

College Bound

ISSUES & TRENDS FOR THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS ADVISOR

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The Class of 2025

“Talent, Smarts and Global Perspectives”

Brandeis Admitted 39 Percent. Brandeis U. in Massachusetts delayed its scheduled move-in date to dodge the impact of Hurricane Henri. But once the storm moved on, 953 new members of the Class of 2025, the largest in school history, moved in, coming from 39 states and 29 countries. The new students' average high school GPA was 3.84. Nearly 80 percent ranked in the top 20 percent of their high school class. Students of color make up 30 percent of the new class, while 16 percent are first-generation college students. Brandeis boasts a 10:1 student-faculty ratio.

Bucknell's Pool Topped 11,000. Bucknell U. in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, attracted 11,263 applicants for its Class of 2025, the most in school history. This fall, 1,031 enrolled as Bucknell's largest first-year class. Admitted students posted an average high school GPA of 3.62.

“While their grades and course rigor were impressive, we were equally attracted to their curiosity, collaborative skills and ingenuity,” said Kevin Mathes, dean of admissions.

More than half of applicants took advantage of Bucknell's test-optional policy, up from 17 percent from a year ago. About 20 percent of the class will participate in Bucknell's 27 Division I teams. The class includes a Junior Olympic diver, a nationally-ranked squash player, an Ironman triathlon finisher, a woman ranked 51st in the world in Cross-Fit and a water polo player who competed at the Tokyo Olympics.

They raised money for breast cancer research, volunteered at animal shelters, served on the Civil Air Patrol and worked with Amnesty

International and Habitat for Humanity, among other community contributions.

Dartmouth Ponders Expansion. The Class of 2025 at Dartmouth C. in New Hampshire soared to 1,229 students, 160 of whom took a gap year during the pandemic. Dartmouth, traditionally the smallest school in the Ivy League, is debating whether or not to increase enrollment by 10-25 percent, according to the dartmouth.com.

“The intent wasn't to enroll a larger class,” Lee Coffin, vice provost for enrollment and dean of admission and financial aid, told the school paper. “The intent was to honor the deferrals of the '24s, while also keeping Dartmouth open to the students who graduated high school last year.”

Denison Class Largest... Ever. Denison U. in Ohio fielded 9,513 applications for its Class of 2025 and enrolled 654 first-year students, with another 30 scheduled to arrive in spring. Domestic students of color account for 22 percent of the class. Just over 20 percent hail from Ohio. International students traveled from 22 nations.

“Not only is this our largest Denison class, it is a class full of talent, smarts and global perspectives,” said Greg Sneed, vice president for enrollment management.

George Washington's Enrollment Up 30 Percent. George Washington U. in the nation's capital rebounded from its 2020 pandemic year, increasing enrollment to 2,571 first-year students, up 30 percent from last year. GW's first-to-second year retention rose from 88

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Financial Matters

Tuition Up “Higher than Inflation.” The average published tuition and fees for full-time, in-state students at public four-year universities reached \$10,740, \$170 higher than in 2020-21, according to the College Board's report “Trends in College Pricing 2021.” For out-of-state students attending public four-year public universities, the sticker price climbed by \$410 from last year to \$27,560.

The average tuition and fees for full-time, in-district students at public two-year colleges this academic year is \$3,800, or \$50 more than 2020-21. The average tuition and fees for full-time students at private non-profit, four-year schools climbed to \$38,070, up \$800.

Financial Aid Picture. However, the majority of full-time undergraduates receive financial aid support, \$14,800. Overall, the amount of aid that undergraduate and graduate students received in 2020-21 reached \$234.9 billion. The total amount of federal grant paid in 2020-21 was \$38.1 billion, including \$26 billion in Pell Grants. The total amount that parents and students borrowed in federal and nonfederal loans in 2020-21 was \$95.9 billion. Also, the average state and local funding per student was lower in 2019-20 than it was in 2007-08.

As a result, since 2009-10, on average, first-time, full-time students at public two-year colleges receive enough aid to cover their tuition and fees.

The average net amount paid by in-state
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“TALENT...”

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to 91 percent. “The big picture is things look good,” said Jay Goff, vice provost of enrollment and student success.

Indiana Enrolled More Than 9,000 First-Year Students. Indiana U. Bloomington attracted more than 46,000 applications for the Class of 2025 and enrolled 9,482 students. IU Bloomington’s total fall undergraduate enrollment is 34,253. Their average high school GPA ranged from 3.62-4.00. Their SAT scores ranged from 1200-1400; ACT from 27-32. About 42 percent of students traveled from other states to attend. International students make up 4 percent of the new class. Minority students account for 28 percent.

