

College Bound

ISSUES & TRENDS FOR THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS ADVISOR

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Who Will Be In the Class of 2020?

AS *CB* went to press this month, colleges and universities were sending out acceptance (and rejection) letters to thousands of students. Here are the early returns for this Spring. *CB* will have more admit news next month.

CLASS OF 2020 ADMITS

Barnard's Nine Ways of Knowing. Barnard C. in New York fielded 7,071 applications for the Class of 2020, and admitted 16 percent, the lowest rate in school history, down from last year's 19.5 percent. The new female students will be the first to explore Barnard's new general education requirements, "Nine Ways of Knowing."

Connecticut Still Considering Applicants.

The U. of Connecticut though was still considering applicants "on a space available basis... until the Storrs Fall 2016 class of 3,800 students is full," Nathan Fuerst, director of admissions, told *daily campus.com*. "Most universities accept late applications," he noted.

At the same time, Fuerst added, "Counseling students and families who do not receive an affirmative decision is a standard part of the role that our staff plays. At this time of year, we have numerous support staff and professional staff directed at fielding phone calls and walk-ins who wish to visit about their admission decisions."

Duke Accepts 10.4 percent. Duke U. received 28,600 Regular Decision applicants, and offered admission to 2,501 of them or 8.7 percent. Duke's Early Decision acceptance rate was 23.5 percent. The Early Decision applicants accounted for 48 percent of the Class of 2020. An additional 49 students who applied early and were deferred were also

admitted, down from 69 last year. Duke's overall acceptance rate was 10.4 percent.

"We only have 1,705 places in the class, and we didn't have room for many of the compelling candidates," explained Christoph Guttentag, dean of admissions.

Johns Hopkins Admits From 54 Nations.

Johns Hopkins U. admitted 2,539 students through Regular Decision who will join 559 students already admitted Early Decision. Nearly 37 percent of those admitted through Regular Decision are members of underrepresented minorities. The prospective "Blue Jays" hail from 49 states, Washington DC, and 54 nations.

Maine Starts Wait List. The U. of Maine used aggressive marketing and tuition incentives to attract 14,205 applications to fill its 2,150 freshman seats this fall, 17 percent more apps than last year. As a result, for the first time in recent history, Maine has begun a wait list.

MIT Announces with Star Wars. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology admitted 1,485 students to its Class of 2020. That is but 7.8 percent of the 19,020 applications it received this year, down from 8 percent last year. Early Action admits numbered 656 of the total. Another 437 were wait listed. In the past five years, MIT has admitted between zero and 65 from that list, Stu Schmill, dean of admissions, told *The Tech*.

One third of the newly-admitted students have already won national or international academic distinction, while "many are athletes, artists or makers," said *MIT News*. They hail

continued on page 2

"Gallimaufry" in College Admissions

After 40 years counseling generations of students and families on how to find their best match of boarding school, private high school, college or graduate program, Frank C. Leana reflects on changes in the college application process with interest and concern.

WE CONTINUE to read that students are applying to sought-after colleges in record numbers. Colleges parade their high numbers of applicants, low numbers of admits and high yields. When this combination of numbers emerges, alumni, trustees and presidents, along with other constituencies, take pride in their institutions becoming more and more selective.

But aren't we in the midst of all this hoopla forgetting one very important population, that of parents and applicants? It is heartbreaking to see super-qualified students deferred, wait listed or denied because of sheer numbers and the important but restrictive variables of constructing a diverse freshman class to include athletes, scholars, legacies and special talents.

The Challenge for Counselors

For counselors, the challenge becomes how to guide families with the appropriate blend of hope and reasonability to stretch for the best, most appropriate school in the midst of all this admission frenzy.

• How do we protect ourselves by not being overly ambitious for our students yet

continued on page 3

INSIDE

- State of Applications 2020
- Enrollments Trends, Books
- International Affairs
- Curriculum Capsules and News You Can Use

CLASS OF 2020

continued from page 1

from 49 states and 65 countries. One quarter are members of underrepresented minority groups. About 15 percent will be the first in their families to attend college. In keeping with tradition, the admissions office produced a lighthearted Star Wars themed video to alert students to check their decision screen on March 14.

