

# College Bound

ISSUES & TRENDS FOR THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS ADVISOR

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## Admissions Watch

### Trends Among the States

THIS MONTH, a number of states have put higher education front and center on their agendas as public colleges and universities launch new initiatives to boost enrollment. Here's a spot check.

**ASU Seeks More Native Americans.** In 2013, Arizona State U. launched an initiative to help Native American students make the transition from high school to campus life at a large university. Its workshops help Native American students no matter where they want to attend, but it hopes most will chose ASU.

"RECHARGE is an initiative designed to increase the number of native students attending ASU," Victor Begay told statepress.com. In 1996, there were only 700 Native American students attending ASU. In the fall of 2016, that number had increased to at least 2,300.

**Florida Admits Under 40 Percent.** The U. of Florida in Gainesville received 34,000 applications for the Class of 2021, and admitted 13,214 or just 38 percent of all applicants, down from nearly 43 percent last year. Innovation Academy, where students take classes in the spring and summer, admitted 979 students. The Pathway to Campus Enrollment program, where students take their first 60 credits online before taking on-campus classes, admitted 2,420 students.

According to alligator.org, the average high school GPA of students starting this fall is 4.4, while the average SAT score is 1349. The average ACT score is 30.

**Illinois Posts Records.** The U. of Illinois Urbana-Champaign attracted more than 38,700 applications and has already admitted more than 23,200 students for the 2017-18 academic year, about 1,000 more than last

year at this time, Andrew Borst, director of undergraduate admissions, told *The News-Gazette*. More than half of them were admitted in December under UI's Early Action option. Almost half of those who were deferred were admitted in February. About 900 remain on a wait list. Typically, one in 10 is admitted from the wait list.

This year's first-year class set a record with 7,593 students, and Borst expects next year's class to be about the same size. The average ACT score of admitted students is 29.9. UI sent financial aid packages in mid-February, a month earlier than usual. Borst said that that is partly for competitive reasons and partly because students filed their family financial information earlier this year under the new deadline for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

**SUNY Oswego Says "Stick with Us."** Applications to the State University of New York (SUNY) Oswego's Early Action program were up by 7 percent this year, according to Jerry Oberst, senior associate director of admissions. Oswego admitted 2,100 high school seniors by early February. The Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management is now in the midst of a "Stick with Us" campaign aimed at students who have not yet submitted their deposits. It also has opened a Facebook group for members of the Class of 2021 and transfer students so they can connect with future friends.

"What we found was the people who were applying Early Action appeared to be above our average academic profile," Oberst said. "In general, people who apply early tend to be a little more organized, little more sure of their choice of a four-year school."

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### Community College Students Are Being Priced Out

"A generation of strivers is being priced out of the most affordable rung of the higher education ladder," says a new report from the Institute for Research on Higher Education (IRHE) at the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education.

The report notes that:

- 28 states enroll at least a third of their students in community colleges..., with California enrolling 64 percent.

- The percent of family income required to cover the cost of attending community college has increased in recent years.

- In a majority of states, a student would have to work over 20 hours a week in order to cover the cost of enrolling as a full-time student.

- Many of the nation's states with the poorest populations perform poorly on community college affordability, contributing to those states' cycle of poverty.

- Of the 10 states projected to have the most high school graduates by 2028 (representing 54 percent of projected high school graduates in the nation), five rank in the bottom half of all states on community college affordability. The notion that a community college is an option in states with expensive four-year colleges is no longer true. Many states have both expensive community colleges and expensive public four-year colleges.

To view the entire report, go to: [www.gse.upenn.edu/pdf/irhe/affordability\\_diagnosis/community\\_college.pdf](http://www.gse.upenn.edu/pdf/irhe/affordability_diagnosis/community_college.pdf). ■

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## TRENDS AMONG STATES

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### West Virginia Notifies Students Early.

Nearly 6,100 students who have been admitted to West Virginia U. in Morgantown have already been alerted about the amount of financial aid they will receive. That's thanks to the earlier deadline (October 1) for filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

"We are one of the first, if not the first, schools in West Virginia to move this quickly with the new deadline for sending in the federal financial aid form," Sandra Oerly-Bennett, WVU's assistant vice president for student financial support and services, told the *Charleston Gazette-Mail*. "We believe this will serve our students and their parents very well, and help alleviate some of the concerns about paying for higher education."