“We are extremely proud that our campus was able to stay safe and together throughout the past year,” said Lauren Robel, provost.

Oberlin Attributes 10,000 Apps to “Virtual Outreach.” Oberlin C. in Ohio attracted 10,636 student applications for its 2021-22 academic year. This fall, 882 first-year students enrolled, exceeding its target of 810 students, for one of Oberlin’s largest classes in recent years.

“We are proud of the great virtual outreach we were able to conduct last year,” said Manuel Carballo, vice president. “...This has carried onto this next cycle with a very busy summer of campus visitors. We’ve seen a twofold increase in on-campus visitors in the summer months.”

Ohio U. First-Year Enrollment Jumps 17 Percent. Ohio U. in Athens enrolled 3,664 students in its Class of 2025, 17.2 percent more than last year. They are the “most diverse and academically accomplished freshmen” in school history, with a 3.59 high school GPA. African American students make up 6.5 percent of the new class. Over 16 percent come from 34 other states. The number of enrolled international students grew by 28 percent over pre-pandemic levels. OU is proud of attracting high-achieving students to its Ohio Honors Program that enrolls 8 percent of the school’s undergraduates.

Candace Boeninger, vice president for enrollment management, told *The Post* that the school had made changes in its Ohio Excellence Award Program to offer more competitive financial aid offers. This fall’s total enrollment at OU stands at 21,597 students.

Oregon’s “Flat” Tuition and COVID-19 Protocols Impact Enrollment. The U. of Oregon in Eugene welcomed 4,600 members to its Class of 2025. In high school, they posted a 3.73 GPA. More than 1,000 transfer students also joined the school. About 1,600 members of the new class come from domestic minority groups.

Roger Thompson, vice president for student services and enrollment management, attributed the record number to UO’s recruitment team, but also the “right decisions” regarding COVID-19, including its vaccination requirement, improvements in ventilation and mandatory masking, plus the Oregon Guarantee, that promises flat tuition for four years.

Southern California Attracted Over 70,000 Apps in 2021. The U. of Southern California in Los Angeles attracted “an unparalleled” 70,971 applications for Fall 2021. USC enrolled 3,668 first-year students, of whom 23 percent are first-generation college students, an increase from 9 percent in 2011. A record 32 percent of first-year students come from historically underrepresented groups, 3 percent more than last year.

New first-year students hail from all 50 states and 88 different nations. Some 13 percent of students are legacies. In addition to California, the most new students come from New York, Texas, Illinois and New Jersey. More than a quarter of the students received “perfect grades” in high school, the most in school history, Timothy Brunold, dean of admissions, told the *Daily Trojan*.

Stanford’s Class Includes 2020 Gap Year Students. Last admissions cycle, Stanford U. in California received 55,471 applications for its Class of 2025, the largest pool in university history. It offered admission to 2,190 applicants, for an admit rate of 3.95 percent, the lowest in school history, down from the previous year’s 5.19 percent. The yield for that Class of 2025 was 80 percent. Some 369 admits who took a gap year in 2020 also enrolled this fall, according to *The Stanford Daily*.

Temple Calls Itself the “Diversity University.” Nearly 45 percent of the Class of 2025 at Temple U. in Philadelphia is made up of people of color. Some 30 percent are first-generation college students, while 28 percent receive Pell Grants. A third of the class comes from out-of-state, with large increases from Florida, Texas and California.

“In 2018, we embarked on an enrollment goal to recruit a first-year class with no ethnic majority,” said Shawn Abbott, vice provost for admissions, financial aid and enrollment management. “We are the Diversity University.”

Tufts Admitted Record Low 11 Percent. Tufts C. in Massachusetts received 35 percent more applications for the Class of 2025 than the previous year, and admitted a record low of 11 percent. Students of color make up 56 percent of the admitted class. More than 10 percent of the admitted class are first-generation students, and more than 10 percent work with college access organizations, including 200 students admitted through QuestBridge. About 12 percent

of those admitted are international students, representing 100 different citizenships.

“The academic strength, community engagement and demographics of the Early Decision and Regular Decision pools this year were similar, and both pools were historically diverse and historically large,” said JT Tuck, dean of admissions.

Vanderbilt Includes More Internationals. International enrollment in the Class of 2025 at Vanderbilt U. in Tennessee climbed from 3.1 percent in 2006 to 10.4 percent. However, that is still a decline from the Class of 2018’s all-time high of 12.4 percent international students, Doug Christiansen, dean of undergraduate admissions and financial aid, told *The Vanderbilt Hustler*.