Northwestern U.'s Record Pell Students.

Northwestern U. accepted 2,690 students to the Class of 2020 through its Regular Decision pool, adding to the 1,061 students admitted Early Decision. NU's acceptance rate fell 2.3 percent to 10.7 percent, a record low.

Christopher Watson, dean of undergraduate admissions, said that Northwestern accepted about half as many students through Regular Decision as it did five years ago. In part, that is due to the fact that the Class of 2020 will enroll 1,925 students, down from 2,025 last year.

In March, Northwestern's president, Morton Schapiro, said he wanted to increase the number of Pell-eligible students to 20 percent this year.

"We certainly were focused heavily on—with all the incentives—recruiting... students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds," Watson said.

Penn State's Schreyer Honors College. The Schreyer Honors College at Penn State received 3,930 applications for the Class of 2020, 6 percent more than last year. It admitted 18.8 percent of them. Those accepted include 28 international students and represent 37 states.

Some 56 percent of the admitted students are Pennsylvania residents. Schreyer students represent the top 2 percent of Penn State students.

Stanford Receives Nearly 44,000 Apps.

Stanford U. received 43,997 applications this year, the most in school history, and offered admission to 2,063 students from 50 states and 76 countries. "Our admitted students reflect the deep and profound diversity of the world in which we live," said Richard H. Shaw, dean of admission and financial aid. "We believe these students will impact the world in immeasurable ways."

Swarthmore Sends Letters.

Swarthmore C. outside Philadelphia received 7,717 applications for the Class of 2020 and offered admission to 963, or 12 percent, to fill about 420 seats next fall. Twenty-three percent will be the first in their families to attend college and 10 percent are from overseas, 70 nations and six continents. Some 34 percent are high school valedictorians or salutatorians, while 51 percent are in the top two percent of their high schools. Engineering is the most popular intended major of admitted students, followed by political science, economics, biology, mathematics, computer science, English literature, physics, psychology and environmental studies.

"Swarthmore's residential liberal arts approach and our commitment to providing access to affordable education resonates with these students," said Jim Block, vice president and dean of admissions.

Wesleyan Posse Veteran Scholars. Among

the students admitted to Wesleyan U. this year is the third cohort of the Posse Veteran Scholars, three women and seven men who have served in all the branches of the U.S. Armed Forces. This third cohort brings the total number of Posse Veteran Scholars at Wesleyan to 30. Their academic interests range from visual art and filmmaking to teaching and mathematics.

Wheaton Makes Hand Delivery. In mid-March, Wheaton C. in Massachusetts hand-delivered 65 acceptance letters to students in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island and parts of Maine. Students were greeted by blue-and-white balloons and a large sign that read "Yes!" *The Boston Globe* reported. ■

State of the 2020 Applications

Sweet Briar is Up 50 Percent. A revived Sweet Briar C., the all-women school in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, attracted 1,284 applications by March 1, 50 percent more than last year. That's a good indication that its revival from a premature shut-down last spring is real. Sweet Briar currently educates 236 students and is aiming to rebuild to 800. It is attracting new students with deep discounts on its published tuition of \$35,800 and recruiting more international students.

"We're still fragile," Phillip Stone, president, told *The Wall Street Journal*. "We need more students. We need more money. But we are going to be O.K."

Xavier's Success on the Basketball Court May Have Led to Increase in Apps.

Xavier U. in Ohio saw applications soar by 25 percent to 12,253, perhaps related to its recent on-court basketball prowess which has given it more national exposure. Xavier has a rolling admissions process, and a 73 percent acceptance rate. This year, it has already accepted 7,548 students and hopes to enroll 1,150 first-year students in Fall 2016.

Yale's Increase in Apps Includes More African Americans.

Yale U. attracted 31,439 applications this year for the first time, 4,700 of which were Early Action apps. Applications from African-American students increased by 10 percent. Overall, Yale has experienced an increase of 49 percent in total applications since those for the Class of 2009.

Ivy 2016 Early Admit Rates.

