

College Bound

ISSUES & TRENDS FOR THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS ADVISOR

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Public U.'s Brace for Application Surge

"IT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME since paying for college seemed like a reasonable task for most families," a recent article in *The Hartford Courant* in Connecticut proclaimed. "But this year, as college savings accounts slump, tight credit markets stoke fears about home equity and private student loans, and workers feel increasingly insecure in their jobs, many families with high school seniors are rethinking their approach to the college search."

Exactly. And as a result, many college-bound students are taking a second look at state supported colleges and universities. In fact, according to the *Courant*, applications to state schools are way up this season. For example, the *Courant* reported that by mid-November, applications were up 46 percent at Eastern Connecticut State U., up 21 percent at Western Connecticut State U. and up 31 percent at Central Connecticut State U. Applications had

doubled at Southern Connecticut State U. and they were up 11 percent at the flagship U. of Connecticut.

At the same time, private college endowments have been damaged by stock market plunges, and that could affect scholarships this year. For example, Trinity C. in Connecticut lost nearly 15 percent of its endowment in the falling market. And according to the *Washington Post*, Washington and Lee U. in Virginia had 6 percent of its operating budget in a fund that went under, creating liquidity problems.

FINANCIAL SAFETY NETS

"What we're seeing are a great number of institutions who are tightening their belts, cutting back where they can in order to maintain, and where possible, increase their
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Admissions Watch

A 2007 STUDY by the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) found that last year one in three U.S. colleges recorded a decrease in early decision applications.

But to the surprise of many, early apps seem to be way up this fall. George Washington U. in Washington D.C. received 1,200 ED 1 applications by mid-November, compared to 946 in 2007. In 2006, GW attracted 1,009 ED applications. GW also extended its ED deadline by two weeks to November 27. "As you can imagine, students applying this year are more concerned about the country's financial situation and how the current economic conditions will affect their college choice," Kathryn Napper, executive dean for undergraduate admissions, told the *GW Hatchet*.

Other Early App Reports. At Middlebury C. in Vermont, early decision applications this year ran 12 percent ahead of last year. However, Bob Clagett, dean of admissions, told *The Middlebury Campus*, the increase "will not necessarily translate into a 12 percent increase in ED 1 admits." Clagett attributes the increase in applications to the college's strength in environmental science, international studies and languages, as well as infrastructure improvements. The increase in applications also came against the backdrop of a 40 percent decrease in travel among the admissions staff, part of the college's cost savings effort.

Northwestern U. in Illinois attracted 15
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THE GREENE REPORT

THINK THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS PROCESS couldn't get any more complicated? Guess again. Recent events with the economy and current trends in college enrollment and costs are baffling students and parents and the counselors trying to help them negotiate in these uncertain times. Below are key trends we have been tracking this fall.

1. The Impact of the Economy. The economic downturn in the country is indeed impacting the choices students and their families are making. Higher-income families have seen major erosion in their savings portfolios and house values and are thinking about financial aid for the first time. Middle- and lower-income families, already stressed about paying for college, are worried that their aid packages will be diminished. Those whose savings have lost value are more likely to add to their application lists the colleges offering merit-based scholarships, as well as lower sticker prices overall.

2. Admissions Offices under Pressure. Inside admissions offices, we are hearing about different trends and conflicting forecasts. On the one hand, Early Decision/Action applications are on the rise. Students are seeking to lock in at least one choice for the fall. Universities such as Wake Forest, Tulane, Duke, Vermont and others are aggressively courting students with "VIP" and other non-binding early notification applications to try to admit more students earlier in the process to decrease their own uncertainty.
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APPLICATION SURGE

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financial aid," Tony Pals, a spokesman for the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, told the *Courant*. But he also tried to be reassuring. "It's the financial aid portion of the budget that will be the last touched by an institution."

In fact, the *Post* said schools such as Shenandoah U. in Virginia have set aside emergency funds to help students who have been hard hit, including those with family suddenly out of work or who did not receive the expected home equity loans. George Washington U. is preparing for an increase in requests for financial aid by setting aside several million more dollars to help hard-pressed students. And the U. of Virginia is bracing for a significant increase next year in its costs for need-based aid.