Vermont 2025 Class Best Prepared in 230 Years. The U. of Vermont attracted 25,500 applications for its Class of 2025, 38 percent more than last year. This fall, UVM enrolled 2,932 first-time, first-year undergraduate students, the most in school history.

“We believe that among the factors behind the surge is our commitment to keeping UVM affordable and accessible with a tuition freeze expected for a fourth consecutive year,” said Jay Jacobs, vice provost for enrollment management.

UVM ranks among the top 5 percent of public institutions in graduation rate. Some 77 percent of the undergraduate class entering in 2015 graduated. For undergraduates who graduated between 2017-19, 93 percent were employed or continuing their education within the first six months of graduation.

Washington Welcomes an Unexpected “Large Class.” The U. of Washington welcomed a record 7,249 new freshmen this fall, a couple hundred more than last year. Some 1,438 of the new students come from underrepresented minorities.

“... we were not planning on having such a large class,” Paul Seegert, director of admissions, told *dailyuw.com*. “It’s difficult to predict what students are going to do during a pandemic. Last year, over the summer... our enrollment melted away at a pretty high rate.” That wasn’t the case this year. ■

P. S. Amherst Halts Legacies

Amherst C. in Massachusetts announced it will no longer give preference to the children of alumni. In the past, as many as 11 percent of a particular class of about 1,700 students were legacies. “Now is the time to end this historic program that inadvertently limits educational opportunity by granting a preference to those whose parents are graduates of the College,” said Amherst President Bidy Martin. ■

More Financial Matters

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students enrolled in public four-year institutions is \$2,640. In 2021-22, the average net tuition and fees paid by first-time, full-time students enrolled in private, non-profit four-year institutions is an estimated \$14,990.

Finally, the average amount borrowed by 2019-20 bachelor's degree recipients who took out loans to pay for college was \$28,400, down from \$30,700 in 2014-15. About 54 percent of those borrowers with outstanding debt owe less than \$20,000, while 10 percent owe \$80,000 or more.

Stress Over Aid Applications. Understanding how to pay for college is the most stressful part of the process for 66 percent of the 1,000 parents of current college students surveyed by College Ave Student Loans. Some 53 percent also reported they found filling out the college application to be stressful.

Almost 80 percent of the parents set aside money to help pay for their child's college education, and 64 percent felt comfortable with their savings amount. But only 28 percent actually saved enough to pay the full cost. Only 43 percent said they could pay half or more of those college costs. These college student parents also urged parents who follow them to: "Be persistent with scholarship applications; fill out the FAFSA now; organize your paperwork and don't leave stones unturned." See, www.collegeavestudentloans.com.

Target's Debt-Free Education Assistance. The Target Corporation, based in Minneapolis, has offered "comprehensive debt-free education assistance" to more than 340,000 of its U.S.-based part-time and full-time frontline employees. The aid extends to those seeking select undergraduate degrees in business management and operations to IT, computer science, design and more, plus certificates and certifications. Target will invest \$200 million over the next four years in the program.

Thirteen Percent of College Students Took Out Private Loans. According to Sallie Mae, 13 percent of college students secured private loans to go to school, most to "bridge the gap" between federal aid and college costs. The average interest rate on a 10-year fixed-rate loan was 5.75 percent during the week of July 20, 2021. For five-year loans with variable interest rate, the average was 2.67 percent. Some private student loans have no origination fee. The drawback on private student loans is they are not eligible for federal protections such as deferment or student loan forgiveness. Variable-rate loans can increase over time.

Brown "Need-Blind" for International Students. Brown U. in Rhode Island announced that it will become "need-blind" in admissions for international students.

The Ivy League school also announced that will cover tuition for students coming from families that earn under \$125,000 a year by removing home equity from the family contribution calculation for financial aid and scholarships. The changes require nearly \$25 million additional to each year's undergraduate financial aid budget.

The changes will "increase income diversity on campus, and it will increase the fraction of students (44 percent of the Class of 2025) who receive financial aid," Brown's president Christina Paxson told *The Brown Daily Herald*.

Colgate Goes No Loan. Colgate U. in Upstate New York joined the small but growing number of colleges that are attacking the \$1.7 billion "student debt crisis" by eliminating institutional loans. Colgate will be tuition free for students with annual family incomes of less than \$80,000, while those from families with incomes up to \$150,000 will not be required to take out student loans.

