

College Bound

ISSUES & TRENDS FOR THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS ADVISOR

Vol. 35, No. 8

April 2021

A Year of “Adaptation”

Brown Up by 26 Percent. Brown U. in Providence, Rhode Island, attracted 46,469 applications for the Class of 2025, 26 percent more than last year. Like other Ivy League universities, Brown attributes the surge to its policy of suspending standardized tests during the pandemic and the fact that it meets the full financial need of students during a time of economic turmoil.

Colby Apps Up 13 Percent. Colby C. in Maine attracted more than 15,700 applications for the Class of 2025, 13 percent more than last year’s record-breaking applicant pool and more than 200 percent growth since 2014, according to Randi Arsenault, assistant vice president of admissions and financial aid and dean of admissions.

Applications to Colby are free. The school does not require standardized test scores or an extra essay, and the most talented students attend for free.

Cornell’s Record. Cornell U. in New York, which officially does not release admissions statistics, attracted a record high number of apps to the Class of 2025, 17,000, more than ever before, according to the *Cornell Sun*.

Dickinson Apps Up by Nearly 1,000. Dickinson C. in Pennsylvania received 6,295 applications for the Class of 2025, up from 5,333 last year. Cathy Davenport, dean of admissions, told *The Dickinsonian* that Early Decision netted 222 students toward the college’s goal of 575 first-year students.

Emory 2021 Theme, “Adaption.” Emory U., with campuses in Atlanta and a freshman/sophomore campus in Oxford, Georgia, attracted its largest and most diverse application pool. Emory received a record 33,780 applications for the Class of 2025, up 18 percent over last

year and 67 percent from five years ago. Emory admitted 6,892 students, 4,278 of them headed to its Oxford C.

Even though Emory was test-optional this year, only 31 percent chose not to submit a standardized test score. Emory also received 1,975 Early Decision I applications.

“This year’s theme has to be summed up as ‘adaptation.’ We know students had to adapt in order to have a successful year. And our staff had to do the same, learning how to do things that we are so good at in new ways,” said John Latting, associate vice provost and dean of admission.

Johns Hopkins RD Acceptance Rate Falls to 5 Percent. During the Regular Decision (RD) period, Johns Hopkins U. in Baltimore fielded 33,236 applications to its Class of 2025, and admitted 1,652 students. They will join 824 others who were admitted during two rounds of Early Decision, according to jhnewsletter.com. Another 3,400 students were offered a spot on Hopkins wait list. The school also announced that its test-optional policy will continue next year.

Johnson & Wales. Pandemic fallout forced Johnson & Wales U. in Rhode Island to shut down its North Miami and Denver campuses. But its Rhode Island program drew about the same number of applications as last year.

Lafayette’s Apps Up About 2 Percent. Lafayette C. in Pennsylvania, founded in 1826, with a satellite campus in New York City, attracted 8,240 first-year applications, up 2 percent over last year. However, applications from African Americans dipped 1 percent and those from first-generation college-bound students fell by 4 percent. On the other hand applications from women and international

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Financial Matters

How the \$1.9 Trillion Stimulus Helps Higher Ed. The new COVID stimulus bill, the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 signed by President Biden last month, allocates nearly \$40 billion more to colleges, universities and students to help them through the pandemic. It supplements the \$14 billion they received through the CARES Act and the \$22.7 billion from the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) both signed by President Trump. Spending from all three Acts is split equally between institutions and students.

The American Rescue Plan. This allows colleges and universities to use the funds to defray costs associated with the pandemic, including lost revenue, costs of the transition to distance learning and payroll. It mandates that colleges and universities spend half of their funds for financial aid to students, including cost of attendance, tuition or emergency costs such as food, housing, health care, childcare. Pell Grant recipients are to be prioritized, but are not to be the exclusive beneficiaries of aid. Distance learning students are included under coverage.

Also, millions of students and former students become exempt from paying taxes on any loan forgiveness they may receive until 2026, perhaps saving them thousands of dollars.

Outreach to Students. The Department of Education also received \$91 million for outreach to let students and borrowers know

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students are up 3 percent and 2 percent, respectively. More than 300 students have already confirmed their intentions through Early Decision.

