

# College Bound

ISSUES & TRENDS FOR THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS ADVISOR

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*WELCOME TO CB'S 24TH YEAR of reporting on admissions and financial aid trends in colleges and universities across the U.S., indeed the world. Ever since CB began publishing, every admissions season has proven to be unique, with surprising details and unexpected developments. From fluctuating demographic shifts to early admissions programs, from increased minority participation to growing student debt, from new academic programs to merit scholarships, CB has brought you the inside story. We look forward to reporting on yet another unpredictable admissions season. Thanks for your support.*

## Admissions Watch

# Roundup of Summer Numbers

OF COURSE, it is too early to carve this fall's trends in stone. (CB is preparing its annual survey of colleges as we speak.) But we've received early indications of how the admissions cycle is panning out this fall. State universities, in many parts of the country, are reporting larger incoming freshmen classes and larger transfer classes. Many of the large private universities are holding their own. But smaller private liberal arts colleges are reporting decreased applications and enrollment, thanking the economy for their situation.

In fact, by June, the National Association for College Admissions Counseling was reporting that 60 percent of counselors had noted a greater willingness of students to apply to public schools. Seventy-one percent of counselors said that students did not enroll in their "dream schools" for financial reasons. Philip Vangeli, a guidance coordinator in Howard County, Maryland, told NACAC, "I think a lot of students did apply to their dream schools, but then they looked at the total picture and decided that in-state was the best fit."

Here is a round-up of early returns from various states throughout the country.

### REPORTS FROM THE STATES

**Connecticut Sees Changes in Enrollment.** According to *The Hartford Courant* on August 25, Connecticut institutions are adjusting their admission policies to address the changing landscape. At U. of Connecticut and other schools in the state college system, applica-

tions have increased considerably. Lee Melvin, interim vice president for enrollment planning, management and institutional research at UConn, said that applicants to the Storrs campus rose 4.5 percent this year to 21,998. UConn accepted fewer students, though, to ensure a reasonably sized freshman class. The school admitted 494 fewer in-state students and 49 fewer non-residents than last year. The incoming first-year class stands at 3,239 students, with the expectation that the numbers will rise to 3,250 to include international students. The Connecticut State University System saw an 11 percent increase overall. For example, Central Connecticut State U. enrollment is expected to rise between 3 and 5 percent.

**Exceptional Fall Class in Florida.** The incoming U. of Central Florida class is expected to consist of 3,800 freshmen. Their average GPA was 3.8 and average SAT score was 1221, which were both records for the school. The class is likely to have 55 National Merit Scholars, which would rank UCF in the top 50 universities for its number of National Merit Scholars nationwide.

The total enrollment should be approximately 52,000, a rise from 50,254 last year. Considering the \$77.2 million budget cuts that the school has experienced since July 2007, the increased tuition dollars will aid UCF significantly, officials say.

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## What's New with U.S. News?

A STUDY RELEASED in the August issue of *Research in Higher Education*, "Getting on the Front Page: Organizational Reputation Status Signals and the Impact of *U.S. News and World Report* on Student Decisions," asks whether the publication's rankings actually affect college admissions. The three major findings were:

- Admissions are significantly aided by being in the "Top 50" rankings for public universities and small liberal arts schools alike.

- When schools are in the "Top 25," they benefit from further increases in their ranking, but the effect is not noticeable for liberal arts colleges or schools in the bottom of the "Top 50."

- The report further said that potential "consumers of liberal arts colleges" saw "institutional quality" in terms of "expenditures on student instruction."

**The New U.S. News Rankings.** With the above said, the U.S. News Media Group released its "2010 America's Best Colleges" at the end of August, looking at 1,400 schools across the country. Harvard U. and Princeton U. are both ranked first on the Best National Universities list. Williams C. is listed as the number one Best Liberal Arts College. But beyond that...

"As it becomes increasingly difficult to choose the right school—and pay for it—*U.S. News* strives to provide students and families with the best information to help guide them through the entire college process," said Brian Kelly, *U.S. News & World Report* Editor. "This

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## INSIDE

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- What the ACT Results Mean
- New Financial Aid

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## ROUNDUP

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First-year enrollment has remained consistent over the last several years. But UCF predicts a record 4,700 transfers to enroll, with about 4,200 coming from community colleges. Incoming community college transfers register through "DirectConnect to UCF." Graduates of four neighboring community colleges are assured admission to UCF.

**Enrollment Increases at Georgia Schools.** Enrollment rates are on the rise for mid-state colleges in Georgia, according to an August 17 article on macon.com. Georgia C. and State U. enrolled 6,665 students, a 15 percent increase from last year.