Early admit rates at the Ivy League colleges this year, according to the *Brown Daily Herald* were: Brown U., 22 percent; Cornell U., 27.4 percent; Dartmouth C., 25.6 percent; Harvard C., 14.8 percent; U. of Pennsylvania, 23.2 percent; Princeton U., 18.6 percent and Yale U., 17 percent. ■

Enrollment Trends

Goucher's Video Apps Yield Strong Students.

Two years ago, Goucher C. in Maryland made news with its willingness to let students submit video applications instead of the traditional kind. Now it reports that students admitted through the Goucher Video Application (GVA) posted average first semester GPAs of 3.15 versus the 3.11 average GPAs of students admitted through its traditional applications. Some 52 percent of GVA applicants were students of color and 38 percent were first-generation college students.

"Some questioned whether the GVA was missing a critical piece of applicant review by disregarding the high school transcript, the previously widely agreed upon best predictor of college accomplishment," said Jose Antonio Bowen, president. "However, not just academics, but multiple indicators of student success—academic performance, retention rate and campus community involvement—were similar among both populations. We really believe we have been successful in identifying one alternative way to uncover student potential, and we are excited to

welcome future students through this process."

College Completion.

Currently, only 60 percent of those enrolled in bachelor degree programs complete their education. And only one-in-ten students from low-income families complete college by age 25, compared to half of students from high-income families, reports the U.S. Dept. of Education. However, in 2012-13, black and Hispanic students earned nearly 250,000 more undergraduate degrees than in 2008-09.

Meanwhile, the Lumina Foundation in Indianapolis found that the college completion rate for students who started at a four-year public institution declined from 2008 to 2009 by 1.7 percentage points to 61.2 percent. Nationally, about 13 percent of students who started at a four-year public institution completed at a school other than the starting institution. The college completion rate for students who started at a two-year public institution also declined in the same period by 1 percent. ■

continued from page 1

urging them to have their reach exceed their grasp, a la Matthew Arnold, in the spirit of dreams sometimes becoming reality?

- How do we sincerely address parents' understandable concern about the prestige of a school that will set their sons and daughters up for gainful employment in the future without placating them by having a slew of stretch schools to indulge egos but not protect students?

- Can we resist the temptation to focus primarily on safety schools, which disheartens students and their families?

- Can we any longer reliably use the results of a prior year's admission outcomes as any kind of guide to predict success this time around?

- And, as one student asked, is the admission process these days just "a crapshoot?"

The Sad Trend Away from Real Conversations

Seasoned counselors still trust instincts, to some extent, about which students are likely to be admissible to certain schools. But most counselors, even those in private high schools, lament the recent trend away from meaningful conversations with school representatives from various colleges. Some highly selective college admission offices have gone so far as to officially eliminate such exchanges. So more projections take place in the dark, without much feedback as to which applicants are looking favorable for admission or what may have been lacking in a folder to cause a deferment or denial. Parents don't always find their high school counselor's statements that they don't know how a decision will go credible, but in many cases, they don't have any idea. We independent counselors have for the most part, with some exceptions, had to proceed on that basis.

I believe that most school counselors now are in the same boat, in that our main role is to help students define appropriate schools that serve their objectives and personalities—that both stretch and protect them—to understand the application process itself, to correctly fill out the Common Application and to brainstorm topics for essays and assist students, in the way of an effective English teacher, to arrive at their best work as thinkers and writers.

I remember a veteran colleague many years ago sharing with me his theory that college admission offices could probably attain about the same freshman class composition by plugging numbers into a computerized formula as they obtained by the holistic process of offering individual interviews, assessing the impact a student had on his school community or a larger society outside of school and speaking with school counselors, for example. I did not believe him then, nor do I now, but we do seem, with a majority of universities and even many



Frank C. Leana

small liberal arts colleges, to be closer to that point as admission personnel try to make judicious decisions in the limited time they have to read through thousands of applications.

I continue to believe that subtleties among applicants are lost sight of when a salvo of applications facing admission readers shifts the emphasis from a holistic approach to reliance upon scores of sheer numbers, such as grades and scores. The process no longer feels very user-friendly to students and their parents.

In fact, a large percentage of students apply Early Decision or Early Action more out of nerves and the prospect of early relief than out of thoughtful planning. Some try to outfox the system by seeing if they can apply

ED to one place, EA to another or more places, and maybe even throw in a Rolling Admissions school somewhere. Strategy can trump planning and lead to regret at not having explored alternatives in depth over time.