“The question of international students from the very moment of the pandemic has been an acute one, not only for admissions but for people throughout the college,” Joshua Sanborn, a history professor and head of the Enrollment Planning Committee, told *Lafayettestudentnews.com*. “International travel and visa restrictions instituted by governments have all had a significant impact on our international students and so that’s something that we’ve been trying to adapt to in terms of enrollment.”

Add to that the fact that last year Lafayette enrolled about 100 fewer students. Some 30 students of the Class of 2024 postponed matriculation until Spring 2021, while another 50 deferred enrollment until this coming fall.

Miami of Ohio Apps Up 10 Percent. Miami U. attracted more than 2,800 applications for Fall 2021, 10 percent more than last year. While many students have been unable to visit campus in person, “We’ve added virtual one-on-one appointments with admission representatives this year which we haven’t done in the past,” Bethany Perkins, director of admissions, told *The Miami Student*. “We also had professors host virtual sessions so that they could connect with applicants personally.”

MIT Admits 4 Percent. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology was inundated with a record 33,240 applications for the Class of 2025, 66 percent more than last year. MIT admitted 1,340 students for an overall admit rate of only 4 percent, down from last year’s 7.3 percent.

Penn Admits 1,194 ED. The U. of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia attracted 7,962 first-choice Early Decision applications for the Class of 2025, and offered admission to 1,194 of them, filling about 50 percent of its new class. Some 54 percent are female, and over 50 percent are U.S. persons of color, while 12 percent are first-generation college students, 13 percent qualify for Pell Grants and 22 percent are Penn legacies. Penn expects to enroll a first-year class of 2,400 students.

Pomona Admits More Women. Pomona C., one of the Claremont C.s in California, admitted 748 students. Some 91 percent are in the top 10 percent of their high school class. Additionally, 83 students who deferred admission last fall will join the new class. Some 57 percent of the new class is female, 18.5 percent is first-generation college students and

State News

Connecticut Tops 36,000 Apps. The U. of Connecticut (Storrs) attracted more than 36,000 applications for the Class of 2025, a school record. Another 2,000 students applied for spots at one of UConn’s four regional campuses, Avery Point, Hartford, Stamford and Waterbury. About 45 percent of applicants represent racial minorities. Nathan Fuerst, UConn’s vice president, told *hartfordbusiness.com* that applications were probably up because of the school’s three-year pilot program of optional standardized tests.

Florida Admits More Than 15,000 Gators. The U. of Florida in Gainesville received 52,513 applications this year, up from 49,401 last year. UF invited 15,220 applicants to become members of its Class of 2025. Some 3,248 of them will start in the Summer B term, while the other 11,972 will matriculate in Fall.

The average GPA of admitted Florida students was 4.51, and despite the pandemic, admitted students posted average SAT scores of 1392 and average ACT scores of 31. UF expects 6,400 new students to enroll. According to the *Independent Florida Alligator*, UF officials anticipate Summer B classes will be conducted in-person with normal capacity. But that decision is reviewable, based on vaccine and virus conditions.

Maine Rewrites Playbook. “We’ve completely re-done the playbook amid the pandemic,” Christopher Richards, vice president of enrollment management at the U. of Maine,

told *newscentermaine.com*. For example, Maine lets students and their families know what their financial aid package would be three months earlier than before, usually late November instead of February. Maine has also gone test-optional. As a result, “1,500 students gained access and the opportunity to attend the U. of Maine,” Richard added.

Southern Maine Looks for Reasons to Admit Students. The U. of Southern Maine has already received 1,120 deposits for the Class of 2025, 72.5 percent more than last year in the April year-to-year measure. “We don’t anticipate bringing in a class that ends up being such a large margin,” said Jared Cash, vice president for enrollment management. “However, it is a strong early indicator that enrollment interest is very strong...” In part, that’s because, he says, “We are looking for reasons to admit the student. I always like to say that proudly.”

Virginia Admits 21 Percent. The U. of Virginia attracted a total of 48,011 students and offered admission to 9,898, for an admit rate of 21 percent. Some 50 percent are minority students, while 9 percent are international students. About 28 percent of in-state students were offered a place in the Class of 2025, compared to only 17 percent of non-Virginians. The target class size is 3,788 students. Dean of admission Gregory W. Roberts promised them “an affordable, world-class educational experience.” ■

54.8 percent are domestic students of color. International students hail from 58 nations. Even though Pomona offered a test-optional policy during the COVID year, 57 percent of those who applied this year submitted ACT or SAT test scores.