College officials credit the economic recession for these higher numbers. "Young people these days are starting to figure out that, in this economy, they're going to need a college degree if they want to keep up. And our dorms are filled to capacity," said Judy Bailey, spokesperson for Georgia C. and State U.

At Fort Valley State U., 3,800 to 4,200 students enrolled, an increase from last year's high enrollment of 3,106 students. Gordon C. in Barnesville expects enrollment to go up from 3,800 to 4,000 students.

**Maine's Ups and Downs.** According to the August 3 *Kennebec Journal*, "inexpensive" colleges with "flexible programming" are increasingly appealing to students during the economic recession. Kennebec Valley Community C. has experienced a 17 percent applicant bump from last year, and registered students are up 12 percent. "It is a huge increase, and more people are coming every day," said Kennebec Valley President Barbara Woodlee. Helen Pelletier of the Maine Community College system expects enrollment at Maine's seven community colleges to increase 8 percent.

Both schools also have upped their number of online offerings as well. At UMA, online students have increased to 817 from 375 over the past two years. U. of Maine at Augusta has seen an 8.5 percent boost overall.

**Maryland Colleges Hold Steady.** A recent report from *The Baltimore Sun* noted that nationally, college admissions officers have noticed that students are flocking to less expensive schools in the wake of the recession. However, Maryland's colleges have seen only minor changes. Students are still enrolled at both public and private colleges in high numbers, but financial aid is reportedly still a big concern for Maryland residents. U. of Maryland, Baltimore County, had a 2 percent increase in applicants. Also, *The Washington Post* reported in August that the U. of Maryland created a 450-student wait list to keep up with its competitors.

But, *The Baltimore Sun* further noted on

August 16 that Maryland community colleges are experiencing increased enrollment with students reporting that they see these schools as a good alternative to four-year institutions for education and career advancement. The Community College of Baltimore County anticipates a 20 percent bump in enrollment this fall. Colleges throughout counties in Maryland generally expect enrollment increases between 10 and 12 percent.

**New Jersey Students Transferring Home.** New Jersey college students who went out-of-state for college have come back home to save money, according to *The Star-Ledger* on August 10.

At Monmouth U., transfer applicants from four-year institutions have increased 40 percent. Robert McCaig, vice president for enrollment, explained that transfers have an 85 percent graduation rate compared to 60 percent of incoming freshman. Elected officials, colleges and universities have increased financial aid to help recruit and retain New Jersey transfers.

New Jersey's 19 community colleges, with 400,000 students, have sent more transfers than ever to four-year schools. Last year, 61 percent of community college grads went on to get their diplomas, eight percent more than in 2006, according to the Council of County Colleges. These percentages put New Jersey among the best in the country.

According to the report, transfers in New Jersey have become a central part of recruitment because students have demonstrated their academic excellence at other schools.

**U. of California Campuses Reduce Enrollment.** Of the nine UC schools, UC Santa Cruz experienced the greatest decrease in the number of incoming students who accepted their admissions offer, with the school seeing a 2.3 percent drop-off since last year. *The Mercury News* reported in June that the campus planned for such a decline. Jim Burns, a representative of UCSC, explained that the UC regents asked the school to reduce enrollment after a high number of accepted offers this year. "Given the budget uncertainties this year, it was absolutely critical that we enroll fewer students," added the associate vice chancellor for enrollment management, Michelle Whittingham.

UC San Diego, Irvine and Davis also experienced at least a 1 percent decrease in enrollment by accepted students. Officials state the drop-off is most likely caused by the 10 percent higher student fees at UC campuses and the budget cuts to Cal Grants and similar aid programs.

**Renewed Wait Lists in Virginia Aim to Secure Fall Enrollment.** Virginia Tech adopted wait lists for the first time since 2006, according to *The Washington Post* on August 13.

The college reported it is particularly concerned that deposited students may choose not to start classes in the fall for economic reasons.

Mark Owczarski, a spokesperson for Virginia Tech, said, "It's critical we hit the target of how many kids are coming to Tech in fall...we'll need that tuition money." Schools always accept more students than will enroll, but this year, colleges admitted especially large classes to ensure their target numbers.

Virginia Tech accepted 309 students off its wait list to guarantee an enrollment of 5,025 students. As *CB* went to press, the school has 5,092 "committed" students, a decrease from 5,490 last year, because 175 students were lost in the "summer melt."