The paper added that Glenville State C. and Concordia U., both in West Virginia, have also started sending out financial aid award letters.

## State Aid for Higher Education Up

Support for higher education in 49 states increased by 2.7 percent from fiscal year 2015-16 to fiscal year 2016-17. Illinois was not included in the findings because it has been involved in a two-year budget stalemate. Slumping energy prices have hurt higher education funding in Alaska, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Wyoming, according to *Grapevine*, a project of the Center for the Study of Education Policy at Illinois State University and the State Higher Education Executive Officers. ■

Marshall U. began sending out financial aid letters late in January.

"If students are receiving information about costs and financial aid as early as January, that gives them adequate time to consider their options," said Kathy Bialk, Marshall's direc-

tor of financial aid assistance. "It's important to make sure that along with it being a good academic fit, the school is a good financial fit."

### William & Mary Faces "Difficult Decisions."

The C. of William & Mary attracted approximately 14,900 applications for the Class of 2021, up 3.7 percent over last year. Just over 6,000 of those came from in-state Virginia. W&M received 1,023 Early Decision applications and admitted 528 of them in December. The remaining applicants will be notified by April 1. Next year's class size target is 1,520 students.

"While it's still early in the review process, from what I've seen, beyond simply having more applications, I'm impressed by the outstanding quality of applicants," said Tim Wolfe, associate provost for enrollment and dean of admission. "We have a lot of hard work and difficult decisions in front of us, but that's the challenge we readily accept." ■

## Admissions Among the Privates

**Harvard's E.A is "New Normal."** Early Action applications to Harvard C. rose 5 percent this year to 6,473. Nearly 15 percent or 938 students were admitted EA to the Class of 2021.

"Early admission appears to be the 'new normal' now, as more students are applying early to Harvard and peer institutions than ever before," said William R. Fitzsimmons, dean of admissions and financial aid. "At the same time, we have continued to stress to applicants, their families and their guidance counselors that there is no advantage in applying early to Harvard. The reason students are admitted, early or during the regular action process, is that their academic, extracurricular and personal strengths are extraordinary."

Slightly more women than men make up the class thus far (48 percent to 47.4 percent). More African-American students were admitted than last year, 12.6 percent versus 9.5 percent. Asian American students account for 21.7 percent of admitted students, compared to 24.1 percent last year. Latinos account for 8.8 percent of the admitted class. Harvard expects that the majority of new students will be awarded need-based aid.

**Lewis Helps St. Joseph Students.** Lewis U. in Illinois is lending a hand to students from fellow Catholic St. Joseph's C. in Indiana that recently announced it is suspending operations at the end of the 2016-17 academic year until it pays down debt.

"The Lewis community is committed to providing as much support as possible so that every St. Joseph College student can complete his or her college degree on time, with as little disruption as possible," the *Herald-News* reported.

Lewis U. said that in addition to its current transfer-friendly policies, it is prepared to maximize the transferability of credits as well as award scholarships and financial aid for every qualified St. Joseph C. student.

### International Students Down at Miami U. While Applications Overall Break 30,000.

As of February 15, Miami U. in southern Ohio had attracted more than 30,068 applications for the Class of 2021, breaking the 30,000 mark for the first time in Miami's history. The applicant pool is also Miami's strongest academically, with an average ACT score of 27.7 and an average high school GPA of 3.73. Applications from domestic students of color jumped 5.5 percent. But international student applications declined by 6.8 percent.

Susan Schaurer, assistant vice president for enrollment management and director of admission, told *The Miami Student* that the strength and diversity of this year's pool is the result of five years of strategic recruiting. "We have used the ACT, SAT and PSAT to reach out to more students as part of our robust communication plan.... We also have enhanced our visits across the nation and the globe." Last year, the Office of Admissions completed 1,676 high school domestic and international visits, compared to 976 visits in 2012.

As for the decline in international applications, Schaurer told the paper, "I've spoken with admissions colleagues across the country and many of them have described outcomes with their international application recruitment for the coming year varying anywhere from up 6 percent to down 25 percent. I think, more than anything, those numbers are indicative of the turbulent landscape nationally and internationally."

