot-com burst for higher ed. We’ve been in this growth mode for a period of time. Now there’s a real leveling going on.”

And now the wait begins for admissions officers. This year they are wading in unchartered waters. “College admissions directors all across the country are flying blind this year,” Louis Hirsh, admissions director at the U. of Delaware, told *delawareonline.com*. “We honestly don’t know what the impact will be of the economy and that has us all sort of sitting on the edge of our seats waiting for May 1 to see exactly what is happening.”

Although May 1 is the traditional deadline for deposits, it may not be that simple. “Those who think they’re going to get the full picture on the May deposit day may in fact be optimistic,” says Barmak Nassirian, associate executive director of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers.

“There may well be students and families who are actually quite interested in attending... and they might actually write a check and put a deposit down... but all it takes is one parent losing their job, or another precipitous hit on the stock market, or another huge drop in housing prices” for them to change their minds.

California Cuts. Applications rose at both the U. of California and the California State U. system, but budget cuts are requiring enrollment reductions of 3 percent at UC and 4 percent at Cal State. Cal State usually accepts about 75 percent of its applicants, but that number is being reduced this year. San Jose State U. had to turn away qualified applicants for the first time in its century-long history, according to *The Mercury News*. UCLA, which was exempted from cuts, received 55,665 applications this year. Last year it accepted 20 percent. This year it expects to admit a smaller percentage, since it expects more of those accepted to enroll.

Chicago Record. The U. of Chicago attracted 13,589 applications this year, 9.6 percent more than last year, and an all-time record. Approximately 1,300 new undergraduate students will enroll. “Students are clearly drawn to the rigorous education, study abroad opportunities, internships and the exciting array of activities available on and off campus,” Michael Behnke, vice president and dean of college enrollment, told the *University of Chicago Chronicle*.

Diversity increased as well. Applications from African American students rose by 21 percent, from Asian students by nearly 5 percent and from Hispanic/Latino students

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Obama Budget Transforms Student Loans

BIG CHANGES ARE COMING to the nation’s student aid programs. President Obama’s FY2010 \$3.6 trillion budget proposal entitled, “A New Era of Responsibility: Renewing America’s Promise” calls for the biggest transformation of the federal student aid program since it was established under the Higher Education Act of 1965. The size of federal aid programs will grow substantially.

Pell grants will rise automatically with the rate of inflation and more families will be eligible to participate in the various programs. The Pell grant funding would be mandatory and the grant maximum has been increased to \$5,550 for 2010-11.

The biggest higher education change, should Congress pass Obama’s budget unchanged, will be a complete shift of student aid programs from private lenders to the federal government. Currently, the federal government handles about \$13 billion a year in grants and loans. Approximately \$57 billion in loans go through private banks and other loaning institutions as part of the Guaranteed Student Loan Program.

Under the Obama plan, the federal government will handle about \$60 billion each year in student and family lending through the Direct Student Loan program, whereby loans go directly through the Department of Education to individual colleges and universities. That change alone could save the federal govern-

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COLLEGE BOUND’s Publisher/Editor: **R. Craig Sautter**, DePaul University; Chief Operating Officer: **Sally Reed**; Assistant Editor: **Emma Schwartz**; Illustration: **Louis Coronel**; Board of Advisors: **Lisa Burnham**, Edina High School, Minnesota; **Claire D. Friedlander**, Bedford (N.Y.) Central School District; **Howard Greene** and **Matthew Greene**, authors, *The Greens’ Guides to Educational Planning Series*; **Frank C. Leana, Ph.D.**, educational counselor; **M. Fredric Volkmann**, Washington University in St. Louis; **Mary Ann Willis**, Bayside Academy (Daphne, Ala.).

"MOST CONFUSING"

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by nearly 15 percent. One reason is the university's new Odyssey scholarship program that replaces grants with loans to students earning less than \$60,000 and cuts grants in half to students from families earning \$75,000 and less.

Colorado State Up. Applications from Colorado residents to Colorado State U. rose 10 percent from 7,243 last year to 7,987 this year, and were up from 6,311 to 6,477 this year from nonresidents, as of early March. Factors leading to the increase are increased outreach around the country, a focus on first-generation students in Colorado and attention to its core constituency of high schools in Colorado.