Where is All of This Going?

We counselors have a job to do, despite the confusion attached to the application process. In addition to the mechanics referred to above, like helping students understand the steps of the process, we have an obligation to guide them through this time of their lives in a way that preserves and protects their dignity and self-esteem. Having done everything correctly—obtained A's, taken AP exams and gotten 5's, scored high on the SAT or ACT, brought water to the desert—and still being deferred or denied, students feel crushed, defeated and betrayed. We adults serve an important role in their lives as they contemplate leaving the familiarity of high school and home and venturing into new territory. And that is, to work with them so that they don't attach their identities to the outcomes of the Byzantine application process.

We need to alert them to all of the variables that impact an admission decision, from gender to geography. We need to remind them and their parents that there is an element of chance and risk in the game of admission. While it is not exactly the "crapshoot" my student referred to, it is unpredictable and fickle—and often unfair. There is no absolute guideline for admitting or not admitting a student, as far as I can tell. There is an element of *gallimaufry* in the overall patterns of admission to college.

Yet we need to help students understand that what might seem disappointing results when decisions are released, could, over time, be seen as a serendipitous opportunity, depending upon what they make of wherever they enroll. I am reminded of a resonant line from Graham Greene's novel *The Power and the Glory*: "There is always one moment in childhood (let's alter that to "adolescence") when the door opens and lets the future in." Our work as counselors is to prepare our students to seize that moment. ■

Frank C. Leana, Ph.D., is a nationally-known Educational Counselor.

COUNSELOR'S BOOKSHELF

Three recent books on higher education reform:

Toward a More Perfect University by Jonathan R. Cole (Public Affairs); 409 pages; ISBN-13 9781610392655; \$29.99.

Wisdom's Workshop by James Axtell; 417 pages;

ISBN: 9780691149592; \$35. And, *Lesson Plan: An Agenda for Change in American Higher Education* by William G. Bowen and Michael S. McPherson; 184 pages; ISBN: 9780691172101; \$24.95. Both from Princeton U. Press.

Spring Break Rehab. While many college

students hit the road during spring break to "party," many others spend their time undergoing alcohol rehab. "Alcohol abuse among college students continues to be out of control," says Randy Haveson, an addiction counselor and author of the *Party with A Plan, College Edition: The Guide to Successful Drinking*; (Blooming Twig Books); Kindle edition \$9.99. Just as alarming is the 90 percent of college students who undergo rehab who then relapse. ■

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Cuba Educational Travel. As a result of President Obama's recent trip to Cuba, the US Treasury Dept. now authorizes individual Americans to travel to Cuba, provided that, among other things, "the traveler engages in a full-time schedule of educational exchange activities that result in meaningful interaction with individuals in Cuba." Previously, Americans were required to travel to Cuba under the auspices of an organization and be accompanied by a representative of the sponsoring organization.

Additionally, a number of American/Cuban educational exchanges were announced. One was to include Cuba in the president's "100,000 Strong in the Americas" student exchange initiative, aimed at increasing the number of student exchanges to 100,000 by 2020. See, www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/03/21/fact-sheet-united-states-cuba-relationship.

Ontario Revamps Financial Aid. Beginning in the 2017-18 calendar year, Ontario, Canada, students will have easier access to aid, more grants for students who need them most, and more assistance in grants and loans to middle-income students, thanks to changes made by the Council of Ontario Universities. Ontario students currently receive \$2 billion in financial aid. Last year, 44 percent of university students in Ontario graduated entirely without debt and the

average debt among all students at graduation was \$15,000, less than the Canadian average.

Need-Based Aid to Foreign Students. Only Harvard, Princeton, MIT, Amherst and Yale provide need-blind admissions and need-based financial aid to foreign students, exactly as they do for domestic students. Cornell U. is the second Ivy League school, along with Dartmouth C., to terminate its need-blind policy in the past six months, according to yaledailynews.com. Instead, they admit all international students on a need-blind basis, but have embraced a "need-aware" financial aid policy.