Meanwhile, Northern Virginia Community C. started a program of "guaranteed admission" with 39 colleges, including the U. of Virginia, according to *The Connection*. The agreement allows those with a degree from the community college to transfer to another university if they meet certain expectations. For example, students who earn at least a 3.4 GPA are guaranteed a place at UVA. Students must also earn a "C" or better in all their community college courses, a "B" or better in two required English classes and enroll in certain required classes, including a "non-Western perspective" course.

**West Virginia Expects Enrollment Increase.** Because students are more concerned than ever with cost, West Virginia schools believe that their enrollment numbers will climb, according to an August 9 article in the *Herald-Dispatch*. "Applications to our institutions statewide are up slightly, with the emphasis on 'slightly,'" said Brian Noland, Higher Education Policy Commission Chancellor. Noland explained that institutions in West Virginia are cheaper than other states' schools. "We are seeing more students applying to our institutions, because we're a low cost set of institutions. Around the country, you're seeing more students declining private schools in favor of public institutions or low-cost privates."

Also, at Marshall U., applicants, admissions and enrollment in summer orientation have all increased. The school projects a 5 percent bump over last year's enrollment.

**Economic Insecurity Aided Increased Applications to U.S. Military Academies.** The combination of the recession, job security worries and heavier recruitment efforts by the military have all led to the increase in students who are applying to military academies. According to the Associated Press, the U.S. Naval Academy experienced a 40 percent boost in applicants (about 15,300 applications for 1,230 spots). The U.S. Military Academy and the U.S. Air Force Academy have had 9 percent and 10 percent application increases respectively. ■

# Tours, Tests and Technology

What are counselors likely to hear about this fall as they prepare students for the college admissions process? Over the summer, the following trends evolved and are likely to play an important role this year.

**Colleges Address Facebook.** Tulane U., St. Norbert C. and Pace Law School have collaborated with Varsity Outreach to create admissions Facebook Applications, according to *PR Web* in July. Since Facebook has become one of the most popular internet sites for students, these three schools saw the need to create more than just the standard school Group or Fan Page. The Application enables prospective and incoming students to meet each other, chat with enrolled students and interact with the admissions office. Prospective students can search for others who live nearby or share their academic interests and use Facebook without giving the school access to their personal profile page. The admissions office can, in turn, provide prospective students specialized information. "Facebook is a great way to reach out to our prospective students on their terms," said Jeff Schiffman, associate director of admission, Tulane U. "Our new application will serve as an easy, one-stop-shop for everything for Tulane admission."

**Tour by Colleges That Change Lives.** In August, the Colleges That Change Lives announced it launched a 21-city tour to undermine the idea that "a college can't be any good if I've never heard of it." The tour will end on September 17 in Columbus, Ohio.

Marty O'Connell, executive director, CTCL, said, "The past few years of record high numbers of applicants, coupled with narrowly focused media stories about college admissions, have led students to believe that their college choices are severely limited or unaffordable. CTCL aims to correct this misperception by presenting accurate information about college accessibility and value, as well as strategies that work to lower the anxiety of parents and students." For more info see [www.ctcl.org/events/programs](http://www.ctcl.org/events/programs).

**Campus Visits Increasing.** Despite the economic recession, the costs of travel and an increasing number of online virtual tours, colleges are reporting high numbers of campus visits, according to *The Boston Globe*, August 3. Parents and students reported that, despite economic concerns, they need to see a campus in person to decide if the school is a good fit.

Almost 55,000 people come to Boston C. yearly. Jack Dunn, a spokesperson for the college, said that visiting rates have remained consistent this year. Northeastern U. saw fewer visitors last year, but numbers rose back to 35,000 to 40,000 this year. Amherst C.'s visitors increased by 1,000 students. "We were all bracing for a dip,"

said Heather Woodcock Ayres, admission director, Wellesley C. "This spring we were pleasantly surprised."

**Updates on Colleges Rethinking Test Scores.** The ACT and SAT may be losing some of their influence in the college admissions process, according to the *Worcester Business Journal*, August 17. Over 800 colleges and universities across the country have questioned the importance of standardized tests. Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Holy Cross C. and Assumption C. in Worcester no longer require students to submit their SAT scores with their applications.

"I think we really came at it from two different angles," explained Edward Connor, director of admissions, WPI. "The SAT was not proving to be the greatest indicator for the ability to succeed [in college] and the curriculum here is project-based, with lots of teamwork and hands-on work. The SATs are not a good indicator for a student's ability to succeed in that sort of environment." He added, "The exciting thing about this is you get an opportunity to know the students a bit better. We are seeing great supplemental material from many of our applicants, which is kind of an unintended positive of this."