Providence Attracts 11,000 Apps. Providence C. in Rhode Island saw its application pool hit over 11,000 students, an increase of 3 percent over last year. Providence hopes to enroll at least 1,075 new students this fall. Raul Fonts, associate vice president and dean of admissions and financial aid, told *providencejournal.com* that recruitment was not easy this year under COVID conditions.

“What we’re finding is, students are tired of the virtual platform.” He added that Providence would be lucky if 20 percent of their admitted students toured the college. “It’s not as big a challenge for the brand-name schools. Once you get to our level, it’s difficult to distinguish ourselves from other smaller liberal arts schools [without a visit].”

Rhode Island School of Design Increases Aid. Rhode Island School of Design attracted

5,425 first-year applications, 15 percent more than last year. The school increased its financial aid for Fall 2021 by 23 percent.

Sarah Lawrence Apps Up 20 Percent. Sarah Lawrence C. in Bronxville, New York, founded in 1926, hit an all-time high of 4,500 applications for the Class of 2025, 20 percent more than last year. The aspirants are competing for roughly 400 spots in the new class.

Sarah Lawrence says it practices “a holistic admission process that prioritizes the individual voice and story of each applicant, appealing to students who will excel in the college’s self-driven curriculum.”

“Sarah Lawrence is a college that prides itself on small class size and the individual attention students received from faculty and staff,” Kevin McKenna, dean of admission and financial aid, told *patch.com*. “The same individual attention is given in the admissions process....”

Spelman Attracts Over 11,000 Apps. Spelman C. in Atlanta attracted the most applications in the school’s 140-year history,

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Counseling Amidst COVID

U. Wisconsin Sends Counselors into High Schools. To combat projected declines in enrollment, five U. of Wisconsin campuses have placed counselors in targeted high schools to help guide students to college. U.W. is spending \$200,000 to help students fill out financial aid and scholarship applications, ACT/SAT prep work, career planning and on how to choose a major.

Interim UW President Tommy Thompson, a former Wisconsin governor and presidential Cabinet member, said the program was designed to support students who will be first in their family to attend college and those from under-represented backgrounds, according to the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*.

Longer Wait Lists. *The Wall Street Journal* warns of longer wait lists this spring, because: 1) students applied to 11 percent more colleges through the Common App; 2) the mathematical models that colleges use to predict who will accept offers do not account for the changes wrought by the pandemic.

As a result, wait lists will expand. Rick Clark, director of undergraduate admission at Georgia Tech told the *WSJ*, "The wait lists are going to be obnoxious this year."

Last year, some selective colleges admitted students from their wait lists as late as July. This year, wait lists could be active longer and schools won't be sure of who will show up, until they show up in fall.

New England Personalizes In-Person Tours. The U. of New England, in Maine, has brought back in-person tours, with a twist. One family or student at a time is guided around campus by one tour guide. UNE has also gone test-blind.

"We are particularly interested in the curriculum [students have] taken during high school or college as appropriate, in the grades they've obtained..." said Scott Steinberg, vice president of admissions. "Even though we've gone test-blind... high school GPAs we are seeing in our accepted students is a little bit higher than it was last year."

Dealing with Rejection. We have now entered the college admissions season of joyous acceptances and agonizing rejections. Here are some (condensed) tips from Kaelyn Barron for writers dealing with rejection that seem to apply to all endeavors. She points out that a U. of Michigan study found that rejection activates the same regions of the brain as physical pain. How can students deal with it?"

1) Accept the situation; 2) Give yourself time to process your feelings; 3) Examine your role in the rejection; 4) Stop the spiral of shame; 5) Surround yourself with love; 6) Make a list of your best qualities; 7) Make it a learning experience, and move on; 8) Keep your confidence.

Universal Learning Losses. K-8 students are experiencing "universal learning losses in math and reading" due to COVID-19 disruptions, according to a new report from Illuminate Education, entitled "No Longer a Prediction: What New Data Tells Us About the Effects of 2020 Learning Disruptions."

"We're urging educators to consider spending more time on these high-need areas," said John Bielinski, senior director of research and development at Illuminate Education. See, <http://www.illuminated.com>.