"We've tried to be very visible and make ourselves well known to students who would be interested in coming here," Jim Rawlins, executive director of admissions, told *coloradoan.com*. We're certainly trying to make sure we don't pull back from out-of-state markets because of budget cuts."

The school also saw a 10 percent increase in applications for financial aid.

Delaware State. Delaware State U., where tuition runs \$6,400 in-state and \$13,700 out-of-state, received 6,300 applications this year compared to 5,800 last year.

Florida Atlantic. For the first time in its history, Florida Atlantic U. has posted an enrollment wait list. This year, the Boca Raton school attracted 11,360 applications, a 28 percent increase over last year, for 2,500 freshman seats. FAU sent out at least 100 wait list letters in March, according to the *Palm Beach Post*. Reasons for the increase include a bad economy forcing more students to stay closer to home; a freshman enrollment cap at Florida's 11 public universities and FAU's two football bowl wins.

Georgia. Georgia C. and State U. at Milledgeville received nearly 4,000 applications, and will admit about 2,200. "It's totally unpredictable," said Mike Augustine, director of admissions, "but we hope to see about 50 percent in the fall." SAT scores have risen among those accepted so far.

Luther's Leap. Luther C. in Iowa received a record number of applications, up 72 percent from 1,943 in 2008 to 3,346 in 2009. Applications from Iowa were up 66 percent; from Minnesota, up 61 percent; up 101 percent from Wisconsin; up 114 percent from Illinois; and up 123 percent from all other states. This year Luther accepted 1,895 students, 52 percent more than 1,247 last year, without lowering its standards. The college hopes to enroll 700 new students.

MIT Cuts. The admissions office at Massachusetts Institute of Technology has taken a hit. Faced with a mandated 5 percent cutback, it laid off staff, will reduce travel of its representatives by 30-50 percent and move much of its communication with students to the Web, according to the student paper, *The Tech*. These reductions come on the heels of record high 15,600 applications, a 17 percent increase over last year, and the lowest acceptance rate in the school's history. MIT accepts about 1,800 students.

Pennsylvania. Applications increased by 14 percent at East Stroudsburg U. and deposits were up 44 percent end of February. Applications are up over 6 percent at Kutztown U.

Stanford Deluged. Stanford U. was deluged by 30,300 applications, up 20 percent from a year ago. It's acceptance rate is expected to plunge to 8 percent from last year's 9.5 percent. Part of the reason is its new financial aid program that waives tuition from families earning less than \$100,000.

U. of Dayton Record. U. of Dayton in Ohio fielded its second straight record year with over 11,610 applications. By mid-February it had already sent out most of its acceptance letters and started its wait list with 100 students.

"The university's financial position is very strong, applications hit a new record and we're seeing an applicant pool that is academically better qualified, more ethnically diverse, and for the first time in our history, we have a greater number of out-of-state applicants," Rob Durkle, assistance vice president and dean of admissions, said.

Dayton does have rolling admission, and will accept more applications through May, the deadline for student deposits. No more acceptances will be offered, but some of those students may be placed on the wait list.

U. of Delaware. The U. of Delaware began rolling admissions for in-state students this year, and has been sending out decisions since early January. UD attracted 2,876 applications thus far, 200 more than last year. It received 21,320 out-of-state applications, down from last year's 22,077. It hopes to enroll about 3,700 students. This fall, the university will also meet all demonstrated financial need of admitted in-state students with a combination of loans, grants and work-study. In-state tuition runs about \$7,700; out-of-state, \$20,200.

U. of Iowa. The U. of Iowa is projecting an 11 percent drop in new freshmen, according to the *Iowa City Press-Citizen*. Applications are down 3.2 percent, with decreases from both in and out-of-state high school students. The bad economy is seen as the chief culprit.

And according to the *Daily Iowan*, the university has pushed back its application deadline from May 1 to June 1. "By extending our deadline, we're giving people more time to think," Emil Rinderspacher, senior associate director of admissions, told the paper

But yields are unpredictable this year and the school could do better than the pessimistic prediction of winter. Iowa is coming off of three record size freshman classes, so the school doesn't expect to see a great dip in tuition revenues. "You don't want to put too much weight on year-to-year fluctuation," Iowa associate provost for undergraduate education, Beth Ingram, told the *Press-Citizen*.