According to an August 18 *Examiner* article, American U. has initiated a test optional pilot program for Early Decision applicants. The school is looking to emphasize academic excellence, essays, letters of recommendation and extracurricular activities among these students. Regular decision students are still required to submit their test scores.

**New Requirements Announced.** Purdue U. will require incoming students in 2011 to have completed four years of high school math. "Studies show that completing one additional unit of intensive high school math increased the odds of completing a bachelor's degree by 73 percent," said Ken Sauer, interim Indiana Commissioner for Higher Education.

And all New Jersey high school students will be required to pass college-prep courses to graduate. Nearly 80 percent of students entering New Jersey two-year colleges and 40 percent entering the state's four-year schools require remedial work, despite passing a High School Proficiency test. So the New Jersey Board of Education voted to toughen standards. Now all NJ students will be required to take college-prep English, science and math courses, with end-of-course exams. The fear is that these higher standards may also result in higher drop out rates. To ease those anxieties, the new standards will be phased in course-by-course over seven years.

Meanwhile, the governors of 33 states have signed onto the Diploma Project, promoted by Achieve, to make high school diplomas more meaningful by increasing standards and expectations. ■

## COUNSELOR'S BOOKSHELF

### Books on Surviving College

*College Student Survival Manual* by Darius Baumgartner, DWBStudios; includes monthly calendar and chapters on surviving stress, networking and emergency talk; ISBN 978-1-4392-4415-9; \$14.99. Available through [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

*U Chic: The College Girl's Guide to Everything* by Christie Garton. Sourcebooks, Inc. ISBN 978-1-4022-1508-7, \$14.99. And, back by popular

demand, *The Naked Roommate: And 107 Other Issues You Might Run Into in College* by Harlan Cohen. Sourcebooks, Inc. ISBN 978-1-4022-0909-3, \$14.95. See [www.sourcebookscollege.com](http://www.sourcebookscollege.com).

### Books on Preparing for College

*The Anxious Test-Taker's Guide to Cracking Any Test* by the Staff of The Princeton Review; The Princeton Review; ISBN 978-0-375-42935-4; \$14.99. And, *The Best 371 Colleges*, 2010 Edition,

by Robert Franek et al, The Princeton Review; ISBN 978-0-375-42938-5; \$22.99. See [www.princetonreview.com](http://www.princetonreview.com).

*Tom Joyner Presents How to Prepare for College* by Thomas LaVeist and William LaVeist, with a foreword by Tom Joyner, 2009, Amber Books, \$15/\$16.95 Canada, 129 pages.

*The Road to Career Success and Happiness* by Yehia El-Ibiary; ISBN 978-1-4343-9639-6; \$15.95. And, *It's Your Decision: A Commonsense Guide to Making Better Choices* by Al Foderaro and Denise Schmidt; ISBN 978-1-4389-0534-1; \$12.50. Both from Author House. See [www.authorhouse.com](http://www.authorhouse.com). ■

## FINANCIAL AID FLASH

### GI Transferability Bill Benefits Families.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill began its family transfer option on August 1, which allows service members to shift their benefits to their families. With the new bill, service members are granted three years of educational benefits, and the unused benefits can be given to a spouse or up to two children. Children must be at least 18 to qualify and forfeit their benefits at 21-years-old if they are not full-time students.

Thus far, more than 25,000 have applied, and over 15,000 have been approved. "We've seen, roughly, a thousand applications a day for the past week or so, and we expect that to continue," said Bob Clark, the assistant director for accessions policy at the Pentagon. "Transferability of these educational benefits has been one of the most requested provisions by family support groups, family advocacy groups and the troops out in the field and fleet..." For more information, see [www.defenselink.mil](http://www.defenselink.mil).

**Siemens Foundation is offering its 2009**

**Competition in Math, Science and Technology.** The yearly competition grants college scholarships to high school students for their original projects, with prizes varying from \$1,000 to \$100,000.

Entries for the competition are due on October 1. For more information, see [www.siemens-foundation.org](http://www.siemens-foundation.org) and [www.collegeboard.com/siemens](http://www.collegeboard.com/siemens).

**National Competition Provides \$670,000 in Scholarships.** The U.S. News Media Group and AXA Equitable Life Insurance Company announced that their AXA Achievement Scholarships will grant \$670,000 to students in every state, Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico. In all, 52 students will receive scholarships of \$10,000. Of these students, 10 are awarded a national scholarship of a supplementary \$15,000, as well as the chance at an internship with AXA Equitable.