Meanwhile, Miami debuted its new \$25 million athletic facility, the most modern football complex in the Mid-American Conference.

**Princeton's Early Action.** Princeton U. accepted 770 students Early Action to its Class of 2021, posting a 15.4 percent acceptance rate, according to the *Daily Princetonian*.

**Thomas Aquinas Expands.** Thomas Aquinas C. of Santa Paula, California, announced it will open a new campus in Northfield, Massachusetts, in fall 2018. Thomas Aquinas features a core curriculum and liberal arts studies with a strong Catholic identity, as well as vocational programs. Thomas Aquinas ranked second only to Princeton for alumni satisfaction, according to *U.S. News & World Report's* 2017 rankings.

**Union Meets Full Need.** Union C. in New York, founded in 1795 as the first planned campus in the country, received 6,652 applications. That is slightly more than last year when the school saw applications increased by 11 percent. International students from 106 nations made up 24 percent of the application pool.

Early Decision applications for the Class of 2021 came from 413 students, 47 more than a year ago. Women made up 47 percent of the ED pool. Union expects to enroll a first-year class of 575 students. The liberal arts college "remains committed to meeting the full financial need of all admitted students." The average need-based scholarship at Union is \$32,500. The average merit scholarships range from \$10,000-\$20,000.

"We know the types of students we look for have many choices for college, and we continue to be humbled and excited that they see Union is a good fit for themselves," said Matt Malatesta, vice president for admissions. ■

# Financial Matters

**California Debt-Free College Expensive.** As California legislators explore the possibility of a “Debt Free College” program, a report from the nonpartisan Legislative Analyst’s Office found such a program could cost the state \$3.3 billion a year. The program under consideration is a pathway to debt-free graduates, not a “full ride.”

Currently, one third of full-time freshmen in California take out student loans. The new program proposal calls for “shared responsibility.” The state would contribute what is needed to graduate debt-free after parent contributions, student contributions and federal aid are deducted.

“The state then provides ‘last dollar’ grants to ensure that students leave college without debt. If the program added eligibility requirements, such as a certain grade-point average or 12 unit minimum, it would significantly reduce those costs,” the report said.

For 2015-2016, average tuition at U. of California universities was \$13,451 for resident students taking 30 units. At California State U. schools, students paid \$6,815 in tuition, while community college students paid on average \$1,380.

**California’s Undocumented Student Options.** Meanwhile, undocumented immigrants in California often use private loans and credit cards to finance their education. Recently, one undocumented U. of California Riverside student sued Wells Fargo for denying her a private student loan. But these students also have other options including in-state tuition, Cal Grants, UC grants, State University Grants, community college fee waivers and scholarships administered by public colleges. To qualify, an authorized immigrant student must have spent at least three years at a California high school, although there are exceptions, according to *The San Francisco Chronicle*.

**Georgia Tech’s Promise.** The Georgia Tech Promise Program is designed to help Georgia students, whose families earned \$33,000 or less a year, to graduate without debt. Since it began in 2007, more than 800 students, 153 of them this school year, many of them minority or first-generation students, have benefited from the program. It is a “huge guarantee to a student and their parents,” program originator G. Wayne Clough, former Georgia Tech president, told *The Atlantic Journal-Constitution*.

Meanwhile, the U. of Georgia launched a \$1.2 billion fund raising campaign for both merit and need-based programs. And Georgia State U. offers students micro-grants of as little as \$300 to help them make it through a school year.

But what is really needed are comprehensive statewide student financial support programs, Claire Suggs, senior policy analyst with

the Georgia Budget and Policy Institute, told the paper.

**Houston Baptist’s Project Day One.** Houston Baptist U., a “Hispanic-serving institution” with about 41 percent of incoming freshmen identifying as Hispanic, and about 80 percent of students from the Houston metropolitan area, sponsors a Project Day One initiative in hopes of increasing retention. One goal is to make sure that new students completely understand their academic and financial responsibilities before the first day of classes.

“We knew there were several barriers to entry and frankly issues that were keeping students from being successful,” James Steen, vice president of enrollment management, told *Inside Higher Ed*. “We’re a really diverse campus, but we serve a low socioeconomic group and obviously a private education is expensive. So what we found is financial settlement is a big problem. We had a lot of students carrying balances from term to term, and we had to do something.”