U. of Oregon. The U. of Oregon has raised the GPA standard for automatic admission to 3.4, starting next year. The school retains its regular admissions process where students must have at least a 3.0 GPA and undergo a comprehensive review of classes and test scores. Freshman enrollment is at record levels. Admissions officers hope the higher standards will give the school more control over those numbers.

U.W. Applications to the U. of Wisconsin-Madison fell by 3 percent from a record 25,000 to about 24,300 this year.

USC. The U. of Southern California received 35,600 applications, about 200 fewer than last year, Timothy Brunold, director of undergraduate admissions, told the *Daily Trojan*. Last year, USC accepted about 22 percent of applicants, this year it will increase acceptance to 23 or 24 percent, Brunold said. "We are not interested in growing the student body...we're actually interested in shrinking it some. We don't have a great tolerance for under or over enrolling." USC is boosting undergraduate financial aid by 8 percent.

Wesley C. Way Up. Wesley C. in Delaware attracted about 1,600 applications last year. This year, it has fielded more than 2,700.

Whitman. Early Decision I and Early Decision II applications were up for this year at Whitman C., while total applications were "just shy" of last year's record of 3,300, with 1,450 acceptances, for a fall 2008 class of 415, according to the *Whitman College Pioneer*.

The economic turmoil "may ultimately hit us harder in the 2010 [high school] class," Kevin Dyerly, director of admissions, said. "The class of 2009 selected their colleges in September, October, before the market hit the tank. But now, the high school juniors are going through their college selection process with the market in mind and that may ultimately affect who chooses a place like Whitman. It's like looking into a big gray fog bank."

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International Affairs

International Initiatives. Each year the Institute of International Education awards colleges and universities for outstanding new international education programs. This year, Champlain C. in Vermont was cited for its "Institute for Global Engagement," which seeks to make the school's curriculum more international. It also created a Global Modules program that links more than 3,000 students in 12 countries through online projects. And it provides faculty with stipends for summer travel abroad. The Universidad de Monterrey in Mexico was awarded for its strategic goals to reach 50 percent study abroad goals.

Clemson U. and the U. of Kansas were recognized for providing future teachers with global skills. Indiana U.-Purdue U. Indianapolis was awarded for projects that unite faculty across disciplines with partners in Moi U. in Kenya, Sun Yat-Sen U. in China and the Autonomous U. of the State of Hidalgo in Mexico. Ohio U. was cited for web-based programs that bring together students and faculty with the U. of Liberia. Scottsdale Community C. was singled out for its program that introduces American students to Maori culture in New Zealand and Aboriginal culture in Australia. To view all projects, go to: www.iienetwork.org/?p+BestPractices.

More U.S. Students Abroad? Only 0.3 percent of U.S. college students study abroad. That compares poorly, for example, to 2 percent of Chinese students, 2.5 percent of French students and 6.2 percent of Norwegian students. And it's not because U.S. students don't need the exposure. A 2006 National Geographic/Roper survey found that 63 percent of Americans aged 18-24 couldn't even find Iraq on a map of the Middle East and 70 percent couldn't find Israel.

It hasn't quite passed in Congress yet, but a bill introduced in March by Senators Dick Durbin, an Illinois Democrat, and Roger Wicker, a Mississippi Republican, wants to give U.S. colleges and universities more funds to send four times more students abroad so they gain the cultural understanding they need to compete globally. And instead of just sending them to Europe where 57 percent of today's students head, the funds would direct many more to developing countries around the globe.

"I'm afraid we are far behind," Senator Durbin told Andres Oppenheimer of the *Miami Herald*. "More and more students from areas like Asia are coming to the United States. Sadly, very few U.S. students are moving in the other direction."

ADMISSIONS AROUND THE GLOBE

China Grads Hurting. Last year, China graduated nearly 5.6 million graduates. But given the nation's economic turmoil, about 27 percent

were unable to find jobs by the end of the year, according to the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

Taiwan Squeeze. More than 22,860 Taiwan university students took graduate entrance exams to the National Taiwan U. for only 2,101 spots. Many college graduates there fear that if they don't get into graduate school they will simply be unemployed because of the global recession, according to *The China Post*.

