

# College Bound

ISSUES & TRENDS FOR THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS ADVISOR

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## Colleges Reach for New Pool of Applicants

**Amherst Increases Outreach.** Amherst C. in Massachusetts accepted 180 out of the 454 Early Decision applicants for the Class of 2020. That represents about 38 percent of the target of 472 members for the new class, a 2 percent increase over last year, Katie Fretwell, dean of admission and financial aid, told *The Amherst Student*.

Women make up about 46 percent of the new admits, while 37 percent identify themselves as students of color. Fifteen of the early admits come from the QuestBridge National College Match Program which works with low-income students. Additionally, 33 incoming students are legacies.

The average SAT composite score for the newly-admitted students is 2150, the average ACT composite score is 32.

"We have been increasing our outreach efforts with Native students," Fretwell told the paper. "We have never had a sizable number of Native American candidates in our ED pool, but I can confirm that our Regular Decision pool has a record number."

**Boston U. Raised Standards, Attracts More Applications.** In 2010, Boston U. decided to "systematically decrease the size of the incoming fall freshman class" by 100 students per year. For Fall 2016, the targeted class size is 3,500 students. And this year, BU added a second round of Early Decision.

Nonetheless, a record 57,433 students applied to BU's Class of 2020. And 108 percent more students applied Early Decision. "...BU is an increasingly competitive place," Jean Morrison, provost, told *BU Today*. "We have moved away from being a safety school. We are now the first choice for a larger and higher quality of students."

**Cincinnati Creates New Marketing Strategies.** The U. of Cincinnati attracted 18,473 applications, a 14 percent increase over last year. According to Caroline Miller, UC's vice provost of enrollment management, the greatest increase came from out-of-state students as a result of new marketing strategies. Cincinnati has a 76 percent acceptance rate, and aims to enroll 4,600 first-year students next fall on its main campus.

**Dickinson's Large Yield Last Year Makes it "More Selective."** Dickinson C. in Pennsylvania fielded a record 6,129 applications for the Class of 2020, a slight increase over last year. "The size of the first-year class—large because more students accepted our offer of admission than we'd anticipated—has led to much research to better understand and predict which admitted students are likely to accept our offer of admission, allowing us to be more conservative and selective in the number of students admitted," Angela S. Barone, director of admissions communications, told *Dickinsonian.com*.

**Fordham's NYC Profile Draws Record Numbers.** Fordham U. attracted a record 44,343 applications for the Class of 2020. More than 19,000 students applied under its Early Action or Early Decision options, both Fordham records. About 4,332 of the total applications came from international students representing more than 125 countries. Visits to campus during the past year also hit a record.

"We've built strong relationships with guidance counselors nationally and abroad," said John W. Buckley, associate vice president for enrollment. "In addition to the inherent  
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## Financial Affairs

**Is There a Move Toward Affirmative Action for Low-Income Students?** Low-income students make up only 3 percent of enrollment at elite colleges. That's why a new report, "True Merit: Ensuring Our Brightest Students Have Access to Our Best Colleges and Universities" from the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, urges colleges to "institute an admissions preference for low-income students." The report says that a "poverty preference" would be akin to preferences for athletes and children of alumni.

"We need an affirmative action admission program for academically qualified students who lack the money that brings many advantages to the admissions process," said the Harold O. Levy, Cooke Foundation executive director. "Right now our nation is failing to fully develop the brainpower of some of our brightest students, simply because their families have less money than most other families. That's a waste of talent that hurts not just the students but our nation...." See, [www.jkcf.org/truemerit/](http://www.jkcf.org/truemerit/).

**Charitable Contributions Record.** Charitable giving to colleges and universities hit a record \$40.3 billion in 2015, according to a new report from the Council for Aid to Education. However, much of it went to the top 17 colleges and universities that represent less than 1 percent of the nation's 3,900 institutions of higher learning. Stanford U., Harvard U., the U. of Southern California, the U. California at San Francisco, Cornell U., Johns Hopkins U.,  
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## ADMISSIONS WATCH

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strengths of the university, international students love our location in New York City. It's a global city, and students from diverse backgrounds find it very appealing."

