

# College Bound

ISSUES & TRENDS FOR THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS ADVISOR

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## Early Results of Some Early Apps

HAPPY NEW YEAR! *CB* begins the year with a round-up of year-end news and the news of new beginnings. Now in our 28th year, we find this start of the year similar in many respects, but, as always, different in many others. What is up? Applications to Early Action and early admissions programs are up at many selective schools. We have a spot check below. But, unfortunately, college debt is up as well. And there seems no stopping it.

What is down? Fall enrollments at some colleges are down as new high-tech means of applying to colleges expand and as the Common Application adds more schools. The result: it is more difficult to ascertain who is really interested in a school and who is likely to show up, let alone, who can afford it.

So here's *CB*'s first round-up of news in the 2014 New Year.

**BU Surges.** Last year, Boston U. saw its early admissions numbers skyrocket by 40 percent. This year, it attracted even more early students, 16 percent more or 1,742. "It speaks to the individual applicant that the person has looked closely at the program that interests her or him and that, by applying early, they are making it known to the university that this is a commitment they want to make," said Colin Riley, BU spokesman.

**Duke's Early Apps Up 25 Percent.** This year, 3,180 students applied to Duke's Early Decision program, 25 percent more than last year and the most in school history. In early December, 797 high school seniors were notified that they had been admitted. That translates into an admit rate of 25 percent. The early students will make up 47 percent of this fall's incoming class, which is expected

to include 1,705 students. Trinity College of Arts & Sciences will enroll 643 of the early students, while 154 will study in the Pratt School of Engineering. Students of color make up about 37 percent of the new group, an increase of 8 percent. International students account for 8 percent as well, an increase of 1 percent over last year.

**Harvard's Early Acceptance Rate Up.** In spite of the fact that Harvard's William R. Fitzsimmons said, "We continue to send a message that you do not have to apply early to Harvard," 4,692 students applied early to the Class of 2018. Harvard C. accepted "just over 21 percent," the highest Early Action acceptance rate since Harvard reinstated the program. In fact, the 992 early acceptances represent an 11 percent increase over the number accepted last year. According to the *Harvard Crimson*, Mr. Fitzsimmons noted that more students were responding to Harvard's outreach efforts to students from poorer economic backgrounds, ethnic backgrounds and international students. In addition, 3,197 students were deferred to the regular decision process, 366 denied, 18 withdrew and 119 submitted incomplete applications.

**Princeton U. Early Apps Up.** After problems with the Common Application this fall, Princeton U. ended up with a slight increase of Early Action applications. This year, it attracted 3,831 early apps, as opposed to 3,810 last year. Two years ago, 21 percent of the early applicants were admitted, accounting for approximately half of the first-year class. Early admissions yield for the class of 2017 was 81 percent, far exceeding the 69 percent overall yield. Dean of admission Janet Rapelye

said Princeton is aiming for a first-year class of 1,290 students.

**Colorado Applications Soar.** Applications to the U. of Colorado were up by 23 percent by early December. As of December 9, CU had received 15,900 applications. The sudden increase is attributed to the school's switch to the Common Application. CU recruiters also visited an extra 120 high schools this fall, as well as 26 countries, up from 19 last year. Applications from out-of-state students increased by one third. "We developed this fall a much more aggressive recruiting plan and at the same time we also went up on the Common App," said admissions director Kevin MacLennan.

**Other Early Stats.** Columbia U.'s ED pool increased by 5.4 percent over last year, with 3,296 applications. Dartmouth had 1,678 early applicants, 6 percent more than last year, and accepted 469 students, filling 40 percent of its 2018 class. U. of Pennsylvania filled more than 50 percent of its freshman class next fall. Its early applications increased by 6.7 percent and it admitted 25 percent of applicants. And Yale's early applications increased 5.6 percent. It accepted 735 students from 4,750 applicants.

### ENROLLMENT TRENDS

**College Enrollment Falls for Second Straight Year.** This fall, a total of 19.5 million students were enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities, down from 20.1 million two years ago. According to the National Student Clearinghouse, total enrollment fell by 1.5 per-

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## EARLY RESULTS

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cent in the fall of 2013, after having declined 1.8 percent last year. However, enrollment increased slightly among four-year public institutions by .3 percent, and four-year private nonprofit institutions by 1.3 percent.

