

College Bound

ISSUES & TRENDS FOR THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS ADVISOR

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Admissions Watch

Bowdoin Apps Down Slightly. Bowdoin C. in Maine attracted 9,309 applications to the Class of 2025, a slight decrease from last year. Whitney Soule, dean of admissions and financial aid, attributed the decline to the fact that many peer institutions also adopted test-optional policies due to the pandemic. Bowdoin has been test-optional since 1969.

Haverford Increases Diversity. Students admitted Early Decision to Haverford C.'s Class of 2025 continue a trend of greater diversity. According to the college, 159 students were admitted ED I and 20 more were admitted through QuestBridge. The ED I students of color increased by 20 percent over last year, including a 50 percent increase in the number of black students.

Last fall, the majority of Haverford students, and some faculty, conducted a two-week strike of classes and activities in an effort to "expose biases of the college against BIPOC students and create meaningful change on campus." Part of their complaint was that Haverford was built on Pennsylvania land "cultivated by Lenni Lenape people for over 10,000 years," and yet only .5 percent of the Class of 2024 was Native American. The Class of 2025 includes twice as many Native Americans.

Lehigh's Apps Increase. Despite worries about the impact of COVID-19 on applications, Lehigh U. in Pennsylvania experienced a 9 percent increase in Early Decision II apps over last year, Bruce Bunnick, director of admissions, told the *Brown & White*. Lehigh also saw its Regular Decision applications increase by 15 percent. Some 40 percent of all applications for the Class of 2025 did not submit standardized tests.

Miami U. Apps Jump Almost 10 Percent. Applications to Miami U. in Oxford, Ohio, rose

9.7 percent to about 30,300 for the Class of 2025. These included more than 700 applications from underrepresented students of color and 100 more from first-generation college students.

Even though Miami went test-optional during this pandemic year, the average GPA among applicants is 3.8, slightly higher than in past years. However, Miami did see a decline in apps from international students, particularly from China.

"I'm in a position where I'm admitting more students from Ohio and from elsewhere in the U.S. to make up for the declines that were seen internationally," Bethany Perkins, director of admissions, told *The Miami Student*.

North Carolina Notifies First Admittees. In late January, the U. of North Carolina at Chapel Hill sent out letters of acceptance to over 8,000 students, according to the *Daily Tar Heel*. Michael Davis, associate director of admissions, told the paper that the preliminary admittance rate for in-state applicants was 47 percent, while only 13 percent of out-of-state students were accepted.

UNC's applicants were given the option to explain how the pandemic affected their lives, "so we really tried to really think about that as we were reading their applications," Davis told the *Daily Tar Heel*.

Penn's Apps Soar by 34 Percent. Applications to the Class of 2025 at the U. of Pennsylvania hit an all-time high of 56,000, 34 percent more than last year. Penn's new class is targeted at 2,400 students. In December, Penn admitted 15 percent of its class from 7,962 Early Decision applicants.

John McLaughlin, interim dean of admissions, speculated that the surge in applications was related to its temporary test-optional
continued on page 2

Financial Matters

Federal Reserve Confirms College Attendance Dropped. The pandemic and the recession following it led to the largest drop in college attendance in decades, according to a new report from the Federal Reserve of St. Louis. It declined 3 percent overall, but by 13.1 percent for first-time undergraduates. Returning undergraduates declined by 1.6 percent.

The Federal Reserve noted that enrollment often increases in a recession, but in 2020, this was not the case. It added that first-time freshmen enrollment also declined because the perceived benefits from college—"the hallowed 'college experience' and the value of in-person learning" shrank as classes moved online while relative college costs—expensive tuition at a time of widespread financial uncertainty—grew." For more details, see, <https://www.stlouisfed.org>.

FAFSA Apps Also Down. As of December 2020, the number of high school seniors who had filed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) was down about 14 percent from the previous year. The form became available to students and their families in October.

"There's no way to look at this as a positive thing right now," said Bill DeBaun, director of data and evaluation, the National College Attainment Network, which compiles the FAFSA data. "That figure represents a large

continued on page 3

INSIDE

- More on Financial Matters
- Enrollment Trends
- The Counselor's Corner
- Curriculum Capsules
- And, News You Can Use

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ADMISSIONS WATCH

continued from page 1

policy and the fact that students couldn't visit campuses to help narrow their choices.