Kids Under Pressure. Challenge Success and NBC news coordinated a study of 75,000 high school students from 86 high schools across the country from Fall 2018 through Fall 2020. Overall, they found: 1) "Students, especially females and students of color, continue to experience high levels of stress and pressure; 2) Students' engagement with learning, which is always a challenge, is especially low now; 3) Students' relationships with adults and peers are strong, yet appear strained in recent times." For more detail or information, see www.challengesuccess.org.

Loss of Student Belonging. "One of the biggest factors that influences student engagement and performance is their sense of belonging in their higher education experience," said Douglas Harris, Senior Fellow, Brown Center on Education Policy. "This is what has suffered the most as a result of COVID-19. They no longer have the same sense of belonging that they used to have."

Go to College, Live Longer? Research that appears in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* suggests that Americans with college degrees live longer than those without them. Researchers examined mortality in the U.S. from 1990 to 2118. The researchers predicted that the pandemic will only exasperate the education divide in life expectancy.

"If you don't have a four-year degree, not only have your wages been falling for 50 years but our study shows your adult life expectancy is also decreasing," Sir Angus Deaton, one of the researchers, said.

More Test-Optional Schools. Seton Hall U. in New Jersey will remain test-optional through Fall 2026. "Standardized test arguably exasperate educational inequality relative to income because not all applicants can afford... assistance," President Jonathan Farina told thesetonian.com.

In 2018, the National Association for College Admission Counseling released a study that concluded schools that switch to a test-optional application process yielded greater numbers of black and Latino applicants and admittees. ■

COUNSELOR'S BOOKSHELF

The K&W Guide to Colleges for Students with Learning Differences, 15th Edition, by Marybeth Kravets and Imy F. Wax; Penguin Random House/Princeton Review Books; ISBN 978-0-525-57030-1, \$31.99.

Education Trap: Schools and the Remaking of Inequality in Boston by Cristina Groeger, Harvard

University Press; ISBN 9789674249110; \$35. Explores contradiction between more people earning degrees and a widening wealth gap.

A Powerful Promise: The Ivy League Inspired Secret Improving Access and Recruitment at College Today by Peter Samuelson, Mike Frechette, et al., Ardeo Education Solutions,

165 pages; ISBN: 9798692285058, \$4.72. "Roadmap to understand how both schools and students are benefiting from Loan Repayment Assistance Programs...."

Colleges Worth Your Money by Belasco, Bergman & Trivette, (to be available May 15), Rowman & Littlefield; ISBN-10; 147-585-3963, \$19.99. The list includes Alice Lloyd C., Amherst C., Arizona State U., Boston U., Bowdoin C. and others. ■

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over 11,000, 20 percent more than last year. “Students are drawn to Spelman because of its strong programs and its legacy of producing inspirational leaders,” said Chelsea Holly, interim director of admissions at the all-female Historically Black College, whose graduates include children’s rights activist Marian Wright Edelman and political activist Stacey Abrams.

Trinity’s Sense of Hope. Trinity C. in Connecticut, founded in 1823, admitted 238 Early Decision I & II students to its Class of 2025. They join 31 previously admitted students who deferred admission last year. Some 11 percent of the ED students are first-generation, 21.5 percent are students of color including multi-ethnic students, while 53 percent are student athletes.

About 56 percent live outside of New England and 17 percent hail from Connecticut. During this COVID year, 88 percent chose not to submit standardized tests.

Admitted students demonstrated a “sense of hope and determination.” They “showed up in their classrooms this year whether they were virtual, in-person or experiencing hybrid learning, and they persevered and continued to push through during these difficult times,” said Adrienne Amador Oddi, dean of admissions and financial aid. “We continue to see more applicants at the top of their high school classes, and they’re looking forward to engaging in Trinity’s intellectual community.”

Vanderbilt ED Rate Falls to 18.1 Percent. Vanderbilt U. in Nashville attracted 5,049 ED I & II applications for the Class of 2025, 16 percent more than last year, and 92 percent

Ivy League Early Acceptance Rates

(Class of 2025 unless noted)

Brown U.	16 percent
Columbia U. (Class of 2024)	15 percent
Cornell U. (Class of 2024)	23.8 percent
Dartmouth C.	21.2 percent
Harvard U.	7.4 percent
U. of Pennsylvania	15 percent
Yale U.	10.5 percent

more than a decade ago. Vanderbilt admitted 18.1 percent of the ED candidates this year, down from last year’s 20.7 percent, Douglas Christiansen, vice provost for university enrollment affairs, told vanderbilthustle.com.