Four-year for-profit institutions saw an enrollment decline of nearly 10 percent. Two-year public institutions fell by 3 percent compared to fall of 2012. The decreases were seen in all regions, but the Midwest experienced the largest decline, nearly 3 percent. The decreases were largest for students over the age of 24, or 3.4 percent. This meant there were 260,000 fewer adults over age 24 in college this fall than a year ago.

Only 10 states logged enrollment increases, topped by New Hampshire, up to almost 13 percent and West Virginia, up 8 percent.

**Yale's Yield of STEM Applicants Up.** For the last two years, Yale has stepped up its recruitment of students interested in science, technology, engineering and math. As a result, the number of its STEM applicants has increased by more than 50 percent. Some 40 percent of the Class of 2017 included students likely to major in STEM fields. Students who score well on AP tests are sent science and engineering brochures. STEM professors are traveling with admissions officers to recruit some students. Yale is also sending out "likely letters" to these students before the April 1 admissions announcements to boost the odds they enroll.

**Fewer Black Students Admitted to U. of California.** African American students have been admitted to the U. of California at "starkly lower rates" since affirmative action was banned, according to a report from the Campaign for College Opportunity. Black students are also less likely to graduate from the state's public colleges and universities. And it takes them longer to complete their degrees.

From 1994 to 2010, the percentage of black student applicants admitted to the university system fell from 75 percent to 58 percent. In contrast, 83 percent of white students who applied in 2010 were admitted, as were 85 percent of Asian American students and 76 percent of Latinos. The acceptance rate for African American students was even lower at UC Berkeley, where it fell from 51 percent to 15 percent, and at UCLA, where it dropped from 58 percent to 14 percent. Once enrolled, about 70 percent of black students graduate system-wide, the lowest rate for all ethnic groups.

Part of the problem is that black students are the least likely in the state to graduate from high school, and many who do, lack required courses for admission by four-year universities.

## Graduation Rates of Bowl Football Teams

This last season, 70 college football teams played in holiday bowl games. But according to the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sports at the U. of Central Florida, their black and white players will graduate at different rates. About 65 percent of black football players will graduate from these colleges, up from 62 percent the previous year. However, 84 percent of the white players will graduate.

Overall, the numbers for the most prestigious conferences are less impressive. According to the U. of Pennsylvania's Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education, 50 percent of black male athletes playing for universities in the seven major conferences graduated within six years, compared with 67 percent of all athletes, and 56 percent of black male undergraduates.

And of the top 25 schools in the Bowl Championship Series (BCS), 60 percent of football players are black men, while only 12 percent of the coaches and athletic directors are black. ■

**Santa Monica C. Leads the Way.** Santa Monica C. ranks number one in transferring its students to the U. of California, according to the California C. C. Chancellor's Office. SMC has held this position for the past 23 years. In fall 2013, 160 SMC students also transferred to the U. of Southern California, nearly three times as many students as the number two feeder school.

**First-Generation Hurdles.** According to the National Center for Education Statistics, more than one third of the 5-to-17-year-olds in the U.S. are first-generation students, *The Daily Sundial* noted last month. About 82 percent of non-first-generation students enroll in college immediately after high school. But only 54 percent of first-generation students enroll.

In addition, a new report from the ACT says that 335,711 first-generation high school students took the ACT test this year. However, 52 percent did not meet any of the ACT college-ready benchmarks of English composition, social sciences, college algebra and biology. Only 9 percent met all four benchmarks. The rest of the students met between one and three of the benchmarks.

The federally-funded Upward Bound TRIO program helps some of these students in middle and high school with after school, weekend and summer instruction in a variety of academic subjects. But TRIO experienced a 5 percent budget cut during the last fiscal year.

**Students Without Minimum Credits Have Tougher Time.** Students who enter Kansas public institutions through exceptions to the minimum admission standards do not do as

well as other students, according to a new report. They have lower retention, course completion and graduation rates, according to the Kansas Board of Regents.