UK Up. The number of applications to universities in Great Britain surged by 8 percent or about 42,000 early this year, according to the Universities and College Admissions Service, which manages applications. Applications from candidates over 24 years of age soared by over 12 percent. However, the national budget for those students was cut substantially, so the universities have been ordered to cut 5,000 slots this year and reduce the parental threshold level for means-tested maintenance grants.

Australian Destinations. The number of overseas students coming to Australia is up between 10 and 15 percent in the first 2009 term at 16 of 20 Australian universities contacted by *The Australian*. The figures suggest that "the global economic crisis will trigger a flight to higher education," the paper speculated. "The magnitude of the increase at this point is a clear indicator that the growth in international enrollments in the higher education sector in Australia is not slowing," said one university international director. "We may be looking at a continuation of the same strong level of growth that the sector experienced in 2008."

Mandatory English. Tamaulipas, bordering Texas, has declared itself the first bilingual state in Mexico. As a result, 320,000 elementary and secondary students will take mandatory conversational English classes. "Our efforts are aimed at preparing students for a more competitive world filled with technology and English," said the state's governor Eugenio Hernandez. Several other Mexican states are following its example, from Mexico City to the Texas border states of Chihuahua and Nuevo Leon, according to the *Dallas Morning News*.

Rosette Stone Scholarship. High school seniors graduating in the spring who learned English as a Second Language could land a \$3,000 scholarship. The challenge is to write an essay about how learning English "opened up the world to possibilities." The deadline is May 15. See www.rosettastone.com/scholarship. ■

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Yale Rejections. Applicants who did not gain admission to Yale U. no longer have to wait for the dreaded thin letter to arrive in their mailboxes. If a student has already checked their admission decision on line, which 95 percent have done, they can find their decision online. Rejections will be posted within 72 hours of the admissions committee's decision. Accepted students will still receive the standard thick admitted student package, while

students placed on the wait list will also receive a letter. The new policy will save "significant expense" of printing and mailing "more than 20,000" rejection letters, Jeff Brenzel, dean of admissions, told the *Yale Daily News*.

P.S. Some Decline. According to a roundup by the *Daily Pennsylvanian*, applications were down 20 percent this year at Williams C., down 12 percent at Middlebury C. and down 10 percent at Swarthmore C. Schools with declines in applications, although less severe, included Amherst by 1 percent, Bowdoin C.

by almost 2 percent and U. of Pennsylvania by 90 applications.

While Others Accept More. Christopher Welna, president of the Associated Colleges of the Midwest, told the *New York Times* that its 13 members, including Carleton, Macalester, Grinnell and Colorado C., planned to accept 10 to 11 percent more applicants to make up for a 10 percent decline in applications. And Marquette U. planned to accept 600 more students, even though applications were up 17 percent. ■

FINANCIAL AID FLASH

Albright C. in Pennsylvania has tilted its traditional 50/50 need-based, merit-based financial aid formula to 60 percent merit aid. It also is sending simultaneous acceptance and merit aid award letters to students so families get a better idea of the real cost of attending the school.

Cal Restores Grants. Governor Schwarzenegger and the California State Legislature restored \$967 million to the California Student Aid Commission to fund grants for nearly 275,000 students. The money had been eliminated from a proposed budget. In urging all students to fill out their FAFSA student aid forms by March 2, the executive director of the Student Aid Commission said, "We want to remind all California students that money for college is available for those who qualify..." Overall, more than 100,000 students enrolled at the U. of California or California State U. can count on the Cal Grant. For more, visit www.calgrants.org.

Changemakers. Mary Baldwin C. is creating 50 new paid internship positions on and off campus as part of its Changemakers program. The Virginia women's college also offers 250 first-year students \$2,000 talent awards for the young women to participate in one of seven leadership "getaways." And sophomores,

juniors and seniors who have demonstrated academic excellence are eligible to be placed on "Julia's List" and receive additional aid. It's all part of an additional \$700,000 that the school is reinvesting in student aid to meet hard economic times.

Cornell Increases Aid. These are hard times for most colleges and universities. For example, Ivy League member Cornell U.'s endowment took a big hit in the turbulent markets, falling by more than 25 percent, from \$6 billion to \$5 billion. It's facing a 10 percent budget shortfall and has already slashed its budget by 5 percent.