To help plan for the new challenge, many high school counselors are urging students to include "financial safety net" schools, or institutions families can afford if financial aid doesn't come through at first choice schools, among their applications.

PUBLIC U.'S TO RESCUE?

"The current economic situation will press a lot of families in their ability to pay for college," Joyce Smith, CEO of the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC),

recently told the *Daily Northwestern*. "We will probably see more applications go toward public colleges and universities." Some call it the "flight to price."

And *The New York Times* reported that applications to the top school in the SUNY system, Binghamton, had received 50 percent more applications than at the same time last year.

Recruiters for public colleges in Massachusetts report uncommonly high turnouts at college fairs and campus open houses, according to the MIT student newspaper *The Tech*. "This year is going to be all about economics," Tom Parker, dean of admission and financial aid at Amherst C., told the paper.

But the rush to state colleges and universities may be blunted by new pressures on the colleges themselves to cut back their budgets as state support weakens. "As families suffer through the meltdown, so are the schools," Stephen Michaud, a college consultant in Norwell, Massachusetts, told *The Tech*. "It is definitely going to have an impact on what schools can provide in financial aid."

CALIFORNIA'S CRUNCH

In addition, many of these public colleges and universities already posted record enrollment figures this school year and have little space to grow next year. Chico State U. in California, for example, halted new applications after

November 30, far earlier than normal, due to deep budget cuts in the California State U. System. The California system has already cut \$31 million. And Governor Schwarzenegger has called for \$2.5 billion in mid-year cuts to all education budgets. In response, CSU recently announced it may need to cut enrollment by up to 10,000 students on 23 campuses. Out-of-state students will be impacted. This while applications for fall 2009 are up by almost 20 percent from this time last year.

City College of San Francisco will cut summer classes by 25 percent. Statewide, California community colleges may have to eliminate classes for 263,000 students, according to the Community College League of California.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE APPS UP

Students are already flocking to community colleges this fall. For instance, the Community College of Allegheny County in Pennsylvania outpaced expectations by 30 percent. Nationally, community college enrollment has increased by 10 percent from 2000 to 2006. This year in Hawaii, community college enrollment is up between 3 and 17 percent at various campuses. But Hawaii community colleges have been ordered to cut their budgets by between 10 and 20 percent, depending upon future conditions. ■

ADMISSIONS WATCH

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percent more early decision applications this fall. According to the *Daily Northwestern*, NU fielded 1,712 early decision applications for the Class of 2013. "Even more significant," associate provost Michael Mills told the paper, "was the 60 percent increase in minority student applications."

One source of those applications resulted from NU's partnership with QuestBridge, a non-profit organization that pairs selective universities with high-achieving students from low-income families. NU received 548 QuestBridge applications and is expected to admit 20 to 25 of them, and offer 15 four-year, full scholarships. NU also launched two other programs that targeted African-American and Hispanic students.

Additionally, both Georgetown U. and New York U. recorded a 2 percent increase in early decision applications.

Yale U. in Connecticut saw its early action applications increase by more than 10 percent this year. Dean of admissions Jeff Brenzel told the *Yale Daily News* that by mid-November, 5,400 students had already applied for a spot in the class of 2013. He expected to receive another 100 early applications at deadline, making the increase 12.5 percent. Yet, Brenzel added that he expects to extend few early offers this year. Last year, Yale fielded a total of 22,817 applications, the most in its history,

and admitted 1,952, producing a record-low admit rate of 8.6 percent.

Bowdoin Up. Early applications rose by nearly 8 percent at Bowdoin C. The Maine college received 480 early decision applications. Given the economic turndown, admissions officers were expecting a decrease. "People are scratching their heads and saying, 'Oh, we're not down,'" Scott Meiklejohn, interim dean of admissions, told *The Bowdoin Orient*. One reason for increased interest in Bowdoin was its decision to replace student loans with grants.

The Bowdoin Orient also reported that ED applications also rose at peer schools. Early applications rose by 13 percent at Colby C. and Haverford C., while Hamilton rose by 8 percent and Dartmouth by 10 percent.

Duke Up. Some 1,573 students applied early decision to Duke U. in North Carolina, a 25 percent increase over last year. "All of us who have seen an increase have been pleasantly surprised," Christoph Guttentag, dean of undergraduate admissions, told the *Duke Chronicle*. Increases came from all ethnic groups. The paper also reported that early applications rose at Stanford U. by 18 percent.