Princeton Up 15 Percent. Princeton U. in New Jersey, an Ivy League member, attracted 37,000 applications for the Class of 2025, a 15 percent increase over last year, according to the *Daily Princetonian*.

"Those higher application numbers inevitably mean that acceptance rates will plummet. Further, decisions made by universities such as Princeton to do away with an early admissions round will only serve to drive overall application numbers in the regular round. Inevitably, the bid to lower barriers and increase equality for prospective students has caused top universities to become more exclusive than ever," the paper speculated.

Rice to Increase Undergraduate Enrollment. Rice U. in Texas received a record-high 29,509 applicants for Fall 2021. It also announced that it will grow its undergraduate enrollment by 800 students, or about 20 percent, by 2025. Rice grew from about 2,900 students in 2004 to 3,800 students in 2016.

"We're not at all, at this point, concerned with quality, given both the strength and size of the applicant" pool, said David Leebron, president.

Santa Cruz Sets Record. The U. of California Santa Cruz, which opened in 1965, fielded a record 74,000 applications for the Class of 2025, 11 percent more than last year. Some 200 students deferred admission during the "COVID year." More than 49,000 came from California high school students, while 11,000 came from California community college students.

African American applicants accounted for 6 percent of the pool, 32 percent came from Asian Americans, 34 percent from "Chicanx/Latinx" students, .5 from Native Americans and 25 percent from white students. UC Santa Cruz is ranked among the top five universities nationally for student social mobility.

"We take pride in working with our faculty to identify students who have maximized the academic and social opportunities within their communities and demonstrated their abilities to contribute to and benefit from the opportunities available at a major research university," said Michelle Whittingham, associate vice chancellor for enrollment management.

Tulane Shatters Records. Tulane U. in New Orleans attracted over 45,000 applications to the Class of 2025, a 55 percent increase over the past five years. Some 4,000 of those came in as Early Decision applications. Tulane conducted more than 80 percent of its classes

ENROLLMENT TRENDS

Freshmen Uncertain Whether to Re-enroll.

A survey of over 5,000 freshmen conducted by Eduventures at the end of the Fall 2020 semester found that a "striking one of five students said they were—at best—unsure about their spring plans."

Among those who are uncertain if they will return, the survey found that 25 percent said they could not afford it, 37 percent worry about their health, 32 percent said their college experience wasn't worth what they paid for it, while 40 percent said they wanted to wait until they could get the full college experience.

Eduventure concluded that, "This new generation of at-risk student is the otherwise stable student who now feels isolated or deprived of opportunity. To keep them on track, it won't be about pre-2020 predictive models and tutoring or financial aid. It will be about looking for them outside of the usual methods and finding ways to restore a sense of community and opportunity in the student experience."

Enrollment Declines to Continue Into 2021?

Last year, high school-to-college enrollment in Massachusetts fell at community colleges by 11.6 percent and 7.7 percent at state universities. The state's Education Commission, Jeffrey Riley, expects "similar potential drops in college enrollment" in 2021, according to radio station WBUR, which reported on one of his memos to the state board. But the state department of education is taking steps to build awareness of the FAFSA.

International Enrollment Plunged. A new report from the Council of Graduate Schools,

in-person during the Fall 2020 semester.

"While many universities have pared down their expectations and ambitions during the pandemic, Tulane continues to perform at an extraordinarily high level in all areas, including attracting the best and the brightest young scholars from around the country," said Michael Fitts, president. "I think having an institution that is so committed to public health, both in Louisiana and nationally, has resonated with and inspired a lot of our applicants," he added. Tulane's founding mission was tied to seeking a cure for yellow fever, cholera and other infectious diseases.

Virginia Tech Attracts 42,000 Apps.

This year, Virginia Tech U. received a total of 42,048 applications for the Class of 2025, 36 percent more than last year. The number of applications from African American students increased by 75 percent, while those from Hispanic and Latinx students soared by 43 percent. Applications from first-generation

"International Graduate Applications and Enrollment: Fall 2020" found that applications to U.S. institutions by prospective international graduate students increased by 3 percent for both master's and doctoral programs. Graduate applications from Chinese nationals rose by 6 percent, while those from Indian nationals increased 5 percent.