### Georgetown Avoids "Marketing Frenzy."

Georgetown U. received 19,958 Regular Decision applications for the Class of 2020, a 2.46 increase over last year. Georgetown C. attracted 11,657 of the applications while the School of Foreign Service collected 3,771 applications, the McDonough School of Business received 3,294 applications and the School of Nursing and Health Studies fielded 1,236 applications. Applications from African-American, Hispanic and Asian-American students all increased. Applications from international students remained relatively stable, growing from 2,258 to 2,276.

"We are kind of unusual, in the sense that we are not in a marketing frenzy, like some schools are," Charles Deacon, dean of undergraduate admissions, told *The Hoya*. "We're competing, for better or worse, for a very narrow part of the high school graduate pool, the very top 4 or 5 percent, these students who get good scores and get good grades and have high aspirations."

**Harvard's Final App Stats.** Harvard U. attracted a total of 39,044 applications for the Class of 2020, up 4.6 percent from last year. About a quarter of them had their application fees waived due to financial hardship, which

means they came from families earning less than \$65,000 a year. Should they be admitted, Harvard covers all of their college costs, including tuition, room and board, travel and other expenses. This year's applicants included 21 percent Asian Americans, 12 percent Latinos, 10 percent African Americans and 2 percent Native Americans and Native Hawaiians. Women make up a little over 49 percent of this year's applicants.

How does Harvard handle such a big number? "We have a team [of faculty and admissions officers] with the knowledge and experience to give each applicant careful and thoughtful consideration," William R. Fitzsimmons, dean of admissions and financial aid, told the *Harvard Gazette*.

**Miami U.'s School Visits Lead to Increase in Applications.** Miami U. in Southwestern Ohio attracted a record 29,500 applications for the Class of 2020, an 8.8 percent increase over last year. Since 2011, MU has tripled the number of high school visits it makes across the country. Miami typically accepts 68 percent of its applicants. The enrollment goal for the Oxford campus this fall is 3,655 students.

Susan K. Schaurer, assistant vice president for enrollment management and director of admission, told the *Cincinnati Enquirer* that first-year students are able to have hands-on research experience working alongside faculty members, presenting at national conferences and getting published. She added, "We're highlighting the success and outcomes Miami stu-

dents have when they leave with our degree."

### Skidmore Emphasizes Creative Thought.

Skidmore C. in Saratoga Springs, New York, drew 9,091 applications for the Class of 2020, 500 more than its 2014 record. That includes a record 542 Early Decision apps.

In fact, applications have shot up by 60 percent over the last five years. Skidmore expects to enroll a class of about 675 students, including 35 to 40 students for Skidmore's First-Year London Program.

"We have increased our outreach throughout our admissions program and are seeing significant application growth coming from populations that will increase our diversity," Mary Lou Bates, vice president and dean of admissions and financial aid, told *saratogian.com*. She added that Skidmore's emphasis on "creative thought matters" attracted students.

### St. Joseph's Creates "Red Envelope"

**Campaign.** As of its February 1 deadline, 8,613 high school seniors had applied to St. Joseph's U. in Philadelphia. It's the largest pool since 2007. The average GPA of prospective students is 3.67. St. Joseph hopes to enroll 1,150 freshmen in the Class of 2020.

"Our social media efforts and our red envelope campaign have been especially effective," said Maureen Mathis, assistant provost in the Office of Undergraduate Admission. "Reaching high school students and resonating with them is not easy in this crowded space, but our counselors and staff keep finding new ways to make the connection."

### Was Hockey Championship Good for

**Union?** Union C. in Schenectady, New York, received 6,570 applications for the Class of 2020, 500 more than last year and a 50 percent increase since 2006. About 400 of those were Early Decision apps. Union, a liberal arts school founded in 1795, expects to enroll 565 students next fall.

Matt Malatesta, vice president of admissions, financial aid and enrollment, cited several reasons for increased interest, including Union's 2014 national hockey championship and improvements to several campus buildings.

### Wesleyan Goes Test-Optional, Apps Jump

**22 Percent.** Wesleyan U. in Connecticut attracted 12,026 applications for the Class of 2020, as of the beginning of February, 22 percent more than last year, and 10 percent more than its record Class of 2017, according to *The Wesleyan Argus*. About 36 percent of applications came from students of color. International applications rose by 24 percent.

According to Nancy Hargrave Meislahn, dean, one reason for the increase is that Wesleyan is now test-optional. Admissions decisions will be released on March 25. ■

## Stats in the States

**Illinois Receives Increase in Apps From Residents.** Applications to the three campuses in the U. of Illinois System jumped by 13 percent to 56,017. More apps were received this year from Illinois residents (up 9 percent), from African-American students (up by 20.6 percent) and Latino students (up by 22 percent).