New Male/Female Quotas in Scotland. Scottish colleges and universities will seek to no longer conduct courses with more than 75 percent of only males or females, according to heraldscotland. Currently, extreme gender imbalance is evident in university technology, math, computer science and engineering classes, which are dominated by males, while psychology, teacher training, social studies and nursing are dominated by females.

"Such imbalances predominantly come about through the gender stereotypes that all too frequently determine subject choice," says the Scottish Funding Council Gender Action Plan. ■

NEWS YOU CAN USE

The "Chivas Regal" Strategy. A study published in the *Administrative Science Quarterly* in January found that schools "set higher tuition after a sharp decline in rank" to try to regain their status. This is especially true if their rivals are already charging higher tuition and if they appeal widely to prospective students. The researchers called this the "Chivas Regal" strategy.

"In contrast to past work that has assumed that organizations passively experience negative effects when their status falls, our results show that organizations actively respond to status loss." The researchers used data on the pricing behavior of private colleges and universities listed in *U.S. News & World Report* from 2005 to 2012.

Risk-Reward Ratios. LendEDU, a student loan refiner, rated the top 25 schools where reward, defined as the average early career pay, is divided by risk, defined as the average student debt per graduate. For example, Princeton U., where the average early pay for graduates was \$61,300, divided by average student debt of \$6,600, yields a ratio of 9.29, is number one.

City University of New York (CUNY)—Baruch is number two, with a 9.20 ratio, followed by CUNY-Queens, Eastern New Mexico U., California Institute of Technology, Florida International U., Hampton U., Harvard U., Yale, National U., MIT, Wellesley C., Brigham Young U., California State U.-Bakersfield, CUNY-John Jay College Criminal Justice, Stanford U., U. of California-Berkeley, California State U.-Fresno, Cooper Union, Dartmouth C., Harvey Mudd C, Northeastern Illinois U., Touro C.-New York and U. of Pennsylvania.

To find the entire list, go to lendedu.com/blog/college-risk-reward-indicator.

Humanities Trends. According to Humanities Indicators, a project of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences, the number of bachelor degrees in the core humanities disciplines (English language and literature, history, languages and literatures other than English, linguistics, classical studies and philosophy) declined by nearly nine percent from 2012 to 2014, falling to the smallest number of degrees conferred since 2003 (106,869). ■

Curriculum Capsules

Albright Adds Two Majors. This fall, Albright C. in Pennsylvania will offer a pair of new "interdisciplinary and complementary" majors in urban affairs and public health. The urban affairs major will "explore urban growth and development, the history of urbanization, and the economic, political, cultural and social influences on and of the city." Albright's public health program was created in consultation with Thomas Jefferson U.'s College of Population Health, as well as Reading Hospital. Founded in 1856, Albright enrolls 1,700 full-time undergraduates and more than 800 adult learners and graduate students. It features "close faculty mentorships, numerous experiential learning options in a diverse, supportive community of scholars and learners."

Chatham/Stetson 3+3 Law Degree. Chatham U. in Pittsburgh and Stetson U. in Florida have teamed up to offer an accelerated route to a law degree. High performing Chatham students will spend three years on their campus before moving over to Stetson law school. "This partnership builds on Chatham's pre-law foundation by helping Chatham students save time and money with the accelerated 3+3 path to their undergraduate and graduate degree," said Chatham president Esther L. Barazzone. "And, as a recognized leader in sustainability, Chatham is also thrilled by the opportunity this presents for our students wishing to pursue environmental law and policy."

Virginia Offers New Students Cohesive Forums. The U. of Virginia is redesigning how first- and second-year students fulfill their general education requirements. "The problem is that when you add all the classes up that a student takes within their first two years, they don't connect to each other," media studies professor Bruce Williams told *The Cavalier Daily*.

So instead, U.Va. is tailoring groups of courses around central themes such as "Mobility and Community," "Epidemics" and "Human Impact on the Environment," or the still pending "Visions of the Good." Groups of up to 40 students will be selected to study each theme during their first two years.

P.S. Alumna, Alumnus, Alumni and Alumnae. In the February issue, *CB* noted Sweet Briar C.'s support from its graduates. As one astute subscriber noted, *CB* should have referred to them as alumnae, not alumni. ■

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