Smith Eliminates Loans. Beginning in Fall 2022, Smith C. in Massachusetts will eliminate loans from its undergraduate financial aid packages and replace them with grants from the college. Also, new undergraduate students from families whose expected contribution is less than \$7,000, will receive a one-time "start-up grant" of \$1,000 in addition to their financial aid package.

And seniors who are graduating in January or May 2022 will receive "launch grants" of \$2,000 to help them with the cost of transitioning to life after college. Altogether, Smith is committing \$7 million more a year to its financial aid budget, which benefits more than 60 percent of all its students. That brings its total financial aid commitment to \$90 million.

Wash U. Increases Financial Aid by \$1 Billion. Due to a 65 percent return on its 2020-21 endowment investments, Washington U. in St. Louis is investing \$1 billion in financial aid. That means that henceforth, an applicant's ability to pay tuition and related costs will no longer be considered in undergraduate admissions decisions. Some 60-plus colleges, including members of the Ivy League, are "need-blind" in their admissions policy."Our job is to find the brightest students we can find," said Andrew Martin, Wash U.'s chancellor, in stltoday.com. ■

COUNSELOR'S BOOKSHELF

New reports: Career readiness is the number one priority with 84 percent of the thousands of students from 18 countries who were surveyed for the *Instructure Second Annual Research Report*. A second finding was that, "Institutions need to think beyond the lecture." That includes the need to offer in-person or virtual counseling services.

A third finding was that, "Faculty-student engagement is critical, whether in person

or through technology." The survey's fourth finding was that, "Online learning needs to be intentionally designed." The survey also found, "Socioeconomic disparities impact engagement." And, "Only 6 percent of students from self-identified lower economic homes said it was very easy to stay engaged."

Finally, the survey concluded, "The democratization of education begins with equitable access." The top two 2021 socioeconomic

factors that drive student success are "access to the Internet and psychological well-being." See, www.instructure.com.

Finding a 'Fit.' For newly-admitted students, finding a right 'fit' in a college means "Finding groups where I fit in, sense of community on campus and off-campus environment/things to do," according to Eduventures' latest annual study of admitted students.

Students rank as least important, the opportunity to become involved in a club, something many colleges emphasize in recruitment. ■

ENROLLMENT TRENDS

Fall Enrollment Continues to Plunge.

According to new preliminary statistics gathered by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, undergraduate enrollment continued its historic decline, dropping by another 3.2 percent, or 240,000 fewer undergraduates enrolled this fall. Enrollment among first-year students fell 3.1 percent this fall. Freshman enrollment among white students plunged 8.6 percent, among black students 7.5 percent.

The long decline in undergraduate and graduate enrollment began in 2012. The reductions continue across all sectors, including community colleges, where enrollment slipped by 5.6 percent. The freshman class at community colleges is now 20.8 percent below the 2019 level. Public four-year colleges and private four-profits also experienced declines. Private nonprofit four-year institutions fell by only 0.7 percent, due to the fact that 4.3 percent more students enrolled in highly selective institutions.

CUNY Remains Nation's Largest Urban Higher Ed System. The City U. of New York (CUNY) enrolls more than 275,000 students in 25 campuses throughout NYC, including seven

community colleges. About a third of those students are Latino, and 40 percent come from low-income families. More than 60 percent are first-generation college students, and 39 percent speak another language besides English.

This year, about 45 percent of its courses are in-person, while the rest remain online. CUNY also distributed \$10 million in student grants to supplement federal aid and used federal stimulus funds to forgive up to \$125 million in student debt.

Iona Enrollment Up 32 Percent. Enrollment at Iona C. in New Rochelle, New York, has soared by 32 percent in only two years. The Catholic liberal arts school, founded in 1940, now with an enrollment of nearly 4,000 students, recently added a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and an accelerated 15-month nursing program for those who already earned a Bachelor's degree in another field.

Iona is expanding to a 28-acre campus in nearby Bronxville, formerly home to Concordia C. And it recently received a \$20 million gift to establish the New York-Presbyterian Iona School of Health Sciences on its new campus.

Additionally, Iona now offers a Bachelor of Arts in Entrepreneurial Leadership and

a Bachelor of Business Administration in Entrepreneurship.

Pennsylvania U.'s Enrollment Lowest in Decade. Fourteen universities in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education reported that over the past decade they lost more than 5,000 students, or about 5.4 percent. Two exceptions were Cheyney U. of Pennsylvania, which posted a 2.39 percent enrollment increase and West Chester U., which only lost 29 students. *The Philadelphia Inquirer* commented that "state schools typically serve more low-income families than state flagship and private schools, which may explain the decrease in enrollment."