However, compared to Fall 2019, first-time international enrollment declined substantially for both master's and doctoral programs in Fall of 2020. Enrollment by Chinese nationals fell by 37 percent, while enrollment of Indian nationals decreased by 66 percent. The decline is likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Historically Black Colleges Get Results.

According to a Gallup Poll cited by Brookings, graduates who attended Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) do better than those who graduated from four-year public U.'s on a variety of indicators.

For example, in the category of "Financial Well-Being," 40 percent of HBCU grads manage their "economic life to reduce stress and increase security," versus 29 percent of non-HBCU grads.

In the category of "Purpose/Well-Being," 51 percent of HBCU grads liked "what you do each day," and were "motivated to achieve your goals," versus 43 percent of non-HBCU grads.

Also, 58 percent of HBCU grads agreed that "my professors at my university cared about me as a person," versus 25 percent of non-HBCU grads. And, 54 percent of HBCU grads agreed that "I had a mentor who encouraged me to pursue my goals and dreams." ■

college applicants jumped by 47 percent from last year. About 47 percent of all applicants chose not to submit standardized test scores.

"I think where we were most pleased in the increases wasn't necessarily in the overall application number than in the under-represented and underserved groups," Juan Espinoza, director of undergraduate admissions, told roanoke.com.

William & Mary Apps Up 23 Percent.

Applications to the C. of William & Mary increased to 17,400 this year, 23 percent more than last year, and the first time they topped 15,000. Applications from first-generation students and students of color are up by more than 20 percent. William & Mary anticipates enrolling a new class of just under 1,600 students.

"As a result of the pandemic, this year brought with it unprecedented challenges and uncertainty," said Tim Wolf, associate vice president for enrollment and dean of admission. ■

FINANCIAL MATTERS

continued from page 1

portion of this class that could end up not pursuing a postsecondary pathway or delaying one to their detriment.”

But not all is lost. There is still time for families to fill out the FAFSA for 2021 awards, although some states and school scholarships will soon be given out, especially after admissions decisions are made this spring. “The earlier you completed, the more money you tend to be eligible for,” Sally Mayers, chief of staff, the Education Trust-New York, told startribune.com.

No Loan Policies Increase Low-Income Student Enrollment. A new study by researchers at Penn State and Michigan State universities, “The Impact of No-Loan Policies on Economic Diversity at Public Colleges and Universities,” published in *Research in Higher Education*, found no-loan policies increase enrollment shares of low-income students from families earning \$40,000 or less, especially students from “the second quintile.”

“Affordability at public four-year institutions has significantly diminished over the past three decades amid declines in per-student support by states and rises in tuition,” the researchers wrote.

STATE NEWS

How Illinois Led the Nation in FAFSA Completion. Illinois led the nation last year in completions of the FAFSA by requiring public high school seniors to complete the form in order to receive a high school diploma.

“Making completion of a financial aid application part of an expectation for high school graduation can increase the number of students who are aware of the resources available to help them afford education or training after high school,” an aide to Governor J. B. Pritzker told WIFR in Rockford. “This information can also help some students decide to attend college when they might not otherwise have done so, and it may help some students limit student loan debt and take a fuller course load to more quickly complete a degree or credential.”

Indiana’s Work-Study. EARN (Employment Aid Readiness Network), Indiana’s state work-study program, has partnered with Indiana INTERNnet to better match students with employers. EARN helps students with financial need to build their resume, gain experience and find paid internships. Employers receive matching funds that amount to 50 percent of the students’ hourly rate. Students first create an account on Indiana INTERNnet. For questions, <https://www.in.gov>.

Only One Third of Eligible Michigan Students Receive Aid.

Only one third of the over 400,000 eligible undergrads in Michigan receive grants for which they are eligible from the state’s largest financial aid program.

“This is a time to provide more flexibility...for this population because otherwise there’s a risk that they won’t go to college or they won’t go back to college and get that degree. So we see this situation as particularly urgent,” Catherine Brown, one of the report’s authors, told michiganadvance.com.