Wesleyan U. Soars. Early decision applications soared by 40 percent at Wesleyan U. in Connecticut. "It is hard to believe that one

group of 17-year-olds has become more decisive than the group you saw the previous year," Greg Pyke, senior associate dean of admission. "So maybe it's that in a time of economic uncertainty, people want something settled."

Other Numbers in the News. Finally, a November 21 *New York Times* article noted that St. Olaf C. eliminated early action and moved its deadline for early decision back to November 15 and saw a 15 percent increase in applications. It also said Pomona C. was up 20 percent and Art Rodriguez, senior associate dean of admissions, surmised that applying early this year was in response to colleges using wait lists last year. "If you apply early, you can find out in December," he said.

A November 18 *Inside Higher Ed* report added that early applications were up 8 percent at Union C. in New York, 14 percent at the U. of Richmond, 30 percent at Warren Wilson C., 5 percent at Wartburg C. in Iowa and up 38 percent at Westminster C. in Utah. The report added that at Goucher C., early action apps increased from 66 percent of all applications to 77 percent.

P.S. People are talking about... "The Coming College Bubble?" the provocative article that appeared at *Forbes.com* on October 23. "The crunch will be particularly bitter for the institutions that drained coffers to build 'country club colleges'..." the article said. ■

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We expect, though, that at the other end of the process, we will see even more use of waiting lists. Colleges will keep an active, diverse group of students in the wings as they come to terms with the first-year yield and the reenrollment of current students.

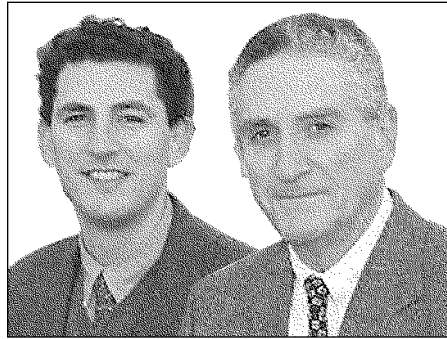
Also, even schools as wealthy as Dartmouth, Wellesley, Harvard, Cornell, Brown, Smith and Amherst are feeling compelled to contact both current and prospective students to discuss both their anticipated need for budget cuts as well as their commitment to need-based financial aid. At state university systems such as Florida and North Carolina, students will face not only significant cost increases next fall, but possibly even mid-year tuition hikes. Michigan State U. and Rhode Island's three public institutions were forced to raise tuition mid-year.

3. No Dearth of Applicants. The number of high school graduates increased from 2.5 million in 1996 to 3.3 million in 2008, according to the College Board and the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education. Over the next 15 years, the projections are that the number stays between 3 and 3.5 million. Thus, we are not going to see a drop in high school graduates nationally nor a decline in college applicants anytime soon. The numbers may plateau over the next few years, but not decrease to the lows experienced during the early 1980s.

However, there will be a diversification of the college applicant pool, with non-traditional applicants, students of color and first-generation college applicants becoming a larger percentage of the pool. Selective colleges will continue to strive for a national applicant pool, to counteract the tendency of most high school students to attend college within a few hundred miles of home. Public universities will continue to ramp up requirements in order to reduce campus growth.

4. Continued Increase in International Students. Interest in U.S. colleges among international students will continue to grow. According to the 2008 report from Open Doors, total foreign student numbers are up 7 percent, new enrollments up 10 percent. More international students, especially from India and China, are able to afford an American education and will continue to apply. These students are and will be qualified and focused, challenging the best and brightest, let alone the average American high school graduate. The result: High school seniors will continue to face more pressure.

5. Higher Costs. Another big trend is the increasing cost of public or private education. According to this year's College Board's "Trends



Matthew and Howard Greene

in College Pricing 2008," the average tuition and fee listed for private, four-year colleges increased 5.9 percent, slightly higher than the 5.8 percent rate of inflation. In-state fees at four-year public colleges nationwide averaged \$6,585, up 6.4 percent. Today, the cost of a public or private university education comprises a much higher proportion of a family's income.