Texas Enrollment Down 4 Percent. Texas is a large state and enrollment numbers vary by region and sector. However, during the pandemic, enrollment at Texas community colleges declined by nearly 11 percent or about 80,000 students. Meanwhile, enrollment at Texas public universities grew by almost 2 percent, enrollment in independent universities remained steady and the number of students enrolled in health-related institutions jumped by nearly 10 percent.

Overall, enrollment declined about 4 percent. Since 2019, the number of white students enrolled in Texas colleges fell by 5.5 percent, the number of Hispanic students fell by 5 percent and the number of black students by 4 percent. Male student enrollment increased this year by about 23,000 students. But the number of female students enrolled in higher education in the state fell by 40,000 since the pandemic began.

Wisconsin's Strong Graduation Rate. The U. of Wisconsin-Madison announced that its six-year graduation rate for students who entered as freshmen in 2014 hit 88.5 percent, nearly 7 percentage points ahead of the average of its peer institutions. ■

CURRICULUM CAPSULES

Endicott Expands School of Nursing. Endicott C. in Massachusetts will use a \$20 million partnership grant with the Cummings Foundation to expand its School of Nursing at a time when the profession is experiencing shortages of trained nurses.

New England's Two New Majors. In Fall 2022, the U. of New England in Maine will enroll students into new Majors; a B.A. in Criminology and a B.S. in Special Education.

The Criminology B.A. will focus on "the social construction of crime, theories of illegal and deviant behavior, social reaction to crime and the effectiveness of anti-crime policies...." The program will prepare students for careers in courts, prisons, police stations, government agencies and a variety of nonprofits, including victim advocacy groups.

Special education is consistently facing shortages both in Maine and nationally. UNE also announced a new minor in Computer Science.

Half of Students Take Online Course. More than half of all students (51.8 percent) enrolled in at least one online course during the 2019-20 academic year, excluding courses that were moved online during the

pandemic. The conclusion is based upon data from the Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Previously, it was believed that only 37 percent of students enrolled online. And, 22.7 percent of those students are enrolled exclusively online.

Wesleyan Launches Human Rights Advocacy Minor. Wesleyan U. in Connecticut announced a new minor in its Human Rights Advocacy program "as robust as any law school human rights clinic." The program will "train the next generation of advocates, giving a group of 16 Wesleyan undergraduates the opportunity to work alongside professionals in the field during the academic year." A total of 32 students will be evenly divided into fall and spring cohorts.

Transfers Lose 43 Percent of Credits. Research by the U.S. Government Accounting Office cited in Eduventure's "2021 Transfer Student Survey" indicates that, on average, transfer students lose 43 percent of the credit they've gained at other institutions through the transfer process. The survey concluded that transfer students need more advising support before they make their decisions. ■

ACT Scores Nearly Steady

In October, the ACT announced that the average compound score for the 1,295,349 students from the high school class of 2021 who took the test was 20.3, down 0.3 points. However, due to the pandemic, 375,000 fewer students took the exam. In September, 700,000 fewer students sat for the SAT. Additionally, hundreds of colleges went "test-optional" this past year, either as a temporary or long-term policy change. Still, it is alarming to note that only 25 percent of students who took the test met all of ACT's four College Readiness Benchmarks, which it says students need to "have a high probability of success in credit-bearing first-year college courses." See, <https://act.org>. ■

SCHOLARSHIP SCOOPS

Arkansas' New Freshman Scholarships. The U. of Arkansas Little Rock offers a new scholarship for first-time freshmen, as well as new freshmen with 11 or fewer transfer credit hours, that covers 50 percent of tuition and fees. The scholarship is available to the first 1,000 freshmen who are admitted and enroll in at least 12 credit hours for the fall semester and is worth \$5,000. No additional application is needed. Students who earn a 2.25 GPA or higher during the fall may renew for spring semester.

"Combined with the recent 11 percent decrease in our institutional net price, the Trojan Strong scholarship provides exceptional opportunity for new freshmen students," said Cody Decker, vice chancellor for student affairs and chief data officer.

Hope Chicago Will Aid Thousands. Hope Chicago, a new organization headed by former Chicago Public Schools CEO Janice Jackson and funded by financier Ted Koenig, announced that over the next 10 years it aims to help 30,000 Chicagoans graduate

from college and trade school. Hope Chicago has already raised \$25 million and awarded scholarships.