Mississippi Completion Grants. Mississippi State U. has provided more than \$1.26 million in completion grants to help underresourced students who are close to graduating. “These are given in the last year of a student’s degree program to help them get over the finish line,” said Regina Hyatt, vice president for student affairs. A five-year, \$200,000 commitment from the Woodward Hines Education Foundation, matched by an additional \$200,000 from the university, supports college retention and degree completion efforts.

Virginia Extends Aid to Undocumented Students. Virginia’s General Assembly passed, and Governor Ralph Northam signed a bill that makes undocumented students eligible for state financial aid, school-issued aid and tuition assistance grants. More than 270,000 undocumented people live in Virginia.

“We know when people are educated, they do better, and it’s better for the economy,” state senator Jennifer Boysko told Richmond.com.

OTHER NEW INITIATIVES.

Ferris State’s Launch. Ferris State U. in Michigan has created a new financial aid initiative called Launch for incoming freshmen. The students will begin college with no tuition cost. The program will combine federal grants, a Ferris Merit grant and other resources. Melanie Mulder, coordinator, told bigrapidsnews.com that the university hopes to attract students for the Associate of Applied Science or Bachelor of Science degrees.

U. of Pittsburg to Provide New Grants. To “offset unexpected educational costs due to COVID-19” the U. of Pittsburgh will award 15,200 students on all its five campuses grants worth \$600 to \$1,050. The funds initially came from the federal government for last spring. But Pitt is extending the aid “to provide grants to even more students.

Odds and Ends. Yale College announced its tuition, room and board for the year 2021-22 will increase 3.8 percent to \$77,750. Tuition will be \$59,950. But Yale noted its financial aid will also increase to meet “full demonstrated financial needs of all undergraduates.” ■

COUNSELOR’S BOOKSHELF

Broke: The Racial Consequences of Underfunding Public Universities by Laura T. Hamilton and Kelly Nielsen; U. of Chicago Press; 288 pages; ISBN: 9780226747453; \$24. “Public research universities were previously able to provide excellent education to white families thanks to healthy government funding. However, that funding has all but dried up in recent decades as historically underpre-

sented students have gained greater access, and now less prestigious public universities face major economic challenges.”

College Belonging: How First-Year and First-Generation Students Navigate Campus Life by Lisa M. Nunn; Rutgers U. Press; ISBN: 9781978807655; \$28.95; paperback; book “reveals how colleges and universities’ efforts

to foster a sense of belonging in their students are misguided....”

Social Mobility Impact Ranking. More than 30 percent of all postsecondary students currently receive federal assistance. But Education Reform Now’s “Social Mobility Impact Ranking” of colleges and universities found that at almost 200 colleges, not even 20 percent of undergraduates are Pell Grant recipients. To see which schools boost social mobility, go to <https://edreformnow.org>. ■

CURRICULUM CAPSULES

New Biomedical and Biotech Degree. The Colorado School of Mines has launched a new degree “to tackle the challenges we face today and in the not-too-distant future,” according to Brian Trewyn, associate professor of chemistry. The new B.S. in Quantitative Biosciences and Engineering will prepare students “for impactful careers in medicine and biomedical fields” as well as a variety of biosciences and bioengineering. For more info, see, <https://www.mines.edu>.

Georgia’s Ocean Science BS. The U. of Georgia now offers an Ocean Science major that “provides students with a deep, interdisciplinary understanding of the structure and function of marine systems, from global oceans to local estuarine environments, and their interaction with the earth/atmosphere system.” Many majors will spend a semester on the Atlantic coast at Georgia’s Skidaway Institute of Oceanography. For more information contact Brian Hopkinson (bhopkinson@uga.edu).

Northwestern C.’s New Software Engineering Major. Northwestern C., a small liberal arts school in Iowa, offers a new program in software engineering and development. The program “addresses modern, cutting-edge technology and gives students experience working on projects in a real-world setting,” said Mike Wallinga, chair. “We’ve had a number of graduates work in

software engineering, including for Microsoft and Google....” But this program will have “what industry wants: the ability to design, test, validate, calibrate and work with teams.”