The flagship U. of Illinois Urbana-Champaign campus received 37,844 applications, an increase of 11.2 percent from last year, according to the *Daily Illini*. Applications also grew at the UIC campus in Chicago, but dipped slightly at the Springfield campus, which will accept applications until August 22.

### Northern Kentucky Up 10 Percent.

Applications to Northern Kentucky U. are up 10 percent over last year, while 6 percent more have already confirmed their choice with a deposit. NKU deadline: August 18.

**SUNY Canton's STEM Appeal.** The State U. of New York (SUNY) Canton attracted 3,000 freshmen applications for Fall 2016, approximately 20 percent more than last year. "Our application percentage increase is higher than

every other SUNY school at this point," Canton president Zvi Szafran told *North Country Now*. "This is a solid step toward our goals.... STEM-oriented education, and SUNY Canton is the best place for applied learning."

### Virginia Tech Apps Include Increase From

**Virginia Residents.** This year, Virginia Tech U. received more than 25,200 applications to the Class of 2020. That is 12 percent more than last year which yielded 6,400 matriculated freshmen, significantly more than past years. This year's pool includes an 8 percent increase in Virginia applicants, with a 13 percent increase in underrepresented applicants. Mildred R. Johnson, associate vice provost for enrollment management and director of undergraduate admissions, attributed part of the increase to the university's highly personalized and accessible admissions process.

"It's gratifying to see so many qualified and talented young people responding to our efforts to provide a technology-rich and relevant education in a diverse and inclusive community that is committed to impactful service," Tim Sands, Virginia Tech president, told WSL 10 TV. ■

# Getting It Right

*Editor's Note:* Many factors play into the success of a college student's application. Here is a roundup of suggestions on what makes it work.

**Double Check.** Robert Kelley, for example, a guidance counselor at St. John's School in California, reminds students to double check on their application's progress at a college, according to the *Pacific Daily News*. "Make sure your application is complete and all recommendations are received," he said. "Do as much monitoring as you can online." But he warns, "...you also don't want to distract or annoy the admissions office with inquiries that can easily be answered online."

Next, Kelley advises students to "celebrate" that they have completed such an arduous task. "Take a day off and celebrate with your friends at the beach," he tells California students. (Students in the rest of the country should take in a movie or go to a restaurant with family.)

Then, they should focus on how to fund their college education by continuing the search for scholarships. And, he emphasizes, they should make sure they have completed and submitted their Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

**Keep Calm, Carry On.** High school seniors who've gotten their college applications in on time now face one of their hardest tasks of all: waiting for a positive response. What should they do? According to the publication VIBE, the best response is to, "Keep calm and carry on!" Beyond that, "Avoid the senior slide and stay committed to your studies and activities." And remember, the online publication notes, even though the end of high school looms, "You'll still be a student for the next four years."

**George Washington U. Streams Interviews.** College interviews can be stressful. But because of budget cuts, George Washington U., located in the nation's capital, has changed the way it interviews many prospective candidates. Karen Stroud Felton, dean of admissions, told *The GW Hatchet*, that the school has increased the use of virtual interviews and increased on-campus interviews "in an effort to streamline resources."

"Previously, the admissions office sent current students as senior interviewers to interview weekends throughout the country in November," she told the paper. "With these added [virtual] opportunities to interview, GW was able to reduce the number of interview weekends that required student staffing."

GW announced it received the largest number of undergraduate applications in at least a decade. GW's test-optional policy also contributed to this jump, Felton noted.

**Tracking Transfers.** Students who transfer into four-year institutions had better outcomes at public institutions, very selective institutions and institutions with higher socioeconomic status students. Lower-income transfer students, however, had worse outcomes than higher income students... though in a few states, the success gap between lower- and higher-income students was small or nonexistent. This is all according to a new study from the Community College Research Center by Davis Jenkins and John Fink titled, "Tracking Transfer: New Measures of Institutional and State Effectiveness in Helping Community College Students Attain Bachelor's Degrees." The report can be downloaded at [www.ccrcc.columbia.edu](http://www.ccrcc.columbia.edu).