To help counter these blows, tuition will go up 4 percent next year. But that is the smallest increase in 42 years. Faculty and staff will receive no raise in salaries, and the president took a voluntary 10 percent cut in compensation. The school also has put all construction projects on hold.

Still, the university's president, David Skorton, told the *Miami Herald* that Cornell is withdrawing another \$35 million from its endowment to increase student financial aid and to increase the dollar amount of the package for the poorest students. "I believe you have to lead or manage by a set of principles. The student comes first," he said. "We are

going to find a way to maintain robust financial aid. Whatever it takes, we are going to do it."

Top 10 Deals. Students who place in the top 10 percent of their high school get a \$14,325 tuition break at Lebanon Valley C. in Pennsylvania. Students in the top 20 percent get a third off of tuition, while those in the top 30 percent get a one-quarter reduction in a program that has been popular since the early 1990s.

Wisconsin Tuition Freeze. Students from families that earn less than the state's median family income of \$60,000 a year will be exempt from tuition hikes at state schools for the next two years. State funding to the U. of Wisconsin system will remain flat for the next two years, at about \$1.15 billion next year and \$1.2 billion in 2011, reports *Madison.com*, the website of the city's newspapers. A tight budget likely means fewer class sections, larger classes and reduced student services. The budget request submitted by Governor Jim Doyle includes a \$38 million increase in need-based financial aid and \$25 million for the Wisconsin Covenant, a program that guarantees admission to students who meet certain academic and social requirements. ■

OBAMA BUDGET

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ment \$4 billion a year. The change would take effect July 2010.

"Rather than continuing to subsidize banks, we want to help more students," President Obama's new Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, told *COLLEGE BOUND* and other reporters in a special briefing. Secretary Duncan said the current Guaranteed Student Loan Program is already on "life support" because of the current credit crisis.

But the *New York Times* called opposition to the plan from private lenders "fierce." It is certain to set off a fight between lobbyists for higher education and the banking industry. And *The Times* noted that the stock value of one of the biggest student loan companies, Sallie Mae, fell by nearly 31 percent after the Obama budget plan was released. Critics also charge that the Dept. of Ed cannot handle the \$60 billion traffic flow. But Duncan said it is already contracting with private companies to service the loans.

Additionally, about \$17 billion from the new stimulus package will go directly to Pell grants, Duncan told honor students at Miami Dade College in March. *CB* will keep you up to date as President Obama's plan moves through Congress. ■

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NEWS YOU CAN USE

Disadvantaged Youth. Three schools recently were cited for their outreach efforts to help disadvantaged youth. Duke U., Brookhaven C. and the U. of Missouri-Kansas City received top honors from the Corporation for National and Community Service, sponsored by the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation. The U of Missouri-Kansas City has 14 programs designed to help the youth of its city, including one that promotes careers in science and medicine among minority and low-income students. "We are graduating students who will contribute to their community through service," said one UMKC official.

Males in Trouble. "By almost any measure, American males are in serious trouble," proclaims a new report on "Gender Distribution of Higher Education Degrees by Degree Level and State 1960 to 2007" from *Postsecondary Education Opportunity*. In 1870, males earned 85.3 percent of bachelor's degrees. That fell steadily to 43 percent during the World War II years when many males were away at war. Then it rose again to 76 percent in 1950 with

the GI Bill. But the number has been tumbling ever since to just 42.6 percent in 2007. To find the entire report, go to www.postsecondary.org.

Freshmen Attitudes. UCLA's 43rd "American Freshman" survey, taken as 240,580 new students at 340 four-year colleges and universities registered last fall, found significant economic worries on their mind. More than 49 percent reported they need to find a part-time job to meet college expenses, up from 47 percent last year. The survey found that 43 percent of the students viewed financial aid as very important or essential to their choice of a college, up from about 38 percent last year.

Since the economic meltdown was just beginning, John H. Pryor, managing director of UCLA's Higher Research Institute, which conducted the study, expects the number of students who express economic worries to be "drastically higher" next year.

Politically, liberalism is back among the freshmen. Some 31 percent described themselves as liberal. ■

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