The report was mandated in 2012 by Kansas legislators who voiced concerns about remedial courses at public universities. To gain entrance to a Regents school, Kansas students must score at least 21 on the ACT or graduate in the top one-third of their high school class. But the universities also can admit up to 10 percent of their freshman class by making exceptions to the standards.

## ADMISSIONS WATCH

**Monmouth and Carl Sandburg Colleges Sign Transfer Agreement.** Monmouth and Carl Sandburg colleges in Illinois launched a Pipeline Program to help qualified Sandburg students earn their B.A. degrees. The Pipeline Program will assign a Monmouth C. advisor to Sandburg graduates to ensure effective transfer, help them prepare a personal academic plan with a faculty advisor, use a Sandburg Associate's degree to fulfill Monmouth general education requirements and provide significant financial aid assistance in the form of scholarships ranging from \$10,000-\$31,000.

"We have seen that after graduating from Monmouth, many of these students will pursue graduate studies and become an even greater asset to our region," said Mauri Ditzler, president, Monmouth C.

**Seeking More Students.** St. Mary's C. of Maryland has announced it is aggressively seeking new students for admissions to its school for next year. Much was made of its shortfall in enrollment this fall and the millions in budget cuts from lost tuition dollars. Indeed, some see the pullback at St. Mary's as a bellwether of what is to come elsewhere. But this fall, the St. Mary's admissions staff visited more than 400 high schools and college fairs. The school also put into place a new Early Action plan with two deadlines. The college hopes to enroll 420 freshmen and 120 transfer students, but could admit even more. It also hopes to tap into the growing Latino population in southern Maryland.

**Rider U. Offers "Instant Gratification" in Admissions.** Admissions officers at Rider U., in New Jersey, are traveling to high schools to interview students and offer instant admissions, or not. Last year, they visited eight high schools, this year 11, according to philly.com. The students must have already met the application requirements: SAT or ACT scores, grades, essays and recommendations. But often in the interviews, students also find out what financial aid they might expect. The decisions are not binding. But, "it's a great ego boost," said Hallie Ciarlone, counselor at Delaware Valley Friends. ■

# Managing a College-Going Culture

CB starts 2014 with a look at some of the latest issues impacting college counseling and the success of students applying to and graduating from college.

**Getting Majors That Fit.** Only 36 percent of high school graduates are selecting a college major that is a good fit with their interest, according to a new report from ACT called College Choice Report. Based on an interest inventory, ACT found that among ACT-tested graduates, 32 percent selected a major “that was a poor fit.” ACT argues that students whose interests and majors match are more likely to remain in their major and persist in school and complete their degree. ACT further argues that students need more help planning for college and career. See, <http://www.act.org/collegechoice/13-14/>.

**Strengths That Impress Colleges.** According to a recent report from the Independent Educational Consultants Association, the number one strength that colleges look for in an applicant is “a rigorous high school curriculum that challenges the students and may include AP or IB classes.”

In addition, IECA said, “Grades that represent a strong effort and an upward trend also impress colleges. However, slightly lower grades in a rigorous program are preferred to all A’s in less challenging coursework.”

Other desirable strengths: Solid scores on standardized tests, well-written essays “that provide insight into the student’s unique personality, values and goals.... passionate involvement in a few in- or out-of-school activities.... special talents that will contribute to the college’s student life program. Colleges like to know what you intend to bring to campus, as well as what you’ll take away from your college experience.”

For a complete list of the strengths discussed, see, <http://www.iecaonline.com>.

**More Admissions Officers Are Checking “Digital Trails” This Year.** Kaplan Test Prep said it before, but its survey results this year rang loud and clear: More admissions officers are indeed “Googling” their applicants (29 percent) and visiting Facebook and other social media pages (31 percent) to learn more about their applicants. “As social media has skyrocketed from being the domain of a younger generation to societal ubiquity, the perceived taboo against admissions officers checking applicants online has diminished,” said Seppy Basili, vice president, Kaplan Test Prep. In a survey of students, Kaplan did find that students said they “are becoming more cautious about what they post,” said Christine Brown of Kaplan. See, [www.kaptest.com](http://www.kaptest.com).