Steen added, “The whole point of Project Day One is to get everything buttoned up and completed by the first day of class, and it isn’t intended just for new incoming students, but also current students.”

**New York Explores Free Tuition.** New York Governor Andrew Cuomo recently proposed a free-tuition plan for public universities for students from families with an average annual income lower than \$125,000. The Excelsior Scholarship would cover tuition to all New York State and city universities for more than 950,000 students per year. The state would pay the costs for students after they have exhausted all other existing financial aid plans, such as New York’s Tuition Assistance Program or Federal Pell Grants.

But the plan has raised concerns at the state’s nearly 200 private colleges that enroll about 40 percent of the state’s college students. They feel that private colleges will be left at a disadvantage. At Ithaca College, for example, where the average tuition is \$41,776, nearly half of students come from in-state. And the median family income is approximately \$123,000, which means a majority of them would qualify for the Excelsior Scholarship. Many of those students might explore other options according to [thelthacan.com](http://thelthacan.com).

Martin Van der Werf, associate director of editorial and postsecondary policy at Georgetown U., told the paper that the idea of free tuition has the potential to draw away a significant portion of applications from private colleges, especially smaller ones that rely on tuition. He estimates that the enrollment in public universities could increase somewhere between nine and 22 percent. ■

## COUNSELOR’S BOOKSHELF

*Colleges That Pay You Back: The 200 Schools That Give You the Best Bang for Your Tuition Buck (2017 Edition)*; Penguin Random House/Princeton Review Books; ISBN-13: 978-1101882467; \$21.99.

*INSIDE Honors: Ratings and Reviews of 60 Public University Honors Programs (2016 edition)* by John Willingham; ISBN-13: 978-0692783818; \$16.95. The top 11 honors programs according to the book are found at: Arizona State U., Clemson U., City U. of New York (CCNY), U. of Georgia,

U. of Houston, U. of Kansas, New Jersey Institute of Technology, U. of Oregon, Penn State U., U. of South Carolina, U. of Texas, Austin. See, <http://publicuniversityhonors.com>.

**Catholic College Guides.** Here are three sites maintained by the Cardinal Newman Society for those seeking a Catholic-based higher education: *Recommended Colleges*, <https://cardinalnewmansociety.org/program/the-newman-guide/>; *Recruit Me*, <https://cardinalnewmansociety.org/program/recruit-me/>; *My Future*, [\[society.org/program/my-future-myfaith/\]\(http://society.org/program/my-future-myfaith/\).](https://cardinalnewman-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

**Go Fund Me.** Over the past three years, more than 130,000 students across the nation have raised more than \$60 million for their college education through GoFundMe.com campaigns. “With the average college graduate in 2016 facing \$37,172 in student loan debt, the need for help with education costs in this country is clear,” said a new GoFundMe guidebook. “That’s why more and more students are realizing that, with just a few clicks, they are able to start a GoFundMe to help reduce the burden.” Find the guide book at [www.gofundme.com](http://www.gofundme.com). ■

## SCHOLARSHIP SCOOPS

**National Financial Literacy Month.** April is National Financial Literacy Month, so Ramsey Solution is sponsoring a “Financial Literacy Challenge.” High school seniors who score 100 percent on the online quiz are eligible to win prizes, including one of two \$10,000 college scholarships, a \$5,000 scholarship, a \$2,000 scholarship or one of three \$500 Amazon gift cards for underclassmen. Find the challenge at [daveramsey.com/challenge](http://daveramsey.com/challenge).

**Lowe’s Donates to HBCUs.** Lowe’s, the home improvement company, donated \$500,000 to the United Negro College Fund’s 37 Historically Black Colleges and Universities to award emergency student aid to financially needy graduating seniors. Since 2009, Lowe’s has partnered with UNCF’s emergency student aid program to provide \$4.2 million in just-in-time aid to more than 1,700 students who have been able to graduate on time.