At the same time, the share of an average four-year degree covered by the need-based Pell Grant program has decreased markedly. Student loan debt has ballooned, with the average debt of a four-year degree recipient climbing above \$20,000. Even with all the attention about the

retrenchments in the loan industry, private lenders represent the fastest growing sector of the student loan market.

On a positive note, total grant, work-study and education tax benefits to college students rose to a record high \$143.4 billion, according to the latest College Board "Trends in Student Aid." Colleges such as Princeton, U. of North Carolina and Amherst have increased grant-aid and decreased loans. Merit-based financial awards also have grown.

6. The Gender Gap. Women now comprise some 59 percent of the college population in this country. The situation is more lopsided at many private liberal arts colleges and flagship public universities, with 60 to 65 percent female matriculants, and applicant pools that can be even more imbalanced. This trend raises a number of concerns. Sociologically, one worries about the abundance of highly educated young women, and the decline of educated male peers. The trend is particularly pronounced among Hispanic and African-American students.

But also, neither men nor women at coed institutions seem to like an environment that tilts above 60 percent of one gender. Socially, both genders tend to suffer. Now though, in terms of applications, the obvious dangers are showing up. We are hearing of colleges giving preferential treatment to male applicants in some admission situations, even at highly selective institutions, where they need more men to enroll. Women are thus being held to a higher standard, and are finding themselves rejected or put on waiting lists while similarly or less qualified young men are admitted to balance out a class. This new "gender affirmative action" has turned the admissions world on its head.

The good news is that there are still many options available among the several thousand two- and four-year institutions of higher education in America. While keeping current trends in mind, a student with a good work ethic and open mind is still sure to find a right choice. ■

Howard and Matthew Greene have developed a web site in conjunction with their PBS programs with free resources for counselors and families. See www.pbs.org/tenstepstocollege.

THE COUNSELOR'S BOOKSHELF

Hot off the Press. *Paying for College Without Going Broke*, 2009 edition by Kalman A. Chany with Geoff Martz; from Random House/Princeton Review; ISBN: 978-0-375-42883-8; \$20; www.PrincetonReview.com.

College Access & Opportunity Guide: Inside Colleges & Universities Committed to Access, Opportunity, and Success from the Center for

Student Opportunity (KendalHunt Professional); ISBN 978-0-9800132-2-1; "a comprehensive college guidebook dedicated to promoting college opportunity for the traditionally underserved."

Race and Class Matters at an Elite College by Elizabeth Aries (Temple U. Press); a "personal look at the day-to-day thoughts and feelings of students as they experience racial and economic

diversity first hand..." at an elite college; ISBN 978-1-59213-726-8; www.temple.edu/tempress.

Parenting the Guardian Class: Validating Spirited Youth, Ending Adolescence and Renewing America's Greatness by Jonathan I. Cloud "calls upon parents and other influential adults in teenage lives to recognize and validate the sense of spiritedness that is often misinterpreted as adolescent delinquency;" ISBN: 978-1-4343-5493-8; \$17.99; from (www.AuthorHouse.com); also see, www.guardianclass.com. ■

TUITION TABS

Ohio Low Tuition Leader. Ohio's public four-year colleges and universities ranked number one in the College Board's "Trends in College Pricing 2008" report. Montana ranked second with a .60 percent tuition increase. Ohio's schools averaged just a .20 percent increase in tuition to an average of \$8,482 for 2008/09. However, Ohio's two-year tuition freeze expires after this year. Enrollment at the U. System of Ohio reached 478,376 students, an increase of 2.7 percent.

Fee Hike at UC and Cal State. Fees could shoot up by as much as 10 percent next year for students in California's two public university systems, according to *The Los Angeles Times*. A report released by

the 10-campus U. of California projects a 9.4 percent increase for in-state students, bringing the average bill to \$8,670. And the 23-campus Cal State system could see prices rise by about \$300 to an average of \$4,150. Both figures exclude the costs of housing and books. The president of the systemwide UC Student Association predicted more protests because students are angry about the relentless rate of increases.

Wyoming Holds Tuition. The U. of Wyoming will not increase in-state tuition next year, according to *The Billings Gazette*. But out-of-state students will probably see as much as a 5 percent increase. In-state students taking 30 credit hours currently pay \$3,621 in yearly

tuition, placing it in the top 1 percent of affordable public doctoral institutions.