**Watching Social Media Posts.** This year, some 40 percent of 400 college admissions officers told Kaplan in its most recent Test Prep survey that, lest students wonder, they actually do visit applicants' social media pages to learn more about them. However, 89 percent of them claim that they do so "rarely." What are they looking for? The admissions officers told Kaplan they are interested in exploring the students' talents; looking for verification of awards, criminal records or disciplinary action; and to check about occasional unsolicited complaints that might sabotage a student's admission. Also, students seeking scholarships get special scrutiny. Moral: High school students need to be ever cautious because they never know who is watching.

**Last word:** There's a buzz about the February 14 *Atlantic* article, "Why Elite-College Admissions Need an Overhaul," by Jonathan R. Cole. One main point? "Contrary to the opinion of some secondary school guidance counselors, these colleges are looking for a well-rounded class as much as for well-rounded individuals."

"And yet it seems that the nation's elite colleges rarely take chances when it comes to filling each freshman class—they are too often guided by what the final result will look like in numerical terms compared with their competition, and how that might play out in *U.S. News & World Report* rankings...."

"The brilliant poet, distinguished novelist, or political cartoonist of the future who just did not care about that physics course in his or her sophomore year (and received a grade that showed it) is told that he or she doesn't have a prayer of getting into one of the selective schools...."

"...many of the top schools seem to have taken the quirkiness out of the student body—and the rebelliousness of intellect, style, and thought that is often critical to doing something important in fields other than law or medicine." ■

## COUNSELOR'S BOOKSHELF

"Get in the Game: Tips for Student-Athletes and Their Families," a publication prepared by the National Association for College Admission Counseling. Download at [www.nacacnet.org](http://www.nacacnet.org).

**2015 Carnegie Classifications.** The 2015 edition of the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education compiles statistics on 4,660 colleges and universities in the United States. In 2014, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

transferred responsibility for the project to Indiana U.'s Center for Postsecondary Research in IU's School of Education. It is now available, with searchable information, on a new website [www.carnegieclassifications.iu.edu](http://www.carnegieclassifications.iu.edu).

**Hispanic-Serving Institutions.** There are 435 Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI), representing 13 percent of all higher education institutions. And 62 percent of Latino under-

graduates attend these schools, according to "Hispanic-Serving Institutions: 2014-15" by Excelencia in Education. The report provides analysis by sector, location, enrollment, race/ethnicity as well as the most current HSI list of colleges and universities with at least 25 percent Hispanic enrollment. Download lists and fact sheets at [www.edexcelencia.org/hsi-cp2/research/hsis-2014-15](http://www.edexcelencia.org/hsi-cp2/research/hsis-2014-15).

*People Are Talking About...* a parent's anguish in "The Poisonous Reach of The College-Admissions Process" in the January 28 of *The New Yorker*. ■

## CURRICULUM CAPSULES

**Niagara in Vietnam.** Niagara U. has signed an agreement to partner with a new hospitality and tourism training center associated with the Imperial Hotel in Vung Tau, Vietnam. Students will receive internationally recognized certificates upon graduation.

**Most Assigned Books.** The Open Syllabus Project, based at the American Assembly at Columbia U., is involved in a multiyear project to analyze over a million “syllabuses” used in colleges and universities across the nation. In a recent *New York Times* article, Joe Karaganis, vice president of the American Assembly, and David McClure, a software engineer at Stanford U., revealed the top 10 most common text assigned across all disciplines.

Number one? The *Elements of Style* by

William Strunk Jr. and E. B. White, followed by Plato’s *Republic*, the *Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Biology* by Neil Campbell, *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, Aristotle’s *Ethics*, *Leviathan* by Thomas Hobbes, *The Prince* by Machiavelli, *Oedipus* by Sophocles, and Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*.

The most commonly-assigned novels from the past 50 years? *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, ranks 43 on the total list. *Neuromancer* by William Gibson, *Maus* by Art Spiegelman, *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison, *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros, *Coming of Age in Mississippi* by Anne Moody, *Ceremony* by Leslie Marmon Silko and *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker round out the novel list. Thousands of other texts are assigned, but less commonly across the board. ■

## NEWS YOU CAN USE

**Delaware Goes Test-Optional.** The U. of Delaware’s Faculty Senate has approved a four-year pilot program in which Delaware students will be able to choose whether or not to submit their SAT or ACT scores for first-year admission.