**Knox’s Internship Grants.** Knox C. in Illinois

requires students to take part in experiential learning. To promote that goal, Knox is providing grants of \$2,000 per student to support their internships, creative projects, research or study abroad activities. The “Power of Experience” grant is intended to broaden the kinds of projects and internships students can pursue. Because many internships are unpaid, this allows students to worry less about whether they can participate. “We wanted to make [these experiences] more evenly available, and available for everyone, and a part of every student’s experience,” Paul Steenis, dean of admissions, told *The Knox Student*.

In recent years, the Office of Admissions has stressed the benefits of experiential learning to prospective students and their parents as an opportunity to take what students do in the classroom and apply it to real world situations. “This is just one more way for us to make sure that families understand when they come to Knox that it’s an important part of who we are, and what your experience will be.” ■

## NEWS YOU CAN USE

**Social Media’s Positive Admissions Impact.** “There’s such a negative stereotype of social media that people often forget about the positive effects of it,” one admissions officer told Kaplan Test Prep’s latest survey of more than 350 colleges on the impact of social media on an applicant’s admissions chances. “One student had won an award and had a picture with their principal on their personal page, and it was nice to see,” said one responder. Another admissions officer said, “One young lady started a company with her mom, so it’s cool to visit their website.”

Kaplan found that the percentage of admissions officers who check applicants’ social media has actually dipped to 35 percent this year versus 40 percent last year. Of the 35 percent of admissions officers who say they check social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to learn more about applicants, 47 percent say that what they found has had a positive impact on prospective students, up from 37 percent last year.

However, 42 percent said what they found had a negative impact, up from 37 percent last year. Kaplan’s survey also found that of those who use social media to help them make decisions, 25 percent do so “often,” up from 11 percent last year.

**Rider’s Computer Science Major.** Rider U. in New Jersey will offer a Bachelor of

Science degree in computer science in fall 2017. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers, there are currently more computing jobs available than there are qualified graduates. The median starting salary of a 2015 computer science graduate was \$57,273. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects computing and information technology jobs will grow by 22 percent to 2022.

**Transfer Students.** The top two factors in admissions decisions for transfer students are a student’s GPA at a prior postsecondary institution, and average grades in transferable courses, the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) revealed in a new report.

The average admit rate of transfer applicants is 61 percent. For first-time freshmen, it’s 65 percent. High school grades and standardized test scores are less important in transfer admission than in first-time freshman admission. Public colleges admit one transfer student for every six first-time freshmen. The rate is 1 to 18 at private colleges. Nine out of 10 colleges regard transfer students as “considerably or moderately important to overall enrollment goals.”

About 53 percent of institutions reserve dedicated grant aid for transfer students. Also, 90 percent of public colleges and 70 percent of private colleges participate in articulation agreements with community colleges. And

## International News

**Oxford Accepts Fewer State School Students.** Oxford U. in England is accepting fewer state educated undergraduates at a time when other universities across the country are admitting more. Leading critics say “unconscious bias” of admission tutors continues to hinder progress.

In 2015-16, 55.7 percent of Oxford’s admitted undergraduates came from state schools and colleges, compared to 57.7 percent five years ago. At Cambridge U., however, the proportion of state sector entrants has risen from 54 percent to 62 percent in the last decade, *The Telegraph* reported.

**Northern Ireland Universities.** Applications by local Northern Ireland students to Northern Ireland universities have fallen by 5 percent, according to the Universities and College Admissions Service. However, the percentage of 18-year-old university applicants from Northern Ireland remains the highest in the United Kingdom.

Almost half of 18-year-olds, 47.5 percent, from Northern Ireland start a university course. In England that number is 37 percent, in Scotland 33 percent and in Wales 32 percent. In Northern Ireland, 55 percent of all 18-year-old women applied to a university last year, compared to 40 percent of men.

Across all of the U.K., applications declined by 5 percent last year. Across the European Union, the decline was even higher, at 7 percent, reports [belfasttelegraph.co.uk](http://belfasttelegraph.co.uk). ■

52 percent of newly-enrolled transfer students came from community colleges.

**Common Application Essays.** The Common Application, used at nearly 700 colleges and universities in the U.S., announced its essay prompts for the 2017-2018 college admissions season. Students can choose from seven prompts to write essays of up to 650 words, designed to show student thinking and analytic capacities. Five of the essays are old or revised.

Here are the two new essay prompts: “Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?” And, “Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you’ve already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.”

For the list, see, [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org). ■

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