Wash U. Apps Up 20 Percent. Washington U. in Saint Louis attracted 33,634 applications for this fall, a 20 percent increase over last year. Wash U admitted 4,374. About 1,795 of them will matriculate. Some 60 percent were admitted Early Decision I & II. About 41 percent of applicants submitted no standardized test scores, which will be optional next year.

About 27 percent submitted their own videos, the first time Wash U solicited them. “We had students showing us everything from their pottery collection to giving a walking tour of their neighborhood,” said Emily Almas, assistant vice provost and director of admissions. “We saw dance moves and heard spoken word poetry. Hearing the voices of these incredible young people expressing themselves was amazing....”

Wash U’s admissions officers worked night and day, contacting school counselors and teachers for additional information, including 2,768 virtual interviews with students. “The

pandemic dramatically changed life for teenagers in many different ways, and we were really careful to understand their individual circumstances,” Almas said.

Wellesley Admits 16 percent. Wellesley C. in Massachusetts attracted 7,920 first-year applications, the most in school history, and admitted 16 percent of them. About 21 percent will be first-generation college students, 63 percent are domestic students of color, African American, Asian American, Latino or Hispanic, Native American or multicultural. Some 11 percent hail from 45 countries outside the United States.

About 87 percent of the admitted students rank in the top 10 percent of their graduating class. Although Wellesley was test-optional this year, about 50 percent submitted standardized test scores. Both QuestBridge and the Posse Foundation contributed to this student pool. Dean of admissions and financial aid Joy St. John called the new students “an amazing group of high school students.”

Whitman Admits Half. Whitman C. in Washington state received 4,210 applications, including 129 transfer students, and admitted 2,162, for an admit rate of 51.4 percent. Admitted students posted a high school GPA range of 3.57-3.92.

About 12 percent of admitted students are first-generation, 13 percent Pell Grant recipients, 9 percent legacies and 4 percent valedictorians. Over 67 percent of new students performed community service while in high school. Students of color make up about 25 percent of the new class, while 9 percent come from 18 other nations, from Rwanda to Mongolia. ■

FINANCIAL MATTERS

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about the “financial aid, economic impact payments, means-tested benefits, unemployment assistance and tax benefits for which student borrowers may be eligible.”

Illinois Housing Agency Pays Off Student Debt. Between 500 and 1,000 young home buyers will have some of their student loans paid off by the Illinois Housing Development Authority, through a \$25 million program. Buyers who meet certain income requirements could see up to \$40,000 of their student loans paid for by the agency to help them acquire a home. “It’s about helping these people put down roots in their community, roots in Illinois,” Kirstin Faust told *Crain’s Chicago Business*.

Critics say the program rewards those who went into debt and shifts the burden to those

who showed fiscal responsibility. The winners are the colleges who ultimately receive the money, the losers are taxpayers who pay off the debt.

New Jersey Enacts Free Community College. In February, New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy signed legislation that guarantees qualified students to attend any New Jersey C. C. without tuition or educational fees. Students from families with incomes of \$65,000 or below qualify. The state will cover tuition costs and fees not already covered by other state, federal or institutional need-based grants and merit scholarships. They’ll be eligible for this aid for a total of five semesters.

“For far too long, higher education has been out of reach for countless New Jerseyans due to its high cost,” Murphy said when he signed the bill. This “underscores our continued commitment to college affordability, ensuring that

our young people and working adults have the opportunity to earn post-secondary degrees and advance their promising careers.”

Rowan “Free” for Low-Income Students. The Rowan U. Opportunity Program promises free tuition and fees for all four-year undergraduate degrees from families earning \$45,000 or less. It is open to all New Jersey students.

Stockton’s “Free Tuition.” Stockton U. in New Jersey has launched a new program, “Stockton Promise,” for New Jersey families with a gross income of \$65,000 or less. The Stockton Promise covers 100 percent of tuition and fees after other scholarships and federal and state aid are applied. ■

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Production: Design|Americom. COLLEGE BOUND is published monthly, ten times a year. Inquiries should be directed to P.O. Box 6536, Evanston, IL 60204; 773-262-5810. Annual subscription: \$59 in North America, \$69 for international orders, including airmail postage. See, www.collegeboundnews.com
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