St Mary’s of Maryland Marine Science Major. St. Mary’s C. of Maryland’s new Marine Science major takes advantage of the college’s waterfront environment of the St. Mary’s River and Chesapeake Bay to create a “program that will be unique, rigorous and innovative.” Its curriculum combines foundational physics, chemistry and biology courses along with advanced courses that utilize those marine resources.

The state of Maryland belongs to the Academic Commons Marketplace (ACM), which is a consortium of several southeastern states. It allows a student from one state to attend another state’s public universities and pay in-state tuition if the student’s major is not offered in their home state. In the past, nearly 1,000 Maryland students have used the ACM and left the state to study marine science and marine biology. They no longer need to leave Maryland to study the subject.

Did You Know... that before the pandemic, some 120 colleges and universities sponsored “Fishing Clubs?” One of them was at the U. of Wisconsin-Green Bay. The U. of Buffalo also has a program and won a national championship. ■

Scholarship Scoops

Mount Holyoke Receives \$10 Million for Scholarships. Mount Holyoke C. in Massachusetts received the largest donation in school history from a 1979 graduate and her husband, which is dedicated to support scholarships and financial aid. Mount Holyoke is using the donation to start a \$20 million fundraising effort called Meet the Moment Scholarship Challenge.

The fund is aimed at attracting top students regardless of economic background. Currently, 73 percent of Mount Holyoke students receive financial aid.

Catawba Promise Opportunity Scholarships. Thanks to a new, anonymous \$2 million grant, Catawba C. in North Carolina is promising to cover four years of residential living and learning for all high-achieving low-income students it admits for Fall 2021. It is still admitting students. See, www.catawba.edu/apply or the Common Application.

Indiana Latino Students. In partnership with 18 Indiana colleges and universities, the Indiana Latino Institute is awarding \$11 million in scholarships over the next five years to Latino youth.

The aim is to improve postsecondary attainment. The schools have pledged to improve recruitment, retention and graduation rates for Latino students. Anyone interested in applying can contact MacKenzie Hock at mhock@indianalatinoinstitute.org. ■

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Women Not Among Top Earners. Although representing 60 percent of the professionals in higher education, women represent only 24 percent of those with the highest salaries in higher education. That is the conclusion of a new report from the Eos Foundation’s Women’s Power Gap Initiative, the American Association of University Women and the WAGE project. The study found there was even greater disparity for women of color who represent but two percent of top earners. The study, with specific data, can be found at <https://www.womenspowergap.org>.

Endowment Spending Rose, Returns Fell. Colleges and universities spent 4 percent more from their endowments this year than last (\$23.3 billion) as they struggled with pandemic losses and costs, according to the annual NACUBO-TIAA Study of Endowments. They also recorded lower returns (2 percent) on assets of \$637.7 billion. About 48 percent of

their spending was on student financial aid, 17 percent on academic programs, 17 percent on new strategic initiatives, 11 percent on faculty positions and 7 percent on campus operations.

Harvard U. still has the largest endowment, \$40.6 billion, followed by the U. of Texas System, Yale U., Stanford U., Princeton U., MIT, U. of Pennsylvania, Texas A&M System, U. of Michigan and U. of California.

Teacher Diversity and Quality. A recent study from the National Council on Teacher Quality, “Program Diversity and Admissions 2021,” found that “lack of diversity in the teacher workforce remains a persistent challenge.” It noted that around the world, “top-performing school systems have restricted program enrollment to the top-third of the college-going population.”

And it found that “research shows an increase in admissions standards for teacher preparation programs was consistent with an

increase in the racial diversity of undergraduate education majors.”

But it concluded that “admissions standards [to teacher education programs] in the U.S. remain too low.” However, “both program diversity and selectivity are [too] often viewed as incompatible.” Yet, the study found 198 U.S. programs that are both selective and “remarkably diverse.”

To find out which programs, go to <https://indianalatinoinstitute.org>.

More Test Optional. Brown U. joins Harvard U., Cornell U., U. of Penn and Columbia U. in extending their test-optional policy through the 2021-2022 application cycle. That is because challenges “still remain” for students to access standardized testing.

“The health of students and their families is of paramount importance,” said Brown’s dean of admissions Logan Powell. ■

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