ND Continues Need-Blind. Even though the economy may negatively impact the endowment at Notre Dame, the university has reaffirmed its commitment to need-blind admission, Joseph Russo, ND's director of student financial strategies in the Office of Student Financial Services, told *The Observer*. "There are not a lot of high-cost private institutions that have this policy, and those that do are going to be looking hard at it this year," Russo said. "We want to be accessible to anybody. We want the admissions decision to be based on applicants' credentials as they compete with other students, not on whether they can afford to come here. Only a handful of high-priced privates can say that... We want access and affordability." ■

SCHOLARSHIP SCOOPS

At a time when families are looking for financial breaks, a number of news releases came across *CB's* desk about these scholarships for freshmen.

American Dreams Equals \$225,000. TD Bank, located in 575 stores throughout the country, will provide \$225,000 to 225 community service-oriented high school seniors who have also demonstrated academic achievement. Deadline: Dec. 15. See www.tdbank.com/americanream.

To Impact Environment. AVerMedia, the maker of digital technologies, is offering a \$5,000 four-year scholarship to a high school senior who "demonstrates leadership, academic achievement, participates in extracurricular activities and has a desire to impact the world around them." An application and one-page essay is required on how a student has impacted the environment and plans to contribute to a sustainable future. Deadline: Mar. 27, 2009. See <http://www.avermedia-usa/presentation/scholarship.asp>.

Most Valuable Student Award. The Elks National Foundation announced this fall that it wanted to "alleviate the financial burden" of the cost of college for 500 students throughout the country. The MVS Scholarship includes \$2.296 million with awards to 18 top winners ranging from \$8,000 to \$60,000 over four years. The remaining 482 runners-up receive \$4,000 over four years. Applicants need not be related to a member of the Elks. Applications due Jan. 9, 2009. See www.elks.org/enf/scholars.

Big Money in Bad Times. That is how the American Fire Sprinkler Association dubbed its scholarship for "struggling students," a \$20,000 annual award for college, university or certified trade school. Instead of writing an essay, contestants are to read one and complete a ten-minute quiz. Deadline is April 1, 2009. See www.afsascholarship.org/.

Support for Science. Clemson U announced that incoming freshmen proficient in physical science, math and engineering fields will receive a minimum of \$4,500. For details see www.clemson.edu.

High Achievers. Five high school students entering Medgar Evers College as freshmen in fall 2009 could earn a four-year scholarship from Moet Hennessy USA. Students must declare a major in business, marketing or communications and maintain a 2.75 grade-point average. See www.cuny.edu.

Florida Realtors Think Locally. High school students in Florida can compete for \$28,000 in scholarships by writing a 500-word essay. Awards vary from \$1,000 to \$5,000 for each of the 13 districts in the Florida Association of Realtors. Deadline Feb. 8, 2009. See <http://media.floridarealtors.org/>.

Great Philadelphia Region Dollars. Ronald MacDonald House Charities and McDonald's operators in Philadelphia have announced three scholarship programs: the Scholars program, the Future Achievers for African American high school seniors and HACER for Latino high school seniors. Fifteen scholar-

ships will be awarded ranging from \$5,000 to \$1,000. Call 215-790-4320 for info.

Media Scholarships in the Middle East. At the Clinton Global Initiative, the American U. in Dubai, a private, non-sectarian higher ed institution, announced it would grant \$26 million to students throughout the Middle East for study in media and journalism. Students must attend the Mohammed bin Rashid School for Communication, recently established in collaboration with the Annenberg School for Communication at the U. of Southern Cal. See www.aud.edu. ■

New Websites

www.College.gov is a website that seeks to motivate students with inspirational stories and information about planning and paying for college. It includes an interactive tool for students to create an "I'm going" personalized roadmap that details steps to get to college; free.... www.CollegeZapps.com "automates the college application...students can eliminate the risk of application errors, streamline the process significantly, simplify financial aid requests and send applications to numerous colleges" says a spokesperson; for a fee.... "Given Half A Chance: The Schott 50 State Report on Public Education and Black Males," can be accessed at www.blackboysreport.org.... Take tougher high school courses beyond the "Core 40." That's the new message of www.KnowHow2GOIndiana.org. That advice will help prepare students for the tougher admissions standards kicking in at both Purdue U. and Indiana U. ■

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