**Yes, Facebook is Being Used in Admissions Offices.** According to a different 2013 survey of 150 college admissions offices conducted by Varsity Outreach, a company that helps colleges with online promotions, 80 percent reported that they use the social networking site in their admissions work, a 13 percent increase over last year. But in an online discussion of the findings on *The Chronicle of Higher Education’s* website, one company representative agreed that students do not often use a college’s Facebook page in the college search process. Rather, once they are interested in a particular school, they use Facebook to stay in touch, interact with admissions counselors and once admitted, use it to interact with other admitted students.

**Food for Thought.** A recent analysis of a new “nationally-representative high school longitudinal study” by the National Association for College Admissions Counselors found:

- High schools with higher four-year college-going rates were more likely to spend a greater proportion of their time on college counseling;
- Schools with higher four-year college-going rates and that spent more time on college counseling were more likely to report college preparation as their primary goal;
- These schools also were more likely to require a parent’s signature on career and education plans;
- Schools with majority black student populations were more likely to organize college visits or have a program for students not considering college than schools with majority Hispanic populations;
- Only 18 percent of ninth-grade students had spoken to a counselor about college.

For more info, see, <http://www.nacacnet.org>.

**New Financial Aid Toolkit.** The U.S. Department of Education’s new Financial Aid Toolkit offers several features that can help counselors. Here are ideas that Dan Griffin, a Department Ed consultant, recommends: The Toolkit’s “Learn about Financial Aid” section provides tips, resources, videos and updates on the FAFSA, as well as the basics of loan repayment. You can also find resources to help plan events such as Financial Aid Night or a FAFSA completion event in the “tips and information” section.

A “Conduct Outreach” section spreads the word about the availability of financial aid. The toolkit’s “Social Media” section provides information on how to leverage the website’s content on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Counselors can also turn to the “Get Training” session to access training materials and learn about training webinars. And for those in a hurry, Griffin suggests using the “search option.”

You can find all of this at [www.FinancialAidToolkit.ed.gov](http://www.FinancialAidToolkit.ed.gov). ■

## THE COUNSELOR’S BOOKSHELF

**Attractive Students and College Graduation.** A new monograph published by Wiley called *Physical Attractiveness and the Accumulation of Social and Human Capital in Adolescence and Young Adulthood*, by Gordon, Crosnoe and Wang, argues that physically attractive youths are more likely to do well academically and have more “social integration and

less social stigma” which serve as “psycho-social resources that support their academic achievement.” At the same time, they may have “social distractions.” ISBN: 978-1-118-88001-2; 316 pages; \$39.95; [www.wiley.com](http://www.wiley.com).

**Latin American University Rankings.** In a global educational world, where many U.S.

students have learned Spanish, attendance in a Latin American university is a plausible option. The top six destinations, according to [topuniversities.com](http://topuniversities.com): Universidade de Sao Paulo, Brazil; Pontificia Universidad Catolica de Chile; Universidade Estadual de Campinas, Brazil; Universidad de los Andes Colombia; Universidad de Chile and Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico. See, <http://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/latin-american-universities>. ■

## FINANCIAL AID UPDATES

**College Payoff?** The latest statistics in the ongoing debate over whether a college degree pays off, or not, come from the American Institutes for Research. Writing in the fall issue of *Science and Technology*, Mark Schneider, president of College Measures, argues that the value of a degree depends not only on what students study, but where they study it. But his results challenge conventional wisdom. For example, some short-term credentials are worth as much as some long-term programs.

And, it also seems that the field of study a student selects is often more important than the place of study. Study in technical fields is more financially rewarding than pure scientific training. In some states, graduates with a two-year degree earn more in the first year after graduation than those with four-year degrees. Graduates of some regional four-year colleges earn more than graduates of their state's flagship university.

The upshot is that students need to do

some hard research into their goals and eventual financial pay-offs before they accumulate unreasonable debt.

**Student Debt Still Climbing.** The average student debt for those who borrowed reached \$29,400 for the class of 2012, according to the Institute for College Access & Success. About 71 percent of students who graduated last year left school in debt.

Between 2008 and 2012, the average debt, for both federal and private loans, increased by an average of 6 percent each year.

But the debt level varies according to state. For example, the average debt of a student who graduated in Delaware was twice as much as one who graduated in New Mexico.