One intriguing aspect of the massive effort is that parents of scholarship students will also be supported in their efforts to gain higher knowledge and skills as an anti-poverty, community-building strategy. "This is an incredible city, a city worth saving," Jackson, who was widely lauded when she left CPS, declared at Hope Chicago's announcement.

Keene State's Low-Income STEM Scholarships. Thanks to a \$650,000 National Science Foundation grant, seven students next year, and seven the following year will be selected for the chemistry and biology program by the New Hampshire school.

"Prospective Keene State students, who should contact the college to determine if they are eligible for the new scholarships, won't have to submit any additional paperwork to the school outside the normal admissions process," said Brian Anderson, chair of the chemistry department. ■

tees qualified students admission to one of the U. of Illinois system universities. To qualify Illinois high school graduates must earn at least 36 transferable credits at an Illinois c.c., maintain a 3.0 or better GPA for all transferable coursework and satisfy the system's English language proficiency requirement.

Meanwhile, Illinois legislators passed a law requiring its public universities to use test-optional admission.

COMINGS AND GOINGS

Vermont State University. The Board of Trustees of the Vermont State College system has merged three four-year colleges, Castleton U., Northern Vermont U. and Vermont Technical C., to become a new college; Vermont State U. The new school will begin operation July 1, 2023.

McPherson Finds a Place. McPherson C. in Kansas returned to a more traditional schedule this fall. "While many question whether or not a small college should exist, we are proving that students and families value the kind of education that they find at McPherson College," said Michael Schneider, president.

St. Louis Back in Force. In its Class of 2025, St. Louis U. welcomed the second-largest first-year class in school history. "I think that this class is challenged with returning to an academic environment that isn't in front of a computer screen," one SLU freshman told *The University News*.

LAST WORD

A University's Mission. In a nation of more than 4,000 colleges and universities, students have a plethora of choices of schools with different missions. Illinois Institute of Technology (Illinois Tech) recently inducted Raj Echambadi as its 10th president. In his inaugural address, he set forth four pillars of future growth, shared by many institutions today.

"First," he said, "we must recommit ourselves to our role as an engine of opportunity. Secondly, we must embrace this unique moment in time to help reimagine the future of education for all. Third, as always, we must remain laser focused on empowering our students in order to create pathways into good jobs and position them for future success. Lastly, we must dedicate ourselves to fostering a culture of purpose-driven citizenship." ■

Happy Thanksgiving! We are thankful for our subscribers and all you do for students and their families.

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NEWS YOU CAN USE

Syracuse Extends SAT/ACT Waiver. Due to the continued impact of COVID-19, Syracuse U. in New York has expanded its standardized test waiver for the 2021-2022 application cycle. "By continuing to make the submission of scores optional, we hope to alleviate some of the stress for applicants," said Maurice A. Harris, dean of admissions.

"C" for Nation's Elementary/Secondary Schools. *Education Week's Quality Counts 2121* gave the nation's elementary and secondary schools a "C" for their combined "academic, finance and socioeconomic factors."

For the third year in a row, New Jersey led the nation with an overall grade of "B+." Massachusetts received the only other "B+." New Mexico posted the lowest score, a "D+." Florida and Nevada were the only states this year to score better for student achievement than four of the other graded categories, "Chance for Success" and "School Finance."

Learning Regression. According to a recent Brainly Pandemic Education Study, a review of 20 million questions submitted by students to the online academic review site Brainly.com, found there may be significant learning gaps across middle, high school and college students as a result of the pandemic. A surge

in the homework questions is its indicator. Some 60 percent of questions are about math and science. See, <https://brainly.com>.

AI Teaching Future? A new study of 1,027 Internet users titled "Artificial Intelligence and Education," by Tidio, which creates and markets Chatbots, found that about 52 percent of respondents "would be okay with AI teaching their kids at school."

Some 64 percent of respondents think that chatbots, robots or AI can replace teachers in the future. Some 67 percent see Artificial Intelligence as an opportunity for learning. While 66 percent think that "everyone should have the right to choose if they want to stay home or attend regular classes."

Greater flexibility and access come with perceived costs. Anxiety, depression and other mental health issues are caused by social distancing. And 63 percent of those questioned had reservations about the quality of education the AI changes will bring. This future seems both hopeful and fearful, leading to more independent learning, but less social interaction. How far off these kind of massive changes will be is hard to predict.

Illinois Eases Transfer Barriers. Illinois legislators recently passed a law that guaran-