For applications and deadline information, go to [www.axa-achievement.com](http://www.axa-achievement.com). ■

## U.S. NEWS

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year, the recession has seriously challenged the traditional model of paying for college, and so we've developed ranking and editorial content to address the many ways to finance an education as well as information on how to get the most out of such a big investment."

Thus, the list also includes a ranking of the Best Colleges for Financial Aid, Best Historically Black Colleges, A+ Schools for B Students and Up-and-Coming Schools. New this year is the Best Colleges for Undergraduate Teaching, which ranks schools by the strength of their undergraduate professors. To see the full list, go to [www.usnews.com/colleges](http://www.usnews.com/colleges) or buy the September *U.S. News & World Report* magazine.

**New Interactive Guide.** In addition, U.S. News Media Group and HP released information about the "U.S. News 100 Best Colleges and Universities interactive guide." Parents and students can look at schools by size, tuition, acceptance rates and student-to-faculty ratios. Families can use a touch screen to look at "fast facts," photos and videos about these schools. To check out the interactive guide, see [www.hp.com/usnews](http://www.hp.com/usnews). ■

eventually succeed. About 95 percent believe that they will graduate from high school, but only 75 percent actually do.

- Half of students are "engaged," meaning they are excited about school. While the other half of students are "not engaged" (30 percent) or "actively disengaged" (20 percent). The poll also found that engagement is at its height during grade school, dropping during middle school and leveling off in high school.

- About 63 percent of students are "thriving," and the rest are "struggling" (36 percent) or "suffering" (1 percent). A total of one-fourth of students can be considered hopeful, engaged, and thriving.

For more information or the full report, see [www.gallupstudentpoll.com](http://www.gallupstudentpoll.com).

**Finally, Beloit C.'s Latest "Mindset" List.** Beloit C. has released its renowned "Mindset List for the Class of 2013." Since 1998, the school has developed a list that tracks the "cultural touchstones that shape the lives of students entering college." For incoming freshmen this year, the college reported the following: "They have never used a card catalog to find a book. Salsa has always out-sold ketchup. The KGB has never officially existed. And American students have always lived anxiously with high-stakes educational testing." For the full list see [www.beloit.edu/mindset](http://www.beloit.edu/mindset). ■

**HAVE A GREAT NEW SCHOOL YEAR!**

## NEWS YOU CAN USE

**2009 ACT College Readiness Report.** The "2009 ACT College Readiness Report," released at the end of August, showed that the number of high school graduates who meet the ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks went up somewhat in 2009. The percentage of grads prepared to receive a "C" or better in first-year college English, math, reading and science classes went up from 22 percent last year to 23 percent this year. These numbers are higher than in 2005 and 2006, and consistent with 2007. The increase in percentages is a plus, but there is still plenty of need for schools to better prepare their graduates for college, said ACT. Over three-quarters of high school grads do not have the academic training to earn at least a "C" in college courses!

Science and math are where college preparedness is at its lowest. About 28 percent of the grads are prepared for college biology, the same as in 2008 and an increase of 2 percent from 2005. Only 42 percent of students are ready for algebra in college, a decrease of 1 percent from 2008 and an increase of 1 percent from 2005.

Graduates are somewhat more ready for college-level English and social science courses. Sixty-seven percent of grads are prepared for English (a decrease of 1 percent from 2008 and 2005), and 53 percent are prepared for the social sciences (the same as in 2008, up 1 percent from 2005).

The countrywide average ACT score was 21.1, the same as in 2008 and 0.2 points higher than in 2005. The average scores by subject were: English was 20.6, the same as in 2008; math was 21.0, the same as in 2008; reading was 21.4, the same as in 2008; science was 20.9, a 0.1 increase since last year. All scores were up from 2005, except for science, which is unchanged.

Almost 1.5 million 2009 graduates took the ACT, an increase from 1.42 million last year. The number of test taking graduates has gone up 25 percent since 2005, although the number of U.S. high school grads has decreased since last year, according to the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education. Also important to increased participation is the ACT's fee waiver program for low-income students. Last year, 100,000 waivers were granted, but this year the number skyrocketed to over 400,000.

For the full report, go to [www.act.org](http://www.act.org).

**Gallup Launches First Poll to Look at Student Responses.** The Gallup Student Poll last May looked at whether 70,078 students between the 5th and 12th grades in 335 schools across the country are "hopeful," "engaged" and "thriving." The poll found:

- Half of students are "hopeful," they actively think about and plan for the future. The rest of students are pessimistic, feeling that they are unable to solve problems or

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