The problem has been aggravated by the employment situation. In 2012, nearly 8 percent of college graduates were unemployed. But 18 percent were either unemployed, working fewer hours than they wanted or had given up looking for a job. However, unemployment

for students without a college degree stood at almost 18 percent.

**Debt Disparities.** Students from middle-income families have a higher risk of debt than those from low- and high-income families, according to a study by Jason N. Houle at Dartmouth C., published in the December issue of *Sociology of Education*. The study found that students from college-educated and high-income families are relatively protected from debt. Also, parents' socioeconomic status is strongly predictive of entry into debt. Young adults from low-socioeconomic backgrounds have a higher risk of accruing debt burdens that exceed the national average.

**Calling Pacific Islanders.** The U. of Hawaii's Maui College has compiled a new listing of available financial aid including federal and university grants. And it has long offered tuition waivers and scholarships for Native Hawaiian students. But it also has a new Centennial Scholars Program of \$1,000 towards tuition for incoming students and merit scholarships for Pacific Islander students and another for international students. For info see, <http://maui.hawaii.edu/financial>.

## NEWS YOU CAN USE

**Sports Beat.** Duke U. is adding softball as a varsity sport and increasing the number of scholarships for women's fencing, rowing, swimming and diving, track & field. Duke now sponsors 13 men's and 14 women's sports.

"Duke University is fully committed to providing the most complete educational and athletic opportunities for women," said director of athletics Kevin White.

But Temple U. in Philadelphia is cutting the total number of its sports programs from 24 to 17, beginning this summer. Baseball, men's crew, men's gymnastics, men's outdoor track and field, men's indoor track and field, women's softball and women's rowing will be eliminated. The reductions will bring the university in line with most other schools in the American Athletic Conference.

**Summer Program Looking for Stem Students.** The U.S. Naval Academy has put out a call for students for its Summer Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Program. The aim is to encourage 8th to 11th graders to pursue STEM-related subjects through high school and college. The program highlights technological advances in science and engineering. Topics include energy and light, infrastructure, transportation, cyber security, environmental challenges, flight and fluids, automation, simulation and modeling and biometrics and robotics. But hurry, dead-

line for applications: Jan. 6, 2014. See, [www.usna.edu/admissions/stem](http://www.usna.edu/admissions/stem).

**Why College Women Still Earn Less.** The persistent gender pay gap favoring men among college graduates was puzzling to researchers Yingyi Ma and Gokhan Savas. Writing in the winter 2014 issue of *The Review of Higher Education*, they report that women reap less earnings advantage from selective institutions, but similar advantages from lucrative fields compared to men. Also, lucrative fields of study can offset the earnings disadvantage associated with less privileged social class and attending nonselective institutions for women. They used data from the National Education Longitudinal Studies.

**Web Courses Not Reaching the Poor.** According to a U. of Pennsylvania study of students in 200 countries, Massive Open Online Courses, known as MOOCs, are not being used by the poor people around the world who the sponsors hoped to reach. This study found that 83 percent of the online students had already earned a two- or four-year college degree. And many who take the courses are already wealthy. Also, more than half of those who take the courses are men and the majority are already employed. The authors of the study said that better access to technology, electricity and basic education are needed. ■

**Green Mountain C. Announces a New Initiative.** Green Mountain C. in Poultney, Vermont, announced A Make a Difference Scholarship that includes full tuition and room and board for four years. It will be awarded "to a student who has made a significant contribution to a fellow human, to society or toward conservation and sustainability." The nomination must come from a guidance counselor. See, [www.greenmtn.edu](http://www.greenmtn.edu).

Two years ago, Green Mountain C. launched the Vermont Tuition Match Scholarship whereby GMC matches the tuition of the U. of Vermont for qualified candidates. Now it is also offering a tuition match worth \$22,000 to a local high school student, a new dual enrollment program at an academy in Manchester and an online business program.

**The Sunflower Initiative.** A relatively new scholarship exists for women who want to attend an all-female college in either the U.S. or Canada. The Harriet Fitzgerald Scholarship will award \$10,000 to one woman who is "passionate about learning" and has "a sincere desire to make a contribution to society." **Deadline:** March 1. See, <http://www.thesunflowerinitiative.com>. ■

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