“This is a big step forward for the University of Delaware and for all outstanding Delaware high school students who want access to a high-quality education at UD,” Nancy Taggart, acting president, told *Delaware Business Times*. “The University’s future is predicated on our commitment to equity and inclusion. We value diverse backgrounds and learning experiences, and this program aligns with that commitment.”

**Sexual Assault.** Sexual assault is a serious problem on many campuses. Now an Austin, Texas-based group, Campus Answers, is working with hundreds of colleges and universities to implement a strategy called “Bystander Intervention Training.” Campus Answers sees “men as allies,” and teaches male students “how to identify developing situations and confidently circumvent an assault in-the-making.” Campus Answers says it has been able to reduce incidences of sexual violence on some campuses by up to 60 percent. For more information, see [www.campusanswers.com](http://www.campusanswers.com).

**Jobs for Grads.** According to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, incomes for recent college graduates are at the highest level in more than a decade and unemployment rates are rapidly falling.

“After the great recession, there was a lot of concern about people graduating, not being

able to get a job,” Richard Dietz, a senior economist at the New York Fed, recently told *The Wall Street Journal*, and people became uncertain “whether a college degree was worth it anymore.”

But data developed by Mr. Dietz and his colleagues demonstrates that those holding a bachelor’s degree earned a median \$43,000 last year, an increase of \$3,000 from the year before. They also found that top 25 percent of young college graduates earn at least \$60,000 a year.

*The Journal* pointed out that eight of the 10 highest paying degrees are engineering majors with a median salary of \$70,000. In contrast, some of the lowest paying majors, with some of the highest unemployment rates, include fields such as anthropology, mass media and environmental studies, with an unemployment rate of 8 percent and median salaries of about \$30,000.

**Law School Rebound?** The number of 2015 LSAT test takers increased over the previous year for the first time since the 2009-2010 cycle, during the great recession, according to Kaplan Test Prep. That’s why 88 percent of law school admissions officers predict they’ll see more applications this year. Kaplan also found that only 35 percent of law schools cut the number of seats for their 2015 first-year students.

“We are hearing from students who have put off applying to law school for a few years, so applicants are a bit older and seem to have fully investigated the pros and cons of law school and legal careers,” Stephen Brown, assistant dean of enrollment at Fordham University School of Law, told Kaplan. ■

## FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

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Columbia U., Princeton U., Northwestern U. and the U. of Pennsylvania were the top 10 recipients of alumni, individual and foundation generosity.

**New Federal Student Aid Enforcement Unit.** The U.S. Dept. of Ed has created a new enforcement unit of about 50 regulators, drawn from existing offices, to “respond more quickly and efficiently to allegations of illegal actions by higher education institutions.”

“When Americans invest their time, money and effort to gain new skills, they have a right to expect they’ll actually get an education that leads to a better life for them and their families,” said John B. King Jr., acting U.S. Secretary of Education. “Schools looking to cheat students will be held accountable.”

**How Badly Do Graduates Want To Get Rid Of Student Debt?** To dramatize the situation, Lendedu.com asked 513 graduated student loan borrowers, giving them tongue-in-check options. Nearly 58 percent said that they would give up social media for life, “if it meant they would have no more student debt.” Some 57 percent would give up coffee, 56 percent would give up alcohol, 35 percent would give up texting, and all for life. You get the idea. So what’s the lesson? College-bound students must be as cautious and as informed as possible before rushing into too much debt.

**P.S. Student Loan Default Arrests.** “Believe it or not,” reported FOX 26 in Houston, “the U.S. Marshals Service in Houston is arresting people for not paying their outstanding federal student loans.” U.S. Marshals showed up at the home of one loan delinquent with guns and took him to federal court where he had to sign a payment plan for a 29-year-old unpaid loan. Between 1,200 and 1,500 warrants have been issued in Houston alone to arrest former students who have not paid up.

But *Washington Post* money columnist Michelle Singletary said, not so fast. She interviewed Richard Hunter, chief deputy for the U.S. Marshals in the Southern District of Texas, who told her, “If anyone out there thinks that it is the top priority of the U.S. Marshals Service to arrest student-loan violators, they are sadly mistaken.”

To find out about the status of a federal loan and various repayment options, go to: [www.nslds.ed.gov](http://www.nslds.ed.gov). Also, [www.consumerfinance.gov/paying-for-college/repay-student-debt](http://www.consumerfinance.gov/paying-for-college/repay-